
WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 16 February 2023 from 7.00 pm - 7.45 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Nicholas Hampshire, Richard Palmer, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Vice-Chair) and Corrie Woodford (Chair).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Graham Addicott (Hartlip PC), Vivien Rich (Tunstall PC) and Steve Tolhurst (Iwade PC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE (Virtually): Parish Councillor Brian Clarke (Bredgar PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Jay Jenkins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Tim Gibson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Roger Clark, Alan Horton and James Hunt.

658 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

659 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

660 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 December 2022 (Minute Nos. 466 – 474) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

661 KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES CONSULTATION

The Chair explained that Kent County Council (KCC) had launched a consultation on their proposals for their Community Services. The consultation proposed changes to the way KCC used their buildings to deliver some community services. They invited feedback on their proposals as part of this consultation, the deadline was 26 March 2023. There was a link to the full consultation document in the agenda pack. The Chair advised that there were drop-in events throughout Swale where residents could go along to talk about the proposals and ask questions.

The Chair asked if anyone had comments on the proposals which would be fed back to KCC. The following comments were made:

- The closure of the Children's Centre at Grove Park, Sittingbourne would affect residents in the Western area;
- traffic would increase due to extra travelling distances, this contradicted one of the aims of the proposals which was to reduce carbon emissions;
- moving youth provision online was a concern;
- some of the information in the document was vague; and
- residents who used bus services often needed help and would be further disadvantaged by these proposals.

The Chair encouraged Area Committee Members, Parish Councils and members of the public to respond to the consultation.

662 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Area Reviews – Area Committee Members requested that parish councils be included in the walkabout with the consultant. Parish Councillor Brian Clarke said the progress was good news and passed on thanks on behalf of Bredgar Parish Council.

Walking and Cycling project – the Chair advised that further to The Meads not being included in the project, Councillor James Hunt would be going on a walkabout with the Active Travel Coordinator to look at options for that area. Councillor Nicholas Hampshire commented that this highlighted the challenge for developers when submitting applications to ensure they were attractive developments.

Flooding in rural areas – Councillor Hampshire commented that Chairs of Area Committees could also write to the Government about this issue, in addition to the letter the Chair of the Environment Committee would be sending. It was agreed the Chair would look at this further.

Reduction in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and the effect in the Western area – Area Committee Members noted the update and commented that the new Police model of moving to community policing and replacing some PCSOs with Police Officers could be beneficial.

Rose Hill & Meads Woodland Management & Work Plans – a Member asked about the process for appointing a Borough Councillor to sit on each Friends Group. The Policy & Engagement Officer was asked to seek advice on this and report back to the Western Area Committee.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Conservation & Design Team be asked to ensure that Parish Councils were invited to participate in walkabouts with the consultant for the Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Area Reviews.***
- 2) That the Chair would take forward the suggestion that Area Committee Chairs could write to the Government about flooding issues, in addition to***

the letter that the Chair of the Environment Committee would be sending, once endorsed by the Environment Committee.

- 3) That the Policy & Engagement Officer sought advice on how a Borough Councillor would be appointed to sit on the Rose Hill and Meads Woodland Friends Groups.**

663 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

664 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Nicholas Hampshire spoke about the impact of the improvement works at Stockbury roundabout (M2 Junction 5) on the villages and roads in the surrounding area and considered a better approach was necessary for future slip road closures. It was agreed that the Chair would write to KCC, Highways England and the Police explaining the issues and asking what could be done to reduce the impact of the works.

It was agreed that Area Committee members would email the Policy & Engagement Officer with specific issues that were being experienced in their Wards. The Chair would use this information when writing to KCC, Highways England and the Police.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Chair writes to Kent County Council, Highways England and the Police about the impact of the works at Stockbury roundabout and ask what could be done to reduce the resulting congestion.**

665 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

666 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

Chair

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