
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at Faversham Guildhall, Market Place, Faversham, Kent ME13 7AG on Tuesday, 17 June 2025 from 7.00 pm - 8.53 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Alex Eyre, Charles Gibson (Vice-Chair), Carole Jackson and Ben J Martin (Chair).

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Claire Stanbury.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): Andre Bowen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Rich Lehmann, Claire Martin, Hannah Perkin, Julien Speed and Terry Thompson.

69 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

71 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 February 2025 (Minute Nos 675 – 686) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

72 CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

The Service Improvement & Project Manager, Andre Bowen, gave a presentation on the Customer Access Strategy.

He stated that Swale Borough Council's (SBC) current Customer Access Strategy was written in 2013, which ensured easy, clear and convenient access to Swale's services for all. While the overarching aim still existed, the way this was achieved needed to be revisited. In the last decade there had been a shift in local demographics, political control, technological developments and social norms post the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and soon to be Devolution.

The Service Improvement & Project Manager went through the various channels available to customers currently and the trend in customer contact over the last few years. He also explained the stages of reviewing the Customer Access Strategy

before asking for feedback from everyone in attendance at the Eastern Area Committee meeting.

The following comments were raised:

- Self-service was generally preferred especially as not everyone could afford to travel to Swale House in Sittingbourne;
- could there be other options such as social media or WhatsApp?;
- currently SBC's reception at the Alexander Centre, Faversham, was open on Tuesdays, could they open on Mondays and/or Fridays for people who were hybrid working in London?;
- could there be face-to-face contact at different hours?;
- face-to-face was important where there was data poverty;
- the Department for Work and Pensions estimated that 5% of the population did not have online access. They also kept their phonelines open from 8 am to 8 pm;
- some people found completing online forms difficult, simplification could help;
- some older people found self-service difficult;
- some younger families could not afford the internet;
- could the face-to-face service be mobile, visiting different parishes?; and
- go to where people were such as outside supermarkets.

73 PROPOSED EXTENSION OF AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

As Councillor Terry Thompson was not in attendance, it was agreed by the Eastern Area Committee to postpone this item.

74 REVIEW OF AREA COMMITTEES

The Chair of Eastern Area Committee said that earlier this year, the Council agreed that a review of Area Committees should take place and he would like to hear everyone's thoughts on how effective the meetings were.

After a short presentation by the Policy & Engagement Officer on the background and purpose of Area Committees, a discussion took place.

The following comments were raised:

- The old Local Engagement Fora were well attended, they were led by the community and external partners attended, such as the Police;
- attendance at the Eastern Area Committee meetings seemed very poor;
- they were well publicised, it was useful to have the opportunity to turn up and ask questions;
- the ability to feedback on consultations was good;
- town and parish councils should set the agendas;
- information sharing could be done by email;
- it was the same people who attended each time;
- a lot of people did not have time to attend evening meetings;
- there needed to be things on the agendas that were of interest to residents;
- public participation should not be restricted to the public forum item;

- Faversham Town Council may meet the needs for the Eastern area;
- there could be standing items on town and parish council agendas for issues to be raised at Area Committee meetings;
- Area Committees could provide an independent voice on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR);
- the officer briefings were good; and
- issues that were raised at Area Committee meetings were acted upon.

75 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

The update in the agenda pack was noted. It was suggested that parishes should give some thought to the LGR and feedback at the September 2025 meeting.

76 FLOODING IN THE EASTERN AREA

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

77 LOCAL BUS FORUM MINUTES FOR NOTING

The Minutes of the last Local Bus Forum were noted.

The following comments were raised:

- The Stagecoach service had been reduced to an hourly service, but as they were unreliable people were using them less;
- Ospringe had been cut-off due to a removal of the service in that area;
- there needed to be a second Faversham Hopper Bus, also passengers often had to be on the bus for a long time as it completed its loop on their return journey; and
- should Faversham Town Council have a representative on the Local Bus Forum?

It was agreed to feed the comments back to the Eastern Area Committee representative on the Local Bus Forum.

78 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

79 PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Oswald-Jones raised the following issues:

- Following a car collision a black poplar tree in the Central Car Park/Multisave, Faversham area needed branch clearance. SBC's Environmental Services had said they did not get involved in third party tree clearance. Mr Oswald-Jones asked if this could be looked at again as it was a health and safety issue.

- In the same area remedial action was needed on the sycamore tree before it cut off telephone lines at the SBC Central Car Park Public Toilets.
- The brick wall around the UK Power Network compound needed maintenance due to buddleia growth. This could potentially impact the Central Car Park, Faversham. Mr Oswald-Jones said he is trying to make contact with UK Power Networks and would keep Eastern Area Committee updated on the matter.

Mr Taylor raised the following issues:

- The dumped boat-hulks at the Abbeyfields Boatyard, Faversham were dangerous and should be removed. Members noted that land-ownership needed to be clarified before this matter could be progressed. Councillor Charles Gibson agreed to find out who owned the land.
- The earth-bunds and the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Faversham were supposed to have been removed during the half-term holiday, but this had not happened. Councillor Gibson agreed to get in touch with the School.
- The Queen Matilda Place alleyway was in a bad state of repair. Kent County Council (KCC) had been out to assess the alleyway and said they would be doing a managed decline. Councillor Gibson agreed to follow the matter up with KCC Councillor Antony Hook.

80 REPORTS/UPDATES FROM PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

Faversham Town Council felt that Faversham should be in the Canterbury LGR model.

81 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Carole Jackson raised the following issues:

- Signs should be installed in Central Car Park and Preston Street, Faversham to stop car idling. It was agreed that this matter should be referred to the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.
- Councillor Jackson asked if it was possible to have the Litterlotto App in Faversham. The way it worked was if anyone took a picture of litter as they placed it in a bin and submitted it on the app, they had a chance to win a prize. It was agreed that this matter should be referred to the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.
- Would it be possible to install goal posts on the green at Whiting Crescent, Faversham instead of play equipment? They would not require much maintenance and it would provide a facility for older children. It was agreed that this matter should be referred to the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.

Faversham Town Councillor Josh Rowlands said that enforcement of the taxi-rank at Faversham Railway Station was not taking place. It was also suggested that the public should have a drop-off area. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Chair of the Swale Joint Transportation Board to request that the whole area was reviewed. It was also agreed a request be made to increase enforcement patrols in the area via the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee.

Resolved:

- ***That a request be made via the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee to install car anti-idling signs in Central Car Park and Preston Street, Faversham.***
- ***That a request be made via the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee to look into the possibility of having the Litterlotto App in Faversham.***
- ***That a request be made via the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee to install goal posts on the green at Whiting Crescent, Faversham.***
- ***That a request be made via the Chair of the Swale Joint Transportation Board to review the layout of the taxi rank and lack of a public drop-off area at Faversham Railway Station.***
- ***That a request be made via the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Committee to increase enforcement patrols at the taxi-rank outside Faversham Railway Station.***

82 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

It was agreed under previous items to refer the following issues to the relevant Committee Chairs for consideration:

- To request car anti-idling signs be installed in Central Car Park and Preston Street.
- To look into the possibility of having the Litterlotto App in Faversham.
- To request goal posts be installed on the green at Whiting Crescent, Faversham.
- To request a review of the layout of the taxi rank and lack of a public drop-off area at Faversham Railway Station be carried out.
- To request an increase of enforcement patrols at the taxi-rank outside Faversham Railway Station.

Chair

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