
REGENERATION AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Monday, 26 September 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.13 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney (Chair), Lloyd Bowen, Richard Darby, Tim Gibson (Substitute for Councillor Simon Clark), James Hall, Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Elliott Jayes (Substitute for Councillor Sarah Stephen), Paul Stephen, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine and Mike Whiting.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Joanne Johnson and Kieren Mansfield.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): David Johnson and Jo Millard.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Steve Davey.

APOLOGIES: Simon Clark, Peter Marchington and Sarah Stephen.

314 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

315 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

316 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 July 2022 (Minute Nos. 179 – 185) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

317 **Forward Decisions Plan**

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

318 **East Kent Skills Summit**

The Economic Development and External Funding Manager introduced the report which outlined the discussions that took place at the East Kent Skills Summit, held on 7 June 2022. The officer drew Member's attention to appendix I of the report which set out the initial suggested actions from the East Kent Summit and contained running commentary against some of the actions that directly related to Swale Borough Council (SBC).

Members were invited to make comments, which included:

- The most important skills that were needed in the borough were manufacturing skills;
- felt that Kent was held back economically due to the lack of skills in the area;

- needed to consider a more successful qualification set-up with the schools in the borough to give young people the necessary skills to take up jobs within the borough that needed to be filled;
- SBC had shown itself to be a prime mover in promoting skills training by supporting the extension of Sheppey College;
- company investors needed to see that certain skills were being met in the borough before bringing their business to the borough so this was key in order to promote the economy in Swale;
- recognised that the average income in Swale was high but felt that this was masked by people working in London and commuting from Swale;
- schools should be directing students to the relevant classes and courses for them to learn the necessary skills they needed to get jobs in the borough;
- felt that schools focussed on the grades that students attained rather than the skills they needed for finding secure jobs;
- Colleges on the Isle of Sheppey were leading by example by holding forums with local businesses to work out what skills they were looking for in students over the next 3, 5, 10 and 15 years; and
- ensuring the residents of Swale were given the right opportunities to upgrade their skills and find reliable work was important and regular updates to the Committee on the progress of the proposed actions from the Summit would be useful.

In response, the Economic Development and External Funding Manager said that Members were welcome to email himself or his team for updates on progress they had made on the list of actions.

The Chair proposed the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Roger Truelove.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Council works with East Kent partners on the development of an East Kent Skills Pledge and a clear action plan.**

319 **Property Condition Surveys**

The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property introduced the report which set out SBC's current approach to managing building maintenance and repairs. The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property proposed that a programme of Condition Surveys on the buildings in Swale be undertaken so the full extent of works to all the buildings in Swale could be understood and the budgets could be set accordingly. She informed Members that the last survey on property assets across the Council's portfolio was conducted in 2018.

Members were invited to make comments, which included:

- Historically there were a lot of issues on the assets across the portfolio and needed to understand what maintenance was needed early on to avoid future repair costs;
- did the list of properties contain all properties that was under Council ownership or was it a list of previous properties?;
- once the surveys had been completed a strategy of properties the Council planned to carry out works on and when needed to come to the Committee to consider;

- the Council had experienced problems in the past with works being carried out insufficiently and it was key that any future works were checked after completion to ensure they were satisfactory;
- the previous survey in 2018 had contained incorrect information in places; and
- important that the Council did not make the same mistake as last time with the survey and the property asset list was properly surveyed this time.

In response, the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property said that the list was a fill list of previous properties and this survey was key for the Property Team to establish a comprehensive baseline of works required to the property assets under the Council's portfolio and once they had that baseline, they could then start working on a strategy to carry out the works needed. She added that any of the works that had not been completed during the Covid-19 pandemic would be reviewed and prioritised if necessary. The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property reassured Members that the surveys could be conducted by a different company as the Council was not tied into a contract with the previous supplier.

The Chair proposed the recommendation, and this was seconded by Councillor Roger Truelove.

Resolved:

(1) To outsource a programme of Condition Surveys for SBC's property portfolio.

320 **Rural Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Economic Development and External Funding Manager introduced the report which set out the details of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) that SBC had received a funding allocation of £502,995. He explained that in order for the Council to access the funding it must produce an addendum to the Local Investment Plan no later than 30 November 2022. He advised Members that up-to-date information was available as to how the funding was profiled across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Members considered that the funding would be essential for ensuring the residents of Swale had advice regarding fuel and water supplies during the winter months and thought that officers should investigate if this was something that the REPF could help fund.

The Chair informed the Committee that the following Members had agreed to sit on the Member Working Group:

Councillor Monique Bonney – Independent Group
Councillor Richard Darby – Independent First
Councillor Julian Saunders – Labour
Councillor Sarah Stephen – Sittingbourne Independence Alliance
Councillor Eddie Thomas – Liberal Democrats
Councillor Mike Whiting – Conservative

The Chair proposed recommendation one and two set out in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Roger Truelove.

The Chair proposed recommendation three in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Mike Whiting.

Resolved:

- (1) To prioritise interventions and outcomes which best supported delivery of the Council's adopted strategy framework, informed by consultation with local stakeholders relevant to the Rural England Prosperity Fund.**
- (2) That the membership of the Member Working Group be agreed as minuted.**
- (3) That delegation be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the Chair of Regeneration and Property Committee to submit the final addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan.**

321 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

- (1) 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 that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.**
- 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

322 **Sale of Land at St Michael's Road, Sittingbourne**

Resolved:

- (1) That the sale of the identified surplus land is approved.**
- (2) That delegated authority to be given to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods to complete the necessary legal formalities, agree a sale contract and undertake any additional work required to achieve the freehold sale.**

Chair

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