
SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in Masters House, Trinity Road, Sheerness, Kent ME12 2PF on Tuesday, 5 December 2023 from 7.00 pm - 9.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Andy Booth, Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Tom Nundy, Ashley Shiel, Mark Tucker (Chair), Mike Whiting and Dolley Wooster.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Linda Brinklow and Chris Reed (Sheerness Town Council (TC)), Lynda Russell and Barbara Twiss (Warden Parish Council (PC)) and John Nurden (Minster-on-Sea PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steph Curtis, Janet Dart and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Lee Jarmain and Paul West, Pyramid Project.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Elliott Jayes, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal and Tara Noe.

485 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

486 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andy Booth disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as the Chair of Swale Community Leisure Limited.

Councillor Dolley Wooster disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Sheerness Town Council.

Councillor Tom Nundy disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Swale Community Safety Partnership.

487 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2023 (Minute Nos. 305 – 317) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the following change:

Councillor Peter MacDonald should have been recorded as being present at the meeting.

488 COMMUNITY SAFETY PRIORITIES

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 it aimed to reduce re-offending.

The agencies included Swale Borough Council (SBC), Kent County Council (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?:

- Wrap-around care;
- youth services;
- anti-social behaviour;
- partnership working in wards;
- reporting via 101 did not work;
- more reporting of crimes to assets should take place;
- improved communication was needed;
- suggested including British Transport Police within the CSP;
- e-scooters;
- address root causes;
- low-level advice should be given to offenders to enable rehabilitation;
- focus on the condition of towns (address issues such as littering and fly-tipping);
- clamp down on drug dealing;
- extend closed circuit television (CCTV) usage and use of mobile units;
- serious crime including knife crime
- domestic abuse – support victims
- education, children did not feel valued and there was no provision for pupils with special educational needs; and
- establish boundaries/zero tolerance with crime.

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

- Wrap-around care;
- reporting & communications;
- partnership working in wards;
- anti-social behaviour;
- drug dealing; and

- domestic abuse – supporting victims.

The Community Safety Manager thanked everyone for their input and said this 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

489 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods introduced the Sheerness Revival Levelling-Up Project update paper and asked the Community Safety Manager to give an update on the Safer Streets Project.

The Police & Crime Commissioner successfully bid for Government Safer Streets funding for Sittingbourne and Sheerness Town Centres which would target a host of activities over an 18-month period. The proposals were being finalised and they centred around:

- Target hardening;
- increased Police/volunteer presence; and
- additional youth work focusing on behavioural change.

There would be a fuller update on the Safer Streets Project at the February 2024 meeting.

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods went through the update paper after which the following comments were made:

- The regular updates were useful and it was surprising how long it took the Government to provide the funding for the project;
- Sheerness Town Council (STC) would be happy to provide part of their notice board for project updates;
- Why did Sheppey College benefit from this funding?; and
- more could be done to the Promenade and Neptune Steps.

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods responded that the college would deliver economic and social benefits that the Government wanted to see as part of the Levelling-Up Fund.

490 THE PYRAMID PROJECT

Lee Jarman and Paul West from the Pyramid Project gave a presentation about the history, aims and achievements of the Pyramid Project.

The project was launched in 2017 and worked with young people in the 16 to 24 year age range who were in most need on the Isle of Sheppey. Most of those young people were not in education, employment and training (NEETS). The first priority was to engage with the young people, usually on a one-to-one basis, and to deliver

functional skills. Funding for the project ended at the end of March 2023 but SBC Members and officers helped to get provision back.

Referrals came from KCC Education, the NEETS Register and self-referral was also possible.

Lee Jarmain and Paul West wanted to make everyone aware of their work and thanked Members for the opportunity to come along to talk about the project.

491 ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SWALE LOCAL FOCUS GROUP

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods 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 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 & 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 Angela Harrison proposed that Councillor Dolley Wooster be nominated as the Sheppey Area Committee representative on the Enhanced Bus Partnership Swale Local Focus Group. This was seconded by Councillor Ashley Shiel and on being put to the vote was agreed. Councillor Peter MacDonald advised he would be happy to act as substitute if required.

Members commented that public transport on the Isle of Sheppey was lacking and there was general support for the implementation of the Enhanced Bus Partnership Swale Local Focus Group.

Resolved:

- 1) That Councillor Dolley Wooster represented the Sheppey Area Committee on the Enhanced Bus Partnership Swale Local Focus Group.**

492 PUBLIC FORUM

A parish councillor asked what value for money Area Committees gave as an extra layer of bureaucracy when SBC were faced with budget reduction decisions? The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods responded that Area Committees were established four years ago following the decision by the Administration to diffuse power amongst Members and to improve public engagement in decision-making. She said that previously the Area Committees received funding to allocate to projects in their areas, but Members took the decision as part of last year's budget setting process to cease the funding. Area Committees continued to meet as they brought people together for the benefit of their areas. In terms of resource implications they required officer resource and sometimes venue hire costs.

A parish councillor said that the Lower Road, Minster was a mess when lorries dropped mud on the road. Councillor Peter MacDonald advised that the operators had an obligation to keep the roads clean and the matter should be reported to the company. If that did not resolve the matter it should be referred to the Ward and County Councillors for the area.

A member of the public asked if it was correct that information on the Visit Swale website, such as tourist information and maps, would no longer be available in hard copy. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods confirmed that was correct as it was agreed as part of last year's SBC budget setting process.

A member of the public raised the issue of homelessness and suggested that some of SBC assets, such as the first floor of Swale House, could be turned into temporary accommodation. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that solutions such as pods were being looked into but it was not straightforward to use assets such as Swale House. Councillor Angela Harrison said that homeless people needed wrap-around care before they could take on temporary or permanent accommodation. She said that the Homelessness team were fantastic and were doing everything they could to alleviate the situation.

493 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

The Policy & Engagement Officer was asked to check with the Active Travel Coordinator if an update on the Grovehurst roundabout could be brought to the next Area Committee meeting.

Sheerness High Street traffic and the expansion of the 20-is-Plenty speed limit to residential streets in Sheerness – it was agreed that STC should get in touch with the KCC Divisional Members for Sheppey to set up a meeting with the KCC Highways Improvement Officer and then feedback to the Area Committee if necessary.

494 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Dolley Wooster said that there were concerns about movement in the Sheerness sea wall in the Ship-on-Shore area. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would follow-up on this matter after the meeting.

Post meeting note – the Environment Agency advised they did go out and inspect the seawall and whilst it was clear that some movement had taken place, the concrete blocks were quite solid. They would continue to monitor and were organising for more in-depth asset condition surveys to be carried out this winter as part of the Medway Estuary & Swale Strategy (MEAS) programme works. They would keep SBC officers updated.

Councillor Ashley Shiel said that the Traffic Amendment Order for the loading bay at Queenborough had not come to STC for consultation. Councillor Angela Harrison advised that if STC emailed engineers@swale.gov.uk to object, it would be referred to the Swale Joint Transportation Board.

Councillor Sheil said it was important that Sheppey Area Committee closely monitored the KCC Youth Services closures.

495 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