
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 12 February 2019 from 7.00pm - 8.55 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Chairman), Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Nicholas Hampshire, James Hunt (Vice-Chairman), Nigel Kay and Ted Wilcox.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Brooke Butfield, Martyn Cassell, Steph Curtis, Mike Marsh, Jo Millard, Bob Pullen and Graeme Tuff.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Alan Horton (Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Families) and David Simmons (Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Baldock and Roger Truelove.

490 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

491 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 January 2019 (Minute Nos. 444 – 449) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

492 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

493 TREE POLICY

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs, the Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure, the Leisure and Technical Services Manager and the Greenspaces Manager to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs introduced the report. He drew attention, that as a result of the suggestions made by Members when the Tree Policy was considered at the Policy Development Review Committee (PDRC) meeting in November 2018, the Draft Tree Policy had been updated.

Members considered the report and the following points were made:

- the paragraph on Hedgerows (page 7) was not strong or specific enough, the Policy needed to protect ancient hedgerows;
- how were ancient hedgerows identified?;
- lack of information on how Swale Borough Council (SBC) responded to Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications;

- thanked Officers and welcomed the updated policy;
- suggested re-wording “.....by the developer who paid the Council a ‘commuted sum’ ” in the final paragraph of page 7;
- suggested including Councillors as well as staff and public in the first bullet point under ‘Who Inspects’ on page 9;
- suggested adding ‘unless urgent’ after ‘...programmed tree works’ on the final bullet point at the bottom of page 13;
- consider a Press Release on who to contact to report damaged or diseased trees;
- the ‘Community support’ heading on page 18 should be titled ‘Advice for public’;
- suggested including a link to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs’ Magic Maps application which provided geographical information on the natural environment or a link to information on veteran trees;
- the importance of ancient woodlands should be stressed throughout the whole document;
- who carried out the tree inspections and did it impact on staff resource?; and
- information on pages 14 and 15 was confusing and needed to be clearer about how residents or Swale Borough Council could act.

In the discussion that followed, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs advised that the information on enforcement for removing ancient hedgerows was included in the document, and further information was signposted. The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure added that there was a crossover into Planning Legislation and he would discuss with the Head of Planning Services the relevant information that needed to be included in the document.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs said that follow-up action from TPO applications was dependent on an individual circumstance and incidents were referred to the Council’s Tree Officer.

In response to a Member’s request that officers’ direct phone numbers were included in the document, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs explained that it was more efficient for calls to be logged with Customer Services. The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure added that staff in Customer Services had received updated training on responding to tree enquiries as part of the recent change in software system.

The Green Spaces Manager advised that a combination of contractors and Council staff carried out the tree inspections, depending on staff workloads. In the discussion that followed, the Leisure and Technical Services Manager explained that the developing Policy brought clarity in how trees were managed, which might help reduce the number of enquiries. The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure confirmed that the Policy could be delivered on the current, existing resource. The Chairman suggested that if Members had concerns over staff resources in satisfying the Policy, Scrutiny Committee could consider a review on it.

The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure thanked Members of the Committee for their input and agreed to consider including the suggestions made, in the Policy.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs, the Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure, the Leisure and Technical Services Manager and the Green Spaces Manager for their attendance.

494 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the work programme. He advised that the programme might change if further policies came forward.

495 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act:

7. Information relating to any action taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

496 SWALE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT.

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities, the Economy and Community Services Manager and the Economy and Community Services Project Officer to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities introduced the report which determined the work programme for the Partnership for the coming year. He highlighted the current priorities and themes on page 29 of the report and sought Members' views.

The Chairman congratulated the Economy and Community Services Project Officer (Community Safety) and support staff for the production of the document.

A Member sought more information on how partners worked together to prioritise and solve issues and highlighted a lack of communication and feedback after incidents were reported. In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities said that monitoring of focused areas was carried out after incidents were logged and the community trigger worked well, when reported. He agreed that feedback from some partners could be improved. The Economy and Community Services Manager added that a newsletter update was circulated to Members, and if Members reported incidents to SBC, feedback would be given. A discussion around community engagement followed and a Member suggested local engagement forums and pop-up stands as more effective communication.

In response to a Member expressing concern about the effect that drugs had on the community, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities agreed that the use of drugs influenced all the current priorities and themes shown on page 29 of the report.

In response to a Member's question, the Economy and Services Manager highlighted the Glossary of terms on page 56 of the report and explained that the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) was a regular meeting held to discuss high-risk victims.

A Member referred to Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities said that Kent Police employed dedicated Gang Liaison Officers.

The Economy and Community Services Project Officer agreed to find out the definition of the colours in the graph on page 38 of the report and the Economy and Community Services Manager advised she was seeking more context from Kent Police on the maps produced in the report.

A Member suggested including other Housing providers in the statistics for Anti-social behaviour on page 41 of the report.

The Chairman referred to seasonal trends in crime and commended the Police's work with the Community Safety Partnership in reducing crime in tourist areas on the Isle of Sheppey.

A Member suggested that fly posting incidents be included in the figures for Fly Tipping and agreed that there should be further re-engagement with the Street Pastors to consider Purple Flag accreditation. Another Member agreed, highlighted the anti-social behaviour of youths and referred to the expected increase in visitors at night when the Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration scheme was complete.

There was a discussion around the installation of gates to tackle anti-social behaviour at Galway Road, Sheerness and the Economy and Community Services Manager advised that the situation was being monitored.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities spoke of the worthwhile work involved when referrals for radicalisation were received.

The Economy and Community Services Manager explained that some of the maps in the document were Police maps that defined wards by old ward boundaries and that some information from Age UK was out of date.

A Member referred to IOM (Integrated Offender Management) on page 49 of the report, and the Economy and Community Services Manager agreed to find out the figures from other authorities, to compare to Swale. In the discussion that followed, Members praised the work that prisoners from the Isle of Sheppey prisons carried out in the local area, as part of their rehabilitation.

In response to a Member's question about the Community Safety Partnership's Twitter account, the Economy and Community Services Manager advised that the account should have been de-activated and she would look into this.

The Economy and Community Services Manager advised that in response to the General Data Protection Regulations, the information sharing agreement had been revised.

A Member drew attention to 2 typing errors in the coloured chart on page 54 which should have read 'Children' and 'development'.

All Members present agreed that the heading of 'Violence Against Women and Children' in the current priorities and themes should remain as a wider heading rather than 'Domestic Abuse' as this narrowed the focus.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities thanked Members for their praise of staff and Members for the useful debate.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities, the Economy and Community Services Manager and the Economy and Community Services Project Officer (Community Safety) for their attendance.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel