
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at Kemsley Community Centre, The Square, Ridham Avenue, Kemsley, Sittingbourne ME10 2SF on Thursday, 22 February 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.10 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Carnell (Vice-Chair), Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Tim Gibson, Mark Last (Chair), Charlie Miller, Angie Valls, Karen Watson, Tony Winckless and Ashley Wise.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Michelle Anderson, Steph Curtis, Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillors James Hall and Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillor James Hall.

684 CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair altered the order of business as minuted.

685 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

686 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Derek Carnell and Tony Winckless both disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as Trustees of Milton Creek Country Park.

Councillor Tony Winckless disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Milton Regis Society.

687 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 December 2023 (Minute Nos 510 – 520) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

688 PUBLIC FORUM

Ken Rowles said that he was concerned that Kent County Council (KCC) were closing Phoenix House, Sittingbourne, on 1 March 2024. He outlined the support that was provided at this venue and asked the Sittingbourne Area Committee to look into the matter.

Post meeting note:

Following the proposal of looking at the use of the Age UK building for the relocation of services from Phoenix House, Age UK had already started working on how the building could be used more effectively with the potential of creating a hub for voluntary groups. They had already been approached

by some organisations. Through the Swale Voluntary Alliance and Cost of Living group, they were looking into proposals and an effective way to take this forward.

Kevin Kelly, the Chair of Sittingbourne Tennis Club said that following the refurbishment of the tennis courts at Milton Recreation Ground, Sittingbourne, the Club had plans to introduce training sessions. However, there were no toilet facilities at the Club and Mr Kelly asked the Sittingbourne Area Committee for support to take this forward. The Head of Housing & Community Services said that a review of public toilets in Swale was due to take place. The Chair agreed to contact the Green Spaces Manager to seek his advice.

689 SAFER STREETS SCHEME UPDATE

The Community Services Manager and Safer Streets Project Officer gave an update on the Safer Streets Scheme. Swale Borough Council (SBC) had been awarded a Safer Streets grant from the Home Office for Sittingbourne and Sheerness town centres. The first year's funding of £154k needed to be spent by March 2024, the second year's funding of £110k needed to be spent by March 2025. Going forward after that, a further bid would need to be submitted to the scheme.

Initiatives included CCTV; cutting back trees; installing extra lighting; bystander training; street marshalls during the school holidays; and additional sessions at the County Youth Club in Sheerness. Hollie Guard Apps had been purchased which would be available to the most vulnerable people in Swale.

A discussion took place and the following comments were made:

- The Sittingbourne Community Hub at 34 The High Street, Sittingbourne, would be able to assist with providing engagement with the community;
- incidents of anti-social behaviour were reported at the Forum, Sittingbourne. The Community Services Manager said she would contact the Forum Managers and suggested they used the Swale Link service;
- vandalism had taken place at Bell Road Cemetery, Sittingbourne. It was agreed to feed this information back;
- there continued to be reports of e-scooters being illegally used;
- it was important to report all incidents via 101;
- a Councillor asked if they could receive details about the locations of the CCTV cameras;
- a Councillor asked if something could be done about empty units in Sittingbourne High Street in terms of boarding the doorways up. The Community Services Manager said she would look into what could be done;
- the enormous amount of work by officers that took place to submit the Safer Streets bid was acknowledged by Members; and
- a Councillor asked what the procedure was to request a rapid deployment camera. The Safer Streets Project Officer advised it would be best to email her direct, however, there needed to be evidence of crime in the requested area.

690 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

691 SWALE LOCAL BUS FOCUS GROUP

Members noted the report.

692 SWALE TRAFFIC FORUM

The Policy & Engagement Officer introduced the report and said that the Policy & Resources Committee had approved the setting up of a multi-agency group called the Swale Traffic Forum (STF). The Forum would monitor the current programme of works and any future planned works and recommend interventions where and when appropriate.

The report set out the proposed membership of the STF which was to include one representative from each of the four Area Committees.

Councillor Simon Clark proposed himself as the nomination for the Sittingbourne Area Committee representative of the STF. This was seconded by Councillor Derek Carnell and on being put to the vote was agreed.

It was agreed to take the following issues to the first meeting of the STF:

- There were significant problems at both ends of Sittingbourne, there was no coordination of works;
- the sequencing of traffic lights at Park Road and Crown Quay Lane was causing queues of traffic;
- there appeared to be a lack of communication and coordination between utility companies. They should be keeping SBC councillors informed; and
- a lot of lorries were driving through Sittingbourne.

Resolved:

- 1) That Councillor Simon Clark be the representative from the Sittingbourne Area Committee to sit on the Swale Traffic Forum.***

693 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The Head of Housing and Community Services said this report was for information only and had been taken to all four Area Committees. She said that the project had been successful but ceased at the end of March 2024 and no alternative funding had been identified so far. There were concerns about how people would cope once the Household Support Fund came to an end.

The Leader advised that he, the Chair of the Housing & Health Committee and the Chair of the Community Committee had written to the two Members of Parliament (MP) in the Borough urging Government to continue the fund. Helen Whately MP has confirmed that she had passed the letter onto the Treasury.

694 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Tim Gibson advised the Area Committee that there was a Police surgery in the Roman Ward on 28 February 2024 and asked Members to get the message out to as many people as possible.

The One Swale Roadshow would also be taking place at the Kemsley Community Centre, Sittingbourne on 28 February 2024.

695 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