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## **EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE**

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in The Sidney Room, The Alexander Centre, 17 Preston Street, Faversham ME13 8NZ on Tuesday, 25 February 2025 from 7.00 - 8.18 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Alex Eyre, Charles Gibson (Chair), Alastair Gould, Carole Jackson and Terry Thompson.

**NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:** Parish/Town Councillors Louise Bareham and Rob Crayford (Faversham Town Council (TC)).

**NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (VIRTUALLY):** Parish/Town Councillor Beverley Ferrell (Oare Parish Council (PC)).

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

**OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY):** Larissa Reed.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Tony Winckless.

Dominic Deeson, Chair of Trustees, Faversham Foodbank.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Kieran Golding, Rich Lehmann, Claire Martin, Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin and Julien Speed.

### **675 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### **676 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### **677 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2024 (Minute Nos 481 – 492) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **678 DEVOLUTION UPDATE**

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on Devolution. She summarised the Government's Devolution White Paper and its proposals for Local Government reorganisation in the form of Strategic Mayoral Authorities.

In December 2024 Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council formally applied to be included in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). This was in agreement with the 12 district and borough councils within Kent. On 5 February 2025 KCC were told that the Government had decided that Kent and

Medway would not be part of the DPP and that the KCC elections would go ahead as planned in May 2025. The Government requested that initial Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals be submitted by 21 March 2025 with final proposals to be submitted by 28 November 2025.

A Member said that it appeared to be a top-down version of devolution with the Government making decisions.

The Chief Executive agreed that was the case, but it was necessary to ensure consistency with reorganisation.

#### 679 FAVERSHAM FOOD BANK

Dominic Deeson, the Chair of Trustees at Faversham Foodbank, gave an update on the work of the Foodbank in Faversham. He said that the residents of Faversham were very generous with making donations at various collection points within Faversham, which the Foodbank then distributed to clients. They were affiliated with Trussell and covered the following rural areas outside of Faversham:

**North:** Conyer, Luddenham, Oare and Uplees.

**East:** Yorkletts, Dargate, Boughton-under-Blean, Dunkirk and Hernhill.

**South:** Selling, Badlesmere, Leaveland, Challock, Charing, Stalisfield, Throwley and Eastling.

**West:** Newnham, Doddington, Teynham and Lynsted.

The Foodbank were concerned they were not reaching people in rural locations and were looking to start a rural foodbank. Mr Deeson asked if the Eastern Area Committee could provide assistance with identifying where there were areas of need. He asked people to email him with any suggestions at [chair@faversham.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:chair@faversham.foodbank.org.uk)

#### 680 WASTE & STREET CLEANSING SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE

The Policy & Engagement Officer gave an update on the Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review.

The Environment & Climate Change Committee had agreed that a scrutiny review should be carried out so that the root causes of the problems at the start of the new waste contract could be identified as well as any learning that should be carried forward.

A cross-party Member Panel was set up and they carried out their investigations between August and November 2024. In January 2025 the panel took a report of their findings to the Environment & Climate Change Committee where their conclusions and recommendations were agreed.

The report was available to read on the SBC website via this link: <https://news.swale.gov.uk/campaigns/new-waste-contract-campaign/waste-scrutiny>

There was also a summarised version of the recommendations available on the website.

The following comments were raised:

- Changes to street cleansing schedules had been observed since the new contract started; and
- there had been an improvement in waste collection services.

**681 FLOODING IN THE EASTERN AREA**

Members noted the updated flooding tracking report and further updates were provided at the meeting. The Chair said he would continue to update the report with progress on flooding issues.

**682 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted the update report.

**683 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Chair advised that Mr David Taylor had emailed a question about Abbeyfields, Faversham boat hulk dumping and earth excavation at the old rail embankment. The Chair agreed to follow this up with the Swale Borough Council Enforcement Team.

**684 REPORTS/UPDATES FROM PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS**

No issues were raised.

**685 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED**

Councillor Terry Thompson advised that a proposal had been put forward to extend the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or National Landscapes as they were now known as, which would interconnect the forests in Challock, Perry Wood and Blean. Once details of the plan were established, Councillor Thompson would bring it to Eastern Area Committee to see if there was support for the proposal.

Town Councillor Rob Crayford raised the issue of off-road bikes causing anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems at a field near the Western Link. The Police had met with the farmer who owned the field but he was reluctant to secure the field due to costs. Councillor Crayford asked if the Eastern Area Committee would be able to provide any support with this issue. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to see how this matter could be addressed.

Councillor Alastair Gould gave an update on the merger of health practices in Faversham which would provide a more unified service in the future.

Councillor Carole Jackson raised concerns about drug houses across Faversham and in particular 12-year-olds visiting them to purchase drugs. Councillor Jackson asked what could be done. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Chair of the CSP. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would take the matter away to see if a strategy could be developed to deal with it through tenancy agreements as there would be clauses about ASB and criminal activity.

**686 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