
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at The Alexander Centre, 15-17 Preston Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8NZ on Tuesday, 28 February 2023 from 7.00 pm - 9.12 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Alastair Gould, Mike Henderson, Carole Jackson, Denise Knights (Chair), Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin, Julian Saunders (Vice-Chair), Tim Valentine and Mike Whiting.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Louise Bareham (Faversham Town Council) and Beverley Ferrell (Oare Parish Council).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Councillor Kevin Fraser (Doddington Parish Council).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Larissa Reed and Philip Sutcliffe.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Lee Suter, Faversham Strikeforce Club and Alan Thorne, Faversham Community Boat Build.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Tim Gibson and Zoe Galvin (Programme Officer), Kent County Council.

APOLOGIES: Councillors David Simmons and Eddie Thomas.

732 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

733 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

734 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2022 (Minutes Nos. 533 – 543) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

735 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES CONSULTATION

The Chair introduced Zoe Galvin, the Programme Officer at Kent County Council (KCC), working on the Community Services Consultation.

Zoe Galvin explained which services were involved in the proposals within the consultation. The consultation proposed changes to the way KCC used their buildings to deliver some community services. They invited feedback on the proposals and the deadline was 26 March 2023. Once KCC had reviewed the

responses, the revised proposals would be taken to Cabinet at KCC in June 2023, with a decision taken in July 2023. The changes would not take place until early 2024 and would take three to four years to fully implement.

Zoe said there was a link to the full consultation document in the agenda pack and advised that there were drop-in events throughout Swale where residents could go along to talk about the proposals and ask questions.

A discussion took place on the proposals for the Eastern area and the following comments were made:

- Residents in Teynham and Lynsted lived a distance from any provision and some of them had increased needs;
- transport was an issue due to cuts in bus services and this would make it harder for residents to access buildings;
- the proposed closure of St Mary's Children's Centre, Faversham was disappointing especially as there was a lot of new housing in the area;
- Members were urged to work with parents and community groups to support keeping St Mary's Children's Centre, Faversham open;
- there were concerns about outreach due to a lack of broadband structure and community buildings in some areas;
- there were concerns about the loss of peer support if St. Mary's Children's Centre closed;
- a communal space was needed for parents to meet in their children's early years and problems could be picked up at these sessions;
- safeguarding in community halls was a concern as there could be structural safety issues or inappropriate placement of security cameras; and
- there were concerns about adult education services as a personal element of training was important which could not happen so effectively through virtual training.

Councillor Julian Saunders said that St Mary's Children's Centre was located in the centre of Faversham and well placed for public transport links. Councillor Julian Saunders proposed *that the Eastern Area Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member at KCC expressing their concern about the closure of St Mary's Children's Centre, Faversham and explained the damage this closure would have on the local community.* This was seconded by Councillor Ben J Martin and on being put to the vote agreed.

In response Zoe said digital communication was being looked at and encouraged Members to provide further details and requirements of those in areas that lacked provision. She said that the proposal had not identified any changes in adult education provision in Swale, but any concerns could be raised through the consultation.

Zoe Galvin thanked everyone for their comments.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Eastern Area Committee wrote to the Cabinet Member at KCC expressing their concern about the closure of St Mary's Children's Centre, Faversham and explained the damage this closure would have on the local community.**

736 FAVERSHAM STRIKEFORCE FOOTBALL CLUB

Lee Suter from Faversham Strikeforce Football Club gave a presentation on the work of the club. He spoke about its history and explained that it was founded in 1999 and there were currently 654 members with 40 registered teams. There were 156 volunteers involved in the running of the club and £51k had been spent on pitches and facilities this season and £178k invested into council facilities.

Lee explained the benefits of football and how it could change lives and communities by tackling inequalities, supporting young parents, offering holiday activities and food programmes, helping to combat mental and physical health issues and helping families that were struggling financially. There were currently 91 players on waiting lists, but because of the lack of investment in facilities in the area they could not join the club at this time. To sustain and grow the club needed a full-size 3G pitch.

A discussion followed the presentation and comments included:

- Members welcomed and admired the work Lee Suter and the volunteers did;
- suggested that Section 106 funding could be used to finance building a 3G pitch;
- the impact on mental and physical health should not be underestimated;
- Swale Borough Council's (SBC) current financial situation was appalling and funding was not available for additional projects; and
- creative and different ways to help needed to be looked at.

The Chief Executive said that there was not an obvious piece of land to locate a 3G pitch, and it was a challenge to identify somewhere suitable.

737 FAVERSHAM COMMUNITY BOAT BUILD

Alan Thorne gave a presentation on the work of the Cinque Ports Rowing CIC (Community Interest Company). He said that he had lived in Faversham since 1996 and worked with the long-term unemployed. In early 2020 the group started a new project 'Build a Boat, Row a Boat' which brought communities together. He said the group wanted to spread their project to Medway and further along the coast of Kent to other Cinque Ports. So far the group had built three boats and had nearly finished a fourth.

The benefits of the project included helping people overcome depression, changing lives and bringing hope. More support was needed to become more established and the group needed somewhere else to store the boats next to Faversham Creek. Alan Thorne said that SBC's support would be very much appreciated.

A Member sought clarification on running costs and what help was required. The Chair said that Members would spread the word about the work and needs of the

group and she asked if officers could get in touch to see what advice could be provided.

Alan Thorne responded that the volunteers were not paid and they needed to train people to take over in the future. They needed a club house and about £25k for adaptive rowing.

738 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Bus consultation project – since publishing the update, the Economic Development Support Officer had advised that the draft bus consultation survey questions were ready and would be circulated to Members for comment.

Flooding in Whitstable Road – the Chair advised that she had been chasing up various agencies and was able to update as follows:

- Earl Bourner, the KCC Drainage Asset Manager had advised that they had produced plans for some further improvements on Whitstable Road and had sent the plans to Southern Water (SW) for their review. The proposal was to complete those works first before commencing on Park Road, Faversham, which involved a new soakaway within the recreation ground in order to drain run-off from Park Road;
- SBC were regularly clearing the roads which was helping to keep the drains clear;
- Sue Cobb from SW had advised they had carried out routine maintenance and cleaning since November 2022 and another clean of the main foul sewer was due to be carried out. Two manhole cover replacements were scheduled for March 2023. On 5 February 2023 there was a sewage spill on Whitstable Road caused by a rag blockage in Abbeyfields. The pollution incident on 25 November 2022 had been caused by a build-up of fat and wipes on the drain from the Queen Elizabeth School. Steps had been taken to reduce the risk of fat building up and the school had been given advice about disposal of fats, oils and grease. There were currently nine sewer manhole sensors in Whitstable Road and Cyprus Road. SW were still looking into the installation of a manhole camera.

The Chair said that there had been a lot of progress with agencies working together but there was still more to do.

Fresh-water leaks – a Member advised that the initial report of a leak she had made had been repaired. Other Members spoke about further leaks that had been reported, but yet to be repaired.

Active Travel Fund – a Member said the reduction in Tranche 4 funding was disappointing but it was good that the Faversham proposal was progressing.

739 PUBLIC FORUM

Flooding in Faversham

Mr David Taylor, a resident in Cyprus Road, Faversham, spoke about flooding in Whitstable Road, Faversham. He said that hydraulic overloading of the combined and foul sewers owned by SW was the cause of flooding and he believed that SW were aware of this issue but had not carried out the necessary works to enlarge the sewers. He said the money that KCC had spent on investigations had been wasted and the problem of lack of capacity in the sewers would be compounded by the building of new houses. Mr Taylor said the combined sewer overflow in Abbey Street and Cyprus Road, caused a choke point on the system which resulted in back-up during heavy rainfall and foul sewage was mixed with rainwater in Whitstable Road. Mr Taylor gave a history of flooding issues that had started in the 1980's.

Teresa Metcalf, a resident in Whitstable Road, Faversham, thanked SBC for the work that had been carried out so far and asked for this matter to remain on the agenda at future Eastern Area Committee meetings.

Colin Alderman thanked Members for trying to resolve the issue and said it was not just about homes flooding, roads were blocked by flooding which stopped emergency vehicles getting through. He said that this issue affected the safety of people in Faversham.

Mr Baines said that there was a crack in the fresh-water supply pipe in Whitstable Road and when the road was flooded with contaminated water, he believed there was a risk that residents were drinking contaminated water. He also said that cellars on the main road were often flooded with dirty water but SW had not dealt with the problem.

The Chair responded by saying she would feed the comments back to SW and KCC. She would also ask SW to educate people in the affected areas not to block the drains with items such as wipes. The Communications and Policy Manager said that it could be possible for SBC to reinforce the message through a communications campaign. Members suggested finding out what SW's capital programme was and to involve the local MP in resolving the matter.

740 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

A Member asked if Police Community Support Officers had been removed from Faversham as there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour incidents. The Chair said that she would ask officers to check and report back.

A Member said that there had been another accident at the Forbes Road crossing and pressure needed to be put on KCC to improve the crossing.

A Member reported there had been an incident at the Teynham railway level crossing where a car had driven along the track but fortunately it had not resulted in an accident.

741 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

742 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

743 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair spoke about the achievements of the Eastern Area Committee since its inaugural meeting in September 2020. She gave examples of issues the Committee had escalated to seek resolutions which had been raised by Members, Parish/Town Councils and members of the public. She also gave some examples of projects the Committee had funded to benefit the area. The Chair said that this showed the Area Committee had served the community well and she thanked the Members and residents.

Councillor Lloyd Bowen noted that this was the Chair's last meeting and thanked her for her hard work and said she would be missed and wished her well for the future.

Chair

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