
SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at Sheppey Rugby Football Club, Lower Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness ME12 3ST on Tuesday, 20 February 2024 from 7.00 pm - 9.31 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Elliott Jayes, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Pete Neal (Vice-Chair), Tara Noe, 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)), Steve Parker and Ben Pointing (Minster-on-Sea Parish Council (PC)), Mike Brown (Eastchurch PC), and Sue Simpson (Queenborough TC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE (Virtually): Sarah Poole (Eastchurch PC).

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ray Featherstone MBE, Sheerness County Youth Club.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Hannah Perkin.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth and Lee-Anne Moore.

650 CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair altered the order of business as minuted.

651 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

652 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dolley Wooster disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a future Governor of the new East Kent College Secondary School.

Councillor Elliott Jayes disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Sheppey Matters.

653 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2023 (Minute Nos 485 – 495) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

654 SHEERNESS COUNTY YOUTH CLUB

Ray Featherstone, MBE, gave a short presentation about the work of the Sheerness County Youth Club and how young people on the Isle of Sheppey benefitted from the activities it offered. He thanked Borough Councillors for supporting the Club. Mr Featherstone introduced Kerry Spurling who would be taking the lead when he stood down.

655 PUBLIC FORUM

Approximately fifty members of the public and representatives of local organisations attended the meeting as they wished to speak about the proposed changes to car parking charges on the Isle of Sheppey.

The following comments were made:

- A lot of pensioners visited the Little Oysters Tea Room, Minster-on-Sea, and stayed all day, if they had to pay £1.40 per hour to park they would not come;
- how could Swale Borough Council (SBC) justify charging £1.40 per hour to park for activities such as taking children to the beach, people visiting their beach huts, families visiting memorial benches, pensioners wanting a cup of tea and a chat, people wanting to get out to exercise, dog walkers and volunteers cleaning the beach for the benefit of everyone?;
- the Isle of Sheppey Sailing Club would be affected by the introduction of charges at the Ship on Shore Car Park. The Club provided training for young people, college groups and they hosted major events. Many of their members visited the Club twice a week. The Club would be crushed by the proposals. Queenborough Sailing Club would be affected in the same way;
- people who regularly volunteered to provide training would have to pay to park;
- locals should be exempt from parking charges;
- some of double yellow lines in Queenborough had caused problems such as being marked out in front of garages and houses;
- people would not want to pay to attend activities such as the bereavement service at Castle Connections, Queenborough. If attendance dropped the centre might end up closing;
- people would start to park on streets to avoid charges, this would cause congestion and conflict;
- people felt that they were being charged to raise money for other parts of the Borough of Swale;
- pensioners living on their own who were unable to walk far would have to pay for parking when visiting the Leas, Minster-on-Sea;
- pensioners living alone needed to get out;
- there were double yellow lines outside the Hopyard Centre, Queenborough for people with learning difficulties. It was not possible to drop off and pick up people who visited the centre;
- there was so much going on in Queenborough, the proposals would kill the community;
- there were families with very little who would not be able to afford to attend activities on the beach;
- Queenborough library would suffer, staff and volunteers who worked 4-hour shifts would have to pay;

- Queenborough was one of the poorest towns in the country.
- the frontage of some terraced houses was not wide enough for a car to park outside;
- Queenborough regeneration would fail;
- the beach should be free for all to use;
- SBC should talk to South Eastern Railway about turning the piece of land by Queenborough station into a car park;
- bus services finished mid-afternoon. Train services should return to a half-hourly timetable;
- seaside businesses would be destroyed;
- it felt like SBC did not care about the Isle of Sheppey;
- people from outside the Borough did voluntary litter-picking, if they stopped due to having to pay to park, then the beaches could become littered; and
- the funding raised from car parking charges should not be used to bridge a funding gap.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said he would take the comments raised to the Council meeting on 21 February 2024.

656 SAFER STREETS UPDATE

The Community Safety Manager and Safer Streets Project Officer gave an update on the Safer Streets Scheme. 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. 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:

- Money needed to be spent to open up the library;
- parents needed to be empowered to stop their children causing problems;
- SBC should keep in mind the slow sliding of Police responsibilities to the Council, they were not fully staffed in this area and SBC should be lobbying to address this; and
- it was important to work with East Kent College.

657 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

Members noted the update report.

Councillor Angela Harrison asked if the timescales for the project would be extended as there had been a delay in receiving the funding. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that Government were being heavily lobbied

on this point and SBC were working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to receive a six-month extension.

Councillor Elliott Jayes proposed that additional Ward Members from the Isle of Sheppey should sit on the Sheerness Revival Project Member Working Group. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Whiting and on being put to the vote was agreed.

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that this request needed to be submitted to the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee for consideration.

Resolved:

- 1) That additional Ward Members from the Isle of Sheppey should sit on the Sheerness Revival Project Member Working Group. This request needed to be submitted to the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee for consideration.**

658 SHEERNESS CLOCK TOWER

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods advised that the Sheppey Area Committee were invited to discuss and agree the updated static schedule of illumination of the Sheerness Clock Tower. She said that the changes needed to be agreed in good time to align with the removal of the scheduling of the late Queen's birthday illumination, and for the King's birthday illumination to be programmed in. The Area Committee were invited to take on responsibility for agreeing and implementing any future discretionary changes to the illumination schedule.

After a discussion it was agreed that the Sheppey Area Committee would take on responsibility for agreeing and implementing any future discretionary changes to the illumination schedule. The Area Committee delegated the decisions on scheduling to the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods.

Parish and Town Councils were invited to submit any scheduling requests to the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods by the end of April 2024.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Sheppey Area Committee take on responsibility for agreeing and implementing any future discretionary changes to the illumination schedule. The Area Committee delegated the decisions on scheduling to the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods.**

659 SWALE LOCAL BUS FOCUS GROUP UPDATE

Members noted the report.

Councillor Dolley Wooster, the Sheppey Area Committee representative on the Swale Local Bus Focus Group, said that Travelmaster should be invited to attend the Forum meetings. She said that it would be better to hold the meetings more frequently, but she understood the resource implications.

Members noted that the bus companies had said they were willing to attend Area Committee meetings. They requested that Chalkwell should be invited to a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting.

660 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 Elliott Jayes proposed that Councillor Dolley Wooster be nominated as the Sheppey Area Committee representative of the Swale Traffic Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Tom Nundy and on being put to the vote was agreed. Councillor Peter MacDonald advised he would be happy to act as substitute if required.

Members, parish and town councillors were invited to email any issues to Councillor Wooster for her to take to the first meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That Councillor Dolley Wooster represented the Sheppey Area Committee on the Swale Traffic Forum.***

661 HOUSING SUPPORT FUND

Members noted the update report.

Members paid tribute to the officers dealing with the grants and getting the support to where it was needed. Concerns were expressed about what would happen to residents when this lifeline ceased.

The Divisional Member for Sheppey advised that the Kent Council Leader had lobbied the Government to renew the fund.

Councillor Dolley Wooster asked if the data that went to the Cost-of-Living Group could be brought to future Sheppey Area Committee meetings so that Members could see where the deficits were. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would take that request back to the team.

662 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

663 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Now that Abbots in Queenborough had closed, a question was asked about what enforcement would take place to ensure that the building would not deteriorate. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would take the issue away and make enquiries.

A question was asked about the Water Tower site in Sheerness. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods advised that the structure was unsafe and a Section 77 notice had been delivered to the owners requesting that they made it safe.

There was a discussion about the recycling centre fire on Peel Ports land near Sheerness Docks on 17 February 2024. The incident required a substantial response from the Kent Fire & Rescue Service and the effect of the smoke could have been much worse for residents had the wind been in a different direction. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that there would be discussions about lessons learnt with particular reference to Peel Ports emergency planning and communications. It was agreed that a briefing should be given at a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting on emergency planning.

Members asked if SBC could request that the Environment Agency (EA) took further action on the illegal tipping of spoil on the Eastchurch shoreline. They also requested that the EA were invited to a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting to give an update on this matter.

664 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

It was agreed to submit the following request to the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee for consideration:

That additional Ward Members from the Isle of Sheppey should sit on the Sheerness Revival Project Member Working Group.

665 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7.54 pm until 8 pm.

Chair

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