
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held via Skype on Tuesday, 8 December 2020 from 7.00pm - 9.48pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Carnell (Vice-Chairman), Simon Clark, Steve Davey (Chairman), Mike Dendor, Tim Gibson, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Ken Rowles, Roger Truelove, Ghlin Whelan and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martyn Cassell, Janet Dart and Bob Pullen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Roger Clark, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Richard Palmer, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Tim Valentine (Cabinet Member for Environment) and Kent County Councillor John Wright.

316 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Rowles declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Swale Media Arts Centre. Councillor Dendor declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Kemsley Community Centre of which he was a Trustee. Councillors Carnell, Davey, Dendor and Winckless declared a non-pecuniary interest in Milton Creek Country Park of which they were Trustees.

317 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 September 2020 (Minute Nos. 96 – 102) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record..

318 **MATTERS ARISING**

The action on brown tourism signs and ponds was noted and would be considered again at the next meeting scheduled for 2 March 2021. There had not been any suggestions regarding additional Conservation Area reviews. The position regarding education was noted.

The Chairman described the initiative he had embarked on to explore issues arising in Sittingbourne wards other than his own. This was necessarily limited by the current pandemic.

The Chairman and Councillor Clark agreed to make further enquiries about the Trots Hall Gardens bomb shelter outside of the meeting.

The remaining matters would be considered under other agenda items.

319 **PUBLIC FORUM**

Richard Emmett and Stephen Palmer from the Historic Research Group of Sittingbourne gave an introduction on the Avenue of Remembrance project which was multi-partner and sought to engage local people and schools in enhancing the Avenue. The project would replace individual memorials and get school children to

undertake research into the backgrounds of those who were commemorated. Work also involved tree management and improving the physical environment.

During discussion it was agreed that the Group work up detailed costings for the element of funding they were seeking from the Committee and bring that back to the next meeting scheduled for 9 March 2021. It was noted that the project contributed towards many objectives shared by Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property noted that the Avenue was likely to be part of Swale BC's planned audit of town centre assets.

Faye Thorley spoke about the Dolphin Barge Museum and recent efforts to develop the tourism and heritage potential of the site including restoration, securing the site and developing a community space.

Rebecca O'Neill from Brogdale Community Interest Company outlined recent developments at the skate park. They had taken on the lease from Swale BC and planned to create a community centre on the site for the benefit of the wider local community. They had received support from local fast food outlets in taking litter away and had hosted community sports groups such as the Far Academy.

320 WASTE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANSING - FUTURE PROVISION

Councillor Tim Valentine, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced this item which sought to raise awareness that the current Mid Kent Waste contract was due to end in October 2023 and the work that has already started in preparation for the new contract, and to seek the views of the Committee. The current contractors also provided the street cleansing functions at Swale.

The current contract has a fully 'co-mingled' collection where all recycling is collected within a single wheeled bin. The disposal authority prefer the 'twin-stream' collection method, whereby paper and cardboard are collected separately to the other recycling, although this system would require an additional container for Swale residents.

Members were generally against the prospect of additional bins as residents already complained that they had to store and separate waste into different bins. One possible solution was inserts for existing bins, although that then reduced the space of other recyclables.

Members discussed air quality and the potential to introduce cleaner and greener waste collection freighters as part of a new contract. Members questioned whether it was prudent to continue using diesel as a fuel source if the government was planning to phase diesel vehicles out, or other greener sources such as electric vehicles or those running on liquid nitrogen gas.

Food waste recycling had always been a big challenge for Swale and by 2023, every household in England must be able to recycle food waste. The vast majority of houses in Swale already have this option and campaigns have been undertaken to reduce the amount of food waste created in the first place to increase the

number of households in the Borough that separate food waste if created. Members recognised the challenges increasing food waste recycling presented in Swale.

Contamination in wheelie bins affects recycling figures and costs much more to dispose of. Food waste, garden waste, textiles, black plastic bags and used nappies were all items that regularly get placed in the recycling incorrectly leading to collections being rejected by the disposal authority.

Members noted that there were often insufficient communal bins at flats and that cross-contamination occurred when e.g. landfill bins became full. Members also noted that smaller replacement bins were provided as a matter of policy.

On street cleansing, members said they regularly reported overflowing bins. It was noted that bins in the town centre were emptied regularly with those in outlying areas much less so.

A member praised the recent press release the Council had published over difficulties in maintaining waste and recycling collections due to operatives having to self isolate to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Such clear communications were well received by residents.

321 THE SITTINGBOURNE AND KEMSLEY LIGHT RAILWAY

Liz Fuller from the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway (SKLR) spoke about recent developments. The Covid-19 pandemic had obviously hit their revenue streams hard and they were fortunate to secure funding from the Department for Culture Media and Sport which had served as a lifeline.

The aims for the society were to improve the site for visitors and volunteers (e.g. there was no electricity or water on site). They had fenced off the boundary with the skate park to prevent vandals getting into the bridge.

They had got permitted development for containers which had greatly improved security of equipment. Other measures they were hoping to overcome included access via the retail park and to a water supply.

KCC Councillor Wright asked both the Barge Museum and SKLR to get in touch with him to explore who he could help with his members grant.

322 SITTINGBOURNE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property introduced the written report and provides some updates to the scheme.

Before the latest lockdown, the Travelodge had been trading successfully and other outlets had opened and were popular with local people. The cinema and bowling alley were nearing completion and would provide a useful local facility for residents once they were able to start trading.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property spoke about a town centres initiative being rolled out across Swale to review the towns' assets and recommended actions to improve them. One of the priorities for Sittingbourne was to declutter the main public realm.

Several members spoke about the demise of Phoenix House including:

- lack of information that it was to be closed;
- most community groups have been able to find alternative accommodation, albeit some on temporary – Swale BC have been assisting;
- poor state of the building – should have been closed years ago;
- no alternative community centre site in the town centre.

323 LOCAL ISSUES

The Chairman had circulated a schedule of signage around the town centre and invited members to comment on whether they thought any of this needed changing. He asked that members submit comments before the issue was considered again at the Committees next meeting scheduled for 9 March 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property noted that the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne were creating their own blue plaque scheme which should complement plans to enhance the town centre.

A member asked about the tennis courts at Milton Recreation Ground. The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure said that the courts were run by Milton Fitness Club and the Council were trying to find how the supply to the floodlights at the tennis courts could be isolated so that they could be operated independently.

It was noted that the clock had been reinstated in Milton Regis and the Chairman would be exploring how lighting in the area could be improved.

324 FUNDING CONSIDERSTIONS

A number of markers for possible grant allocations by the Committee had been brought forward, although detailed information on costs, objectives, accountable body etc. still needed to be submitted before any grant allocations could be made.

Helen Stock from the Swale Media Arts Centre outlined their plans to develop a town centre facility at 34 High Street in early 2021. The group had already set up a Community Interest Company in the name of 'Swale Media Arts Centre CIC' ready for taking on the lease in the coming weeks. They had presented to Swale Borough Council Properties Department, a budget and business plan, that was put together before the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore reflects normal working practices.

They planned to open with the ground floor art gallery and set up the viewing area for screenings and workshops. On the first floor the studio area will be equipped with green screen lighting, sound and video making equipment, the library and museum, art workshop and meeting room. The day to day business is now dependent on the needs of Government regulations due to the Covid-19 crisis.

It was agreed the Centre would bring back more details of costings to the next meeting in March 2021.

Councillor Mike Dendor outlined the request for funding made on behalf of Kemsley Community Centre. The request was for £11,000 towards the cost of installing seven HVAC split units to replace the existing boilers which had been installed in the 1960s.

It was agreed the Centre would bring back more details of the costings to the next meeting in March 2021.

Councillor Ken Rowles spoke about the threat to the future of the Avenue Theatre and requested that the Committee help it with financial assistance if needed.

Richard Emmett and Stephen Palmer from the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne introduced the presentation which had been tabled on plans to enhance the Avenue of Remembrance. Again they were asked to come back to the next meeting with more detailed costings on what support was being sought from the Committee.

325 MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY CABINET

There were none.

326 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE COMMITTEE

There were none.

Chairman

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