
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at West Faversham Community Centre, Bysing Wood Road, Faversham ME13 7RH on Thursday, 4 September 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.20 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Alex Eyre, Alastair Gould, Carole Jackson, Ben J Martin (Chair), Hannah Perkin and Terry Thompson.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Robert Newman and Josh Rowlands (Faversham Town Council (TC)) and Paul Townson (Teynham Parish Council (PC)).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Parish/Town Councillors Kevin Fraser (Doddington PC) and Rob Crayford (Faversham TC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Michelle Anderson, Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

OFFICER PRESENT (Virtually): Andre Bowen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Charles Gibson, Kieran Golding, Rich Lehmann, Claire Martin and Julien Speed.

260 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

261 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 14 May 2025 (Minute Nos. 26 – 28) and 17 June 2025 (Minute Nos. 69 – 82) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

262 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

263 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP) - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Active Travel Co-ordinator gave a presentation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) public consultation.

She said that LCWIPs were evidence-led, long-term plans to identify cycling, walking and wheeling improvements. In recent years there had been a growing interest in walking, cycling and wheeling and as a result there was increased emphasis on the importance of high-quality infrastructure. By developing a Swale-

wide LCWIP, it would be possible to take a network-based approach to planning and delivering this infrastructure.

There were many benefits to active travel which included improved physical and mental health and environmental and air quality benefits.

Swale already had one agreed LCWIP in place in Faversham, led by Faversham Town Council. The current open LCWIP public consultation referred to the Faversham LCWIP but largely concentrated on the Isle of Sheppey towns and Sittingbourne. Using data, evidence, and stakeholder engagement, the Swale LCWIP had identified an aspirational high-level network of future walking, wheeling, and cycling corridors across the borough.

A public consultation was launched on 1 September 2025 and would close on 26 October 2025. Anyone could respond via the online link <https://swale.gov.uk/consultations>. Maps could be viewed and comments and/or photographs could be added to map pins. Paper copies were available from 15 September 2025 at the three hubs across the Borough; Swale House Reception (Sittingbourne), The Gateway (Sheerness) and Faversham Town Council (Faversham).

All feedback would be reviewed and a final report would be drafted for councillors to consider.

264 CONSULTATION ON PUBLIC TOILETS

The Service Improvement & Project Manager gave a presentation on the Public Toilets facilities consultation.

He said that Swale Borough Council (SBC) currently operated 16 public toilet facilities across the borough and the Council were considering options which would help to reach a balanced budget position. The options included delivering all services in-house, outsourcing, closing all toilets, charging for use of SBC public toilet facilities, transferring toilet facilities to Town or Parish Councils and some other appropriate local organisations, or the community toilet scheme model.

SBC proposed a mix of the following options:

- Carrying out formal negotiations to transfer seven public toilet facilities to town and parish councils, or other appropriate local organisations;
- closure of three public toilets;
- introducing a community toilet scheme in areas affected by the closures; and
- continue to operate the remaining six toilets facilities outsourced.

At this stage SBC would like to hear the views of Swale residents, visitors, community groups and businesses and were carrying out a public consultation which closed on Friday 3 October 2025. The information gathered would be carefully considered by councillors before any final decisions were made. SBC were committed to ensuring that the voices of local communities were heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making.

The following comments were raised:

- Had disability charities been consulted regarding people with accessibility problems accessing facilities as part of the community toilet scheme?;
- the transfer of toilet facilities to town and parish councils was a costly process, would this option cost more in the long run?; and
- if the proposal to close facilities was agreed, some people might not feel confident leaving their homes.

The Service Improvement & Project Manager responded and said that various groups had been contacted to find out about accessibility issues and their comments would be taken into account by councillors when making a decision. As part of the community toilet scheme, businesses would be asked for information on the accessibility of their toilet facilities. Some aspects of public toilet facilities were best run by town and parish councils. SBC would consider individual cases and transfers would be carried out in line with the SBC Asset Transfer Policy. It was difficult to comment on costs at this stage.

265 PUBLIC FORUM

Community tensions:

Mr Tim Valentine said he and others were concerned about an increase in community tensions within the Faversham area. This escalation was directly linked to the so-called “Raise the Colours” campaign and the placement of various flags on local lampposts and buildings. There had been reports of increased levels of intimidation and racism which was causing distress to some members of the community, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The hostile atmosphere was also affecting the community's reputation. There were concerns about the anti-immigration march planned for Saturday 6 September 2025 from central Faversham to Acacia Court where unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were housed. Mr Valentine had contacted Kent Police and Kent County Council (KCC) about the matter but was advised neither was able to take action. Mr Valentine asked what action SBC could take to restore law and order?

The Head of Housing & Community Services responded that it was a sensitive and tricky situation. The SBC Chief Executive had been in conversation with politicians about the matter. As the flags were being placed on KCC assets, SBC could not remove them. If there was offensive graffiti, then SBC could act to remove it. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) were working with the Police and were waiting to hear back from KCC. Any incidents of harassment or intimidation should be reported to the Police.

Further discussion on the situation took place and the following actions were agreed:

- That the Head of Housing & Community Services would check with Planning Enforcement to see if breach of Planning action could be taken where flags were placed in conservation areas and if Section 215 notices could be issued to deal with the matter via littering legislation.

- That the Chair would ask the SBC Leader to write to the KCC Leader, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and local Member of Parliament requesting a coordinated and robust response to the community tensions.
- That the Chair refer the matter of community tensions to the CSP and request that they in turn report to the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee Chair.
- That the Chair writes to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and local Member of Parliament requesting a coordinated and robust response to the community tensions.

Faversham Hop Festival:

Councillor Dolley Wooster thanked everyone involved in organising the very successful Faversham Hop Festival. She said that there had been a positive response on social media and the town was immaculate. Faversham Town Councillors thanked Councillor Wooster for her comments.

The Chair said he would write to the Faversham Hop Festival Committee and Suez to express thanks and congratulations for a successful Faversham Hop Festival.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Head of Housing & Community Services would check with Planning Enforcement to see if breach of Planning action could be taken where flags were placed in conservation areas and if Section 215 notices could be issued to deal with the matter via littering legislation.**
- 2) That the Chair would ask the SBC Leader to write to the KCC Leader, the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and local Member of Parliament requesting a coordinated and robust response to the community tensions.**
- 3) That the Chair refers the matter of community tensions to the CSP and request that they in turn report to the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee Chair.**
- 4) That the Chair writes to the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and local Member of Parliament requesting a coordinated and robust response to the community tensions.**
- 5) That the Chair would write to the Faversham Hop Festival Committee and Suez to express thanks and congratulations for a successful Faversham Hop Festival.**

266 EXTENSION OF AONB TO INTERCONNECT FOREST AREAS

Councillor Terry Thompson gave a presentation on the Reconnecting our Ancient Woodlands proposal. He said that he had been working with local MPs, councillors, wildlife groups and landowners, to develop a proposal to reconnect the ancient woodland from Kings Wood and Perry Wood, north-eastward to the Blean Woodland Nature Reserve and east Blean at Hoath, to connect essential wildlife habitats and re-create a landscape-scale forest in east Kent. This project included a “green” land bridge across the A2, creating “steppingstones” to connect habitats and develop marginal habitats to support the biodiversity of the forest.

As part of this scheme, an expansion of the Kent Downs National Landscape, (previously the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) into the area was proposed, to create a substantial forest that could support threatened species and, possibly, allow the reintroduction of larger, lost species such as Bison and Lynx.

Councillor Thompson said he was seeking written support for this project from the Eastern Area Committee, the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee and SBC. All parish councils in the area had confirmed they were supportive.

Councillor Alastair Gould proposed that Eastern Area Committee referred this matter to the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee to consider providing written support for the Reconnecting our Ancient Woodlands proposal. Councillor Hannah Perkin seconded the proposal and on being put to the vote it was agreed.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Eastern Area Committee ask the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee to consider providing written support for the Reconnecting our Ancient Woodlands proposal.**

267 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Chair advised that SBC had set up a Community Governance Review Working Group and Terms of Reference were to be agreed. Both the Chair and Councillor Lloyd Bowen sat on the Working Group. Although the Eastern area was fully parished, the Chair asked if there was anything Ward, Parish and Town Councillors for the Eastern area would like the Working Group to look at, could they please let him know by close of play on Friday 12 September 2025.

268 FLOODING IN THE EASTERN AREA

Members noted the updated flooding tracking report and further updates were provided at the meeting.

269 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

270 REPORTS/UPDATES FROM PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

No issues were raised.

271 SWALE BUS FORUM UPDATE

The Minutes of the last Local Bus Forum were noted.

272 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

The Chair of Teynham Parish Council said that he was undertaking a fact-finding exercise on closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) in the borough and asked how many were funded by SBC and how many were funded locally. The Head of Housing & Community Services agreed to provide this information after the meeting along with the criteria required for cameras to be funded by SBC.

The Chair of Teynham Parish Council asked what the cost per unit was to run street lighting. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would ask the relevant officer to provide the information.

The Chair of Teynham Parish Council asked how other areas maintained their playground equipment. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would ask the relevant officer to provide the information.

Faversham Town Council advised that they would be holding a meeting next week to consider the announcement that the Kent Leaders had selected two Local Government Reorganisation options to proceed to full business case.

Councillor Carole Jackson said that a resident had recently moved into her ward and found that their blue recycling bin was damaged. On contacting SBC they were advised that they would have to pay for the repair themselves which Councillor Jackson felt was unfair as they had not caused the damage. The Chair suggested speaking to the Housing Association. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would raise the matter with the Head of Environment & Leisure.

273 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

That the Eastern Area Committee ask the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee to consider providing written support for the Reconnecting our Ancient Woodlands proposal.

Chair

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