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## SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held at Warden Bay Village Hall, Warden Bay Road, Leysdown-on-Sea ME12 4NB on Tuesday, 6 June 2023 from 7.00 pm - 8.42 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Ken Ingleton (Chair), Peter Marchington, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Ashley Shiel, Dolley White and Mike Whiting.

**PRESENT (Virtually):** Councillors Elliott Jayes and Mark Tucker (Vice-Chair).

**NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:** Parish/Town Councillors Emma Judges (Leysdown and Warden Parish Councils (PC)), Geoff Partis (Leysdown and Warden PCs), Ben Pointing Minster-on-Sea PC) Kirstie Martin (Leysdown PC), Zoe Stockbridge Queenborough Town Council (TC)) and Barbara Twiss (Warden PC).

**NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually):** Parish Councillor Linda Brinklow (Sheerness TC).

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Janet Dart, Adrian Oliver and Emma Wiggins.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Tim Gibson.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Andy Booth.

### 64 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 65 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### 66 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 February 2023 (Minute Nos. 674 – 684) and the Meeting held on 17 May 2023 (Minutes Nos. 39 – 40) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

### 67 **NEW COUNCILLOR INTRODUCTIONS**

Each Sheppey Area Committee Councillor introduced themselves.

### 68 **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted the progress on actions.

Queenborough Guildhall – a Member asked for the improvement works to be carried out as soon as possible. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods confirmed it was on the list of condition surveys and she said she would provide an update on timing.

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera Queenborough causeway – Members spoke about anti-social behaviour incidents that had taken place recently at that location and asked for the CCTV camera to be put back as soon as possible. At a recent Community Safety Partnership (CSP) meeting the possibility of a camera funded jointly by the Town Council and Swale Borough Council (SBC) was mentioned. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would feed-back the incidents raised to the CSP and provide any updates regarding a camera, to the Area Committee.

Dumping of spoil on the Eastchurch shoreline – a Member said that this was an Isle of Sheppey matter and said that SBC should continue to apply pressure to the Environment Agency as it would affect tourism and wildlife.

Beach Hut proposal – a Member asked for an update and expressed concerns about how the proposal could affect wildlife. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods suggested the Member read the paper going to the next Regeneration & Property Committee on 6 July 2023 as it would include a full update.

Active Travel update – The Active Travel Coordinator advised that the Isle of Sheppey bid for the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 had not made it through to the final submission to Active Travel England. However, SBC had received funding from the Capability and Ambition Fund for a feasibility study to improve connectivity between Minster, Sheerness, Queenborough and Halfway. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was progressing, funding had been received to do detailed route mapping. SBC had been working with His Majesty's Prison Swaleside on a cycle recycling scheme, and bikes would be distributed to people who were in need of transport. There was a Kent County Council (KCC) Capital Grant Fund of £5,000 available for each school to apply for to improve cycle facilities, the deadline for bids was 26 June 2023. Members discussed the lack of east/west connectivity on the Isle of Sheppey, the KCC Divisional Member for the Isle of Sheppey suggested a 'shovel ready' scheme could be prepared by KCC and SBC ready for when Central Government funding became available.

Levelling-Up update – The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods advised the paperwork for the funding had been received. Two officers had been appointed to manage the project. A communications and engagement plan would be developed. The team would attend the Sheppey Area Committee meeting in September 2023 to provide a more detailed update. The Department for Levelling-Up, Housing & Communities were interested in the project.

## **69 ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT**

The Policy and Engagement Officer introduced the report which would also be going to the Full Council meeting on 21 June 2023. The report provided background

information about the Area Committees and described how they had evolved since their inaugural meetings in September 2020.

One of the objectives of the Administration formed in 2019 was to diffuse power amongst Members and improve public engagement in decision-making, Area Committees were set up to help achieve this objective. The meetings provided people in the community with the opportunity to speak direct to their local councillors and raise issues that were a concern in the area. They were also a useful way to provide updates on projects coming up in the area and to consult with the community.

The first year of Area Committees took place during the pandemic when it was not possible to meet face-to-face, but the ability to attend meetings remotely proved very popular. When it was possible to start meeting in person, a lot of people were keen to continue attending the meetings remotely, so it was decided to trial hybrid meetings in community venues. The 'Owl' was therefore purchased and provided there was reliable Wi-Fi at the venues, the meetings could be attended either in person or remotely.

For the first three years, Area Committees were allocated funding. They each set work plans which were used to develop priorities and criteria for awarding funding to projects and activities. The report set out in detail how the funds were operated and listed how a total of £534,000 of funding was allocated across the four Area Committees over three years to a wide variety of projects overseen by both external organisations and internally led by SBC.

As part of the budget setting process for 2023/24, Members had to consider how to deal with the budget gap which resulted in funds not being available to allocate to the four Area Committees this year.

## **70 SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE PRIORITIES**

The Policy and Engagement Officer introduced this item and explained that although there was no longer funding available for Area Committees to allocate to support their priorities, it was still possible for areas to agree priorities and work towards achieving them without funding.

One of the first tasks for the new Council was to create a Corporate Plan which would set out what the Council wanted to achieve over the next four years. This would help to make sure Council resources were allocated in an accountable and effective way.

Area Committees were being asked to have an input into the Corporate Plan at an early stage by outlining their own aspirations for their individual areas.

The aspirations of this Area Committee could be issues that were the responsibility of SBC to achieve, or things that were the responsibility of external organisations which the Council could try to influence. They could also be ambitions the Area Committee would like to work towards in the future.

When considering what these aspirations should be, the Policy and Engagement Officer said it was important to bear in mind the challenging budget position which

was likely to continue over the next few years and the capacity of SBC to deliver them on top of the previously agreed workloads.

A discussion activity took place with everyone in attendance splitting into groups to discuss what the priorities for the Sheppey Area were. Four questions were asked, and a summary of ideas included the following:

**What issues affected residents in your Ward that fell within the responsibility of SBC?**

- Fly tipping including industrial waste;
- littering, more bins were needed (recycling and dog waste);
- use of CCTV and tackling anti-social behaviour especially in Queenborough and Thistle Hill, Minster;
- youth issues, addressing anti-social behaviour;
- the Planning application process, ensuring there was an opportunity for residents to respond;
- the cleaner and greener agenda; and
- refuse collection.

**What issues affected residents in your Ward that fell within the responsibility of external partners?**

- Education, Health and Care Plans for children with special educational needs;
- GP/health coverage across the Isle of Sheppey, in particular Leysdown;
- street-lighting;
- roads and transport links across the Isle of Sheppey;
- increased Police presence;
- employment;
- leisure;
- road safety including lack of routes for emergency services when roads are blocked by accidents;
- highway maintenance (potholes, drains);
- bus services, lack of services affected employment opportunities;
- cycle paths (new and improved existing);
- traffic calming/road humps;
- schools – lack of choice; and
- air quality affecting health – farmers burning plastics.

**What changes would you like to see that could improve the life of residents in the future?**

- Improved links from Lower Road to East Sheppey;
- improved transport links across the Isle of Sheppey;
- improved healthcare; and
- railings along Warden and Leysdown roads to protect pedestrians.

**What were the top three issues you would like the Area Committee to take forward in the coming year?**

- Transport;
- bus companies needed to improve services;

- youth/education;
- community maintenance (CCTV, lighting and roads);
- planning application process;
- healthcare, lack of services;
- environment;
- road safety; and
- providing an emergency access route to the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey.

**71 PUBLIC FORUM**

No issues were raised.

**72 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED**

A Member stated that Kent Police had removed the Police Community Support Officer presence from the Isle of Sheppey and suggested that a representative of the Police come along to Area Committee meetings. It was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to Kent Police inviting a representative to attend future meetings.

A Member said that Southern Water had closed roads which resulted in bins not being collected, he suggested that they needed to communicate with SBC about this in the future. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would pass this on.

A Member said that Queenborough Town Council (TC) had raised the issue of some fishermen who wanted to erect fencing on the quayside. The TC would like to work with SBC to look at the lease agreement to support the fishermen and ensure safety.

**73 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES**

No issues were raised.

**74 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