
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held Via Skype on Tuesday, 29 September 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.07pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Alastair Gould, Carole Jackson, Denise Knights, Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Eddie Thomas, Tim Valentine and Mike Whiting

Kent County Councillor Andrew Bowles.

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Clifford, Janet Dart and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Tim Gibson, Lee McCall and Ken Rowles

APOLOGY: Kent County Councillor Antony Hook.

132 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor Denise Knights be elected Chairman for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

133 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor Julian Saunders be elected Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

134 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

135 PUBLIC FORUM

The Chair explained the purpose of the agenda item and invited members of the public present to ask a question or suggest an agenda item for a future meeting.

Local resident Stephen Fisher spoke about his concerns regarding vehicle traffic on the A251 Ashford Road, Faversham and the dangers it presented to cyclists and pedestrians.

Several members spoke in support of Mr Fisher's concerns and raised the following issues:

- various speed limits in place between Challock and Faversham, there was no consistency;
- cyclists tended to avoid using the A251;

- dangerous and inconsiderate parking by public stopping to photograph field of poppies earlier in the year;
- role of Kent County Council and parish councils in promulgating highways improvement plans.

It was noted that connectivity between Faversham and rural areas was to be considered under a later agenda item.

Local resident Louise Bareham asked that the Committee to consider the need for safe cycling routes between the villages and Faversham and the provision of bus services between rural villages and Faversham.

Several members spoke in support of Mrs Bareham's concerns and raised the following issues:

- A251 not conducive to safe cycling: it was the main route between Faversham and the William Harvey hospital;
- need for logistics to fit their vehicles with correct Sat Nav devices: freight route should use M2-A249-M20 to reach the channel ports/channel tunnel; and
- importance of maintaining footpaths: local residents could take the lead as they did recently in Teynham.

136 PURPOSE AND ROLE OF AREA COMMITTEES IN SWALE

The Chair introduced the report which set out the purpose of Area Committees and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

It was noted that each member had an allocation of £4k, £48k in total as there were twelve Members representing the seven wards covered by this Area Committee. The funds could be allocated to projects in consultation and agreement with the Area Committee.

Members agreed to note the report and recommendations.

137 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting as the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing was unable to attend.

138 LOCAL ISSUES

Brown tourism signs

The paper for this item described the process for obtaining and siting of brown tourism signs. It was noted that there were many demands for more brown signs to support the leisure and tourism offer across Swale. However, it was not straightforward or cheap to get these signs put up. Cabinet asked Area Committees to provide a prioritised list of sites which they would be interested in funding signage for, and an indication where they would like those signs to go.

Members raised the following issues:

- some brown signs were obsolete, e.g. no longer a vineyard in Newnham;
- local brown signs were important to direct visitors to attractions, local businesses could invest in these;
- stone chapel off the A2 near Syndale was an important heritage site, but no car parking provision nearby; and
- needed to make a prioritised list.

Heritage issues

The paper explained that SBC had around 50 Conservation Areas, many of which had not been reviewed for several decades. Earlier this year the Council launched a new Heritage Strategy, part of which included reviewing these Conservation Areas over the period of the Strategy. The Committee were invited to consider bringing areas forward for review which were not part of the Heritage Strategy Action Plan by allocating part of the grant funding available to them.

A member suggested inviting parish and town councils to propose priorities.

Conservation issues – including ponds

The paper explained that it was important that the Council had an up-to-date and accurate picture of the ponds in Swale, their current condition, and their ownership details. This did not include private ponds in peoples' gardens.

There was both a strategic need for this information and also a heritage, conservation and tourism aspect. Ponds were often signifiers of underground waterways which SBC needed to be aware of, and were also strong promoters of biodiversity. They could also be used in promotional material encouraging visitors to Swale's rural areas.

139 IMPROVING THE PARISH TO TOWN CONNECTIONS

Councillor Eddie Thomas introduced this item. He spoke of the need to improve connectivity between Faversham and the rural villages, especially so for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. He proposed undertaking an audit of current routes and then coming up with a plan of action to improve the routes.

In discussion, members raised the following points:

- bridleways did not always have a suitable surface for cycling;
- important to feed into Transport Strategy as part of the Local Plan process: intelligence gathering;
- important to liaise with local groups, e.g. Faversham Footpaths Group;
- different needs of leisure and commuting cyclists;
- KCC were the highways authority;
- wanted to see written proposals, it was important not to take decisions 'on the hoof'; and
- requested to put on the agenda for the next meeting and invite officers and Cabinet Member to attend.

Councillor Eddie Thomas proposed and Councillor Tim Valentine seconded the following motion:

- that local knowledge of the most suitable walking and cycling routes between parishes and towns be shared across the Eastern area, both for the benefit of residents and visitors;
- that an investigation/report be made into reviewing existing community transport models to see what might be suitable for the Eastern area.

On being put to the vote, Members agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That local knowledge of the most suitable walking and cycling routes between parishes and towns be shared across the Eastern area, both for the benefit of residents and visitors.

(2) That an investigation/report be made into reviewing existing community transport models to see what might be suitable for the Eastern area.

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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