
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Sydney Room, The Alexander Centre, 17 Preston Street, Faversham ME13 8NZ on Tuesday, 10 December 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.19 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Alex Eyre, Charles Gibson (Chair), Alastair Gould, Ben J Martin (Vice-Chair) and Terry Thompson.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Beverley Ferrell (Oare Parish Council (PC)) and Josh Rowlands (Faversham Town Council (TC)).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (VIRTUALLY): Louise Bareham (Faversham TC), Kevin Fraser (Doddington PC) and Alan Stewart (Graveney with Goodnestone PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steph Curtis, Janet Dart and Lisa Fillery.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Jo Dyer, Artistic Director (Animate Arts Company).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Dolley Wooster.
Chief Inspector Vanessa Foster and Inspector Julia Bassindale (Kent Police).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Kieran Golding, Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann, Claire Martin, Hannah Perkin and Julien Speed.

481 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

482 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

483 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 September 2024 (Minute Nos 179 – 192) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

484 POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATES

Chief Inspector (CI) Vanessa Foster (Kent Police) was in attendance to give an update on policing in the Eastern area. She introduced Inspector Julia Bassindale who would be the Community Safety Unit Inspector for Swale.

CI Foster gave an update on the following issues:

- The Neighbourhood Model was close to being fully staffed;

- the Child Centred Policing Team was now fully staffed and went live in May 2024. They dealt with the most vulnerable and were very proactive;
- VAWG (Violence against women and girls) was a Force priority, supporting victims and dealing with perpetrators;
- the Sports Connect Project was introduced in the summer 2024. Young people taking part were able to participate in activities such as football and fishing;
- the National Intelligence Model looked at data and intelligence which identified priority areas so that teams could target suspects;
- violent crime was down by 6%, Swale was a safe place, unprovoked attacks were rare; and
- Swale was 300 shop-lifting crimes down on last year and there was an extra 10% charge rate. Swale were the best in the county for dealing with shop-lifting.

The following questions were raised:

- So far the Safer Streets funding had not benefitted the Eastern area, would there be an opportunity for Faversham to benefit in the future?;
- residents regularly reported incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB), what support could be provided?;
- was there a proactive approach to deal with rural fly-tipping?; and
- how could British Transport Police be brought in to deal with ASB at train stations?

CI Foster responded that the data showed that Faversham did not experience the same problems as other parts of Swale which was why the Safer Streets funding had not been targeted there. The Police were aware of some problems such as shed break-ins and they were quick to deal with them. The Community Services Manager added the Safer Streets Funding had been allocated by the previous Government and officers were waiting to hear if there would be further funding going forward. Regarding ASB, CI Foster said that there would be extra beat officers next year and Police Community Support Officers could be moved over to Faversham to bridge the gap. The Rural Task Force in Faversham worked in partnership with beat officers to tackle fly-tipping. Intelligence was needed to deal with it proactively. A public campaign would be an effective way to tackle it. British Transport Police had limited resources but they did work with the Police on operations. There had been an increase in platform staff to remove offenders and hand them over to the Police.

The Community Services Manager gave an update on the Swale Community Safety Partnership Plan which was created each year and set out the priorities for the Partnership, based upon data and consultation with partners and the public.

The Partnership were keen to undertake a consultation with Elected Members at County/Borough/Parish level to contribute to the review of these priorities.

The survey would close on 3 January 2025 and could be accessed via this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/qTwnCsZGi1>

The Community Services Manager gave a presentation on Empowering You in Swale, the focus of which was community development.

Community development enabled people to work collectively to bring about positive change. The aim was to work collectively promoting positive social change within the borough, connecting with communities and partners to understand the key issues and improve lives.

The four Empowering You in Swale priorities were:

- Creating skilled, educated and working communities.
- Growing healthy communities.
- Empowering stronger, more sustainable communities.
- Developing strong partnerships for our communities.

The meeting considered the following questions:

1. Do you think these are the correct priorities?
2. Are there any other localised issues that you feel should be included?
3. Are you aware of any specific projects/services that we can collaborate with through the strategy?:

Below is a summary of comments:

- Suggested looking at ways to tackle the issue of increasing number of people who led a nomadic lifestyle and 'van-lifers' as rules were vague relating to planning and planning enforcement;
- Faversham Town Council worked with the Community Network Group youth advisers and could provide further details;
- look at how to push forward issues and projects relating to the Cost-of-Living Crisis;
- look at data sharing agreements with water and power companies to identify people on the priority service register; and
- transport access to education.

486 ANIMATE ARTS COMPANY

Jo Dyer, Artistic Director, gave a presentation on the work of the Animate Arts Company. She explained that they were based at the Alexander Centre but their work reached across Kent and into London.

The award-winning arts company made high quality participatory arts projects, working creatively with people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The project was proven to raise participants' self-confidence, build relationships and develop life-long skills.

The Animate Arts Company needed support with signposting for funding as they only had sufficient funds to continue with the Swale Teachers Network until the end of this academic year. Jo Dyer said it would help them to have a local authority

representative sitting on the Swale Cultural Education Partnership Steering Group to encourage engagement in the project more locally.

The following comments were made:

- Could consideration be given into how the project could help children dealing with loss and bereavement feel less isolated?;
- the Kent Community Foundation would be able to assist with funding;
- Faversham Town Council had some youth funding available which could be applied for;
- Councillor Charles Gibson proposed that the Community & Leisure Committee be asked to nominate a representative to sit on the Swale Cultural Education Partnership Steering Group. This was seconded by Councillor Ben J Martin and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Resolved:

- 1) ***That the Community & Leisure Committee be asked to nominate a representative to sit on the Swale Cultural Education Partnership Steering Group.***

487 FLOODING IN THE EASTERN AREA

Members noted the updated flooding tracking report and Members requested the following areas be added to the list:

- Canterbury Road, Faversham;
- The layby on The Street, Newnham; and
- Stalisfield.

488 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

Flooding in the Eastern Area – Helen Whately MP had raised the flooding issues with the stakeholders but had yet to arrange a date to meet with them.

Earth bunds at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School - the Chair confirmed he had written to the Chair of the Planning Committee as well as the Enforcement Team and was awaiting a response.

Road closure signs – officers to ensure the matter was put on the agenda of the Swale Joint Transportation Board March 2025 meeting.

489 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

490 REPORTS/UPDATES FROM PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

Faversham Town Councillor Josh Rowlands thanked everyone involved at SBC for the referendum on the Faversham Neighbourhood Plan.

491 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

A Member requested that planning enforcement issues in Love Lane, Faversham, be chased up and added to the agenda for discussion. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Chair of the Planning Committee requesting an update.

A Town Councillor requested that SBC publicized when SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) was put in place. It was agreed to make sure that Parish and Town Councils were contacted when this happened in future.

Faversham Town Council requested an update on the TS Hazard transfer. The Chair agreed to write to the Chair of the Economy & Property Committee requesting an update.

492 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

It was agreed under earlier items on this agenda to refer the following matters to Committee Chairs:

- 1) Request a nomination be made to the Swale Local Cultural Education Partnership. *Post meeting note – Swale Democratic Services advised that the normal process was for a report to go to the next Full Council meeting asking for Members to nominate someone to sit on the outside body.*
- 2) Planning enforcement issues in Love Lane, Faversham, be chased up and added to the Planning Committee agenda for discussion.
- 3) The Chair agreed to write to the Chair of the Economy & Property Committee requesting an update on the TS Hazard transfer.

Chair

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