
WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne ME10 3HT on Thursday, 30 November 2023 from 7.00 pm - 8.53 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Ann Cavanagh (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Roger Clark, James Hunt and Richard Palmer.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Ross Richardson (Bobbing Parish Council (PC)), Nigel Osmer (Bredgar PC), Steve Tolhurst (Iwade PC), and Lee Burgess and Vivien Rich (Tunstall PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steph Curtis, Janet Dart and Philip Sutcliffe.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Mike Baldock.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca O'Neill, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Brogdale Community Interest Company (CIC).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Chris Palmer, Paul Stephen and Sarah Stephen.

461 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

462 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

463 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 August 2023 (Minute Nos 240 – 250) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

464 YOUTH PROVISION IN VILLAGES

Rebecca O'Neill, the CEO at Brogdale CIC, was welcomed to the meeting. She explained that they were at present commissioned by Kent County Council (KCC) to deliver youth services in Swale for which they received £103k a year. They worked with nearly 2,000 young people in the district. She spoke about the different clubs and provision in Faversham, Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey.

She said that the KCC funding would stop on 31 March 2024 and therefore youth provision in the area would not be able to continue. She stressed the need to continue to have connectivity with young people as it prevented them from getting involved in things such as anti-social behaviour and other high-risk activities.

Brogdale CIC had been working with Swale Borough Council (SBC) and secured Safer Streets funding which allowed them to continue with provision for a further

year. Beyond that they were seeking alternative funding from organisations such as Children in Need, The National Lottery and Newington and Iwade Parish Councils.

Rebecca O'Neill asked if SBC would consider supporting them to secure year-on-year funding from Swale schools as they worked closely with them. Illustrating this option, she said that if 15 primary schools each gave £1,875 and if five secondary schools each gave £3,500 a year, Brogdale CIC would be able to recoup the money they would be losing for the clubs. Alternatively, those figures could be reduced if they were able to provide match funding from other sources. Charging for some provision was also an option. Venue hire was another cost so Rebecca O'Neill asked for suggestions for venues that could be hired at a cheaper rate or for free.

Members commented that a lot of schools were facing budget challenges and may find it hard to provide funding support. There might be more traction with parish councils, but they would expect to see provision in their areas. It was suggested that Rebecca O'Neill approach some local businesses as they may be willing to assist. A parish councillor said that as they cannot just donate funds, Brogdale CIC would need to approach them direct with a request. The Community & Safety Manager said she would speak to Rebecca O'Neill outside of the meeting to see if there were any live grants SBC were administering that they could apply for. Queenborough Fisheries Trust had grants that could be applied for.

The Chair thanked Rebecca O'Neill for taking the time to come to talk to the Area Committee.

465 COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Community Safety Manager, started her presentation by explaining that the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was a statutory partnership which brought together a number of public sector agencies tackling crime, disorder, anti-social behaviours, substance misuse and reduced re-offending.

The agencies included SBC, KCC, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, probation services, and health services. They worked closely with the local housing associations such as Southern Housing, voluntary and community sector organisations and His Majesty's Prison Service.

A Community Safety Plan was created each year, which set out the priorities for the Partnership, based upon data and consultation with partners and the public.

The Community Safety Manager said she was asking each Area Committee for their views on what the priorities for their area should be for the period April 2024 to March 2025.

All those in attendance broke out into small groups to consider the questions asked, and fed back as follows:

What current Community Safety Issues were being experienced within your community?:

- Drugs and drug dealing;

- anti-social behaviour (ASB);
- people hanging around;
- modern slavery;
- speeding cars;
- quad bikes
- youths on bikes;
- neighbours picking on vulnerable people;
- nuisance from motorbikes;
- drifters (cars in Iwade);
- ASB linked to social housing (Stones Farm and Amber Fields);
- vehicle break-ins;
- wildlife crime; and
- traffic and parking around schools (in villages).

Of those issues, which were the top three themes the CSP should tackle?:

- Anti-social behaviour;
- youths on bikes; and
- traffic and parking around schools.

The Community Safety Manager thanked everyone for their input and said the feedback would be captured and shared with the CSP at their January 2024 meeting, when their priorities would be agreed. A refreshed Community Safety Plan would then be created by the end of March 2024 and would detail how the CSP could tackle those identified priorities. If Members had any specific issues they would like to report, they could email csu@swale.gov.uk

466 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

467 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP - SWALE LOCAL FOCUS GROUP

The Policy & Engagement Officer introduced the report and said that KCC used to manage and run Quality Bus Partnerships for each district to raise and discuss local issues. Those meetings ceased to exist when the government started developing its National Bus Strategy.

The National Bus Strategy was launched in March 2021 and was the blueprint to help improve issues such as infrastructure, bus travel, and air quality.

KCC received funding from the government for various initiatives which were detailed in the report. As part of the funding, each area was required to set up an Enhanced Bus Partnership which was a statutory board. Other high-level groups had been set up but with no district level representation.

To bridge that gap KCC had suggested that Enhanced Bus Partnership, Local Focus Groups were set up in each district. KCC would send along representatives to these meetings but could not resource them.

It was agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee to set up a Swale Local Focus Group which would meet twice a year. It would be managed by the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods who would chair and coordinate the meetings. SBC would be a conduit to bring partners together rather than leading or delivering any work directly.

Given the interest locally in bus infrastructure, it was proposed that issues to be raised were requested from each Area Committee prior to the Local Focus Group with feedback to the Area Committee after the Local Focus Group had met.

It was anticipated that the Swale Local Focus Group would hold their first meeting at the end of January/beginning of February 2024.

Each Area Committee were invited to nominate one representative to sit on the Swale Local Focus Group.

Councillor James Hunt proposed that Councillor Mike Baldock be nominated as the Western Area Committee representative on the Enhanced Bus Partnership Swale Local Focus Group. This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney and on being put to the vote was agreed.

A discussion took place on the main issues that should be taken to the first Swale Local Focus Group meeting and the following comments were made:

- The majority of villages in the Western area had been severely impacted. Rodmersham, Milstead, and Bredgar had no bus services, Tunstall had a limited service to the Kent Science Park and Bapchild services had been reduced from five to one an hour (Stagecoach X3 service). Due to roadworks on the A2, they were often delayed and the last bus service was often cancelled;
- services ended at 6 pm, there was no service in Bapchild on Sundays and a reduced service on Saturdays;
- it was not a useful service as buses were operating during times that were of no use to people working, attending hospital appointments, or hoped to use train services. New services needed to be better timetabled;
- the current option of using a drop-off service was not always suitable as it had to be booked in advance, bus pass holders had to pay and the varying routes could take a long time;
- KCC had not taken advantage of Section 106 funding from the expansion of the Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne which could have been used to support rural communities;
- developers would often put in pilot schemes such as Arriva Click, but they would not stop at villages such as Rodmersham, therefore it was destined to fail as it did not have enough passengers. It also killed the commercial bus service that ran to the Kent Science Park.
- Newington had limited buses with poor timings which did not link up with train times. There was no service in the evening.
- elderly people who liked to be independent were affected by the reduction in services. Not being able to leave the house could affect their mental health;

- bus companies were credited with only 80 pence each time a bus pass was used which impacted commercial services;
- people who regularly attended hospital appointments, or visited relatives or friends in hospital, had to use costly taxis as there was no bus service when they needed it;
- pupils attending schools in Maidstone were affected when the Arriva service stopped. The alternative service, Stagecoach X3, did not always turn up, and not all parents were able to give lifts;
- some people could not get home from the bus station; and
- evening bus services were needed.

Resolved:

- 1) That Councillor Mike Baldock represent the Western Area Committee on the Enhanced Bus Partnership Swale Local Focus Group.**

468 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Members were reminded to promote the Fuel and Water Home Advisor service now that further energy efficient packs had been delivered.

A late update was read out as follows:

The press notifications to London Gazette and a local newspaper advising of the 21-day notice period, for the re-designated and adopted Conservation Areas for Bredgar and Hartlip was scheduled to be published on 1 December 2023. Adoption notification letters to the local residents within the new Conservation Area boundaries were sent out on 29 November 2023.

469 LAND ASSETS IN THE WESTERN AREA

Councillor Mike Baldock introduced the item on land assets in the Western Area and referred to the maps in the agenda packs. He said parish councils could look to see if there were any SBC land assets they would like to take over.

Members commented that the maps were not up-to-date, for example the Meads Woodland was not included nor the village green in Bapchild which was a former tip. Areas such as the roads in Quinton were shown as being owned by SBC but they were owned by KCC.

It was agreed that the land asset maps should be updated and presented by parish rather than by ward. They should be provided in a higher resolution so they could be enlarged. This item should come back to the February 2024 Western Area Committee meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That the land asset maps should be updated and presented by parish rather than by ward. They should be provided in a higher resolution so**

they could be enlarged. This item should come back to the February 2024 Western Area Committee meeting.

470 CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS, ARTICLE 4

Councillor Mike Baldock referred to the briefing note in the agenda pack on Article 4. He said that as some areas were not suitable to be adopted as a conservation area, it was possible for small areas to implement the Article 4 direction which took away permitted development rights.

Members felt that the briefing paper provided by the Conservation & Design Team had not provided enough guidance and requested that officers brought a full guidance paper back to the February 2024 meeting with an officer in attendance to answer any questions.

Councillor Baldock had requested this item so that borough and parish councillors would know what an Article 4 was, what was suitable for an Article 4, and what the process was for parish and borough councillors to request one.

The following additional information was provided at the meeting:

Article 4 in areas without a conservation area

The process will be the same, in this scenario, along with an assessment of the properties to bring under Article 4 direction, we would also need to have enough justification for implementing one, as in, the properties cannot be protected under any other legislation. For example, shopfronts may be better protected under special advertisement control. Whereas houses can be brought under Householders Article 4. It would really depend on what are we protecting and why.

Resolved:

- 1) That officers bring a full guidance paper on Article 4, to the February 2024 Western Area Committee meeting.***

471 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

No issues were raised.

472 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

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