
SWALE RURAL FORUM

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Gatefield Hall, Faversham District Office, Preston Street, Faversham on Tuesday 30th August 2005 from 7.00 p.m. to 8.48 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Jordan (Chairman), Councillors Bobbin, Bowles, Christine Coles, Jordan, Prescott and John Wright.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Attwood and Mr J Holroyd (National Farmers Union), Mr P Cumberland, Councillor D Dewar-Whalley (Kent Association of Parish Councils) and Reverend W Hornsby.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Ms Davies, Miss Newton and Miss Waltham and Mr Tonge.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Barnicott, Sylvia Butt, Sandra Garside, Gerry Lewin and Ben Stokes.

258 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED *That Councillor Jordan be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2005/06.*

259 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED *That Councillor Sandra Garside be elected Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2005/06.*

260 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th May 2005 were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to Councillor Dewar-Whalley's apologies being recorded.

It was brought to Members' attention that Councillor P Whalen had resigned. Councillor Dewar-Whalley undertook to request another nomination at the next KAPC meeting due to be held on 5th September 2005 and notify Democratic Services accordingly.

● DSO

'B' MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

The Chairman altered the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

261 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – RURAL FORUM WORKING GROUP**

The Tourism Development Officer spoke to Members regarding the establishment of a task and finish Working Group in rural areas to provide them with a stronger voice.

Members discussed the importance of enabling rural areas to be involved in regeneration and for the Working Group to feed it's findings to the Executive and Full Council.

RESOLVED (1) That a Rural Forum Working Group be set up, consisting of Councillors Jordan and Prescott (SBC), one representative from the National Farmers Union (NFU), to be confirmed to Democratic Services, and Mr P Cumberland.

● DSO
● TDO

(2) That the Working Group present their findings to the Executive Meeting on 18th January 2006.

262 RURAL ACTION PLAN

The Tourism Development Officer presented a report which recommended the Rural Forum establish a task and finish Working Group to consider the draft Tourism Development Strategy and for them to respond on behalf of the Swale Rural Forum. She also reported that she was keen to expand The Green Tourism Business Scheme and suggested that all businesses should consider promoting their green initiatives in the Borough. A representative from the scheme would be attending the next meeting of the Forum to give a presentation to Members.

A Member proposed that Swale's tourist attractions should be advertised as one, rather than falling under advertisements for each separate town. She suggested setting up a tourist bus to link up rural ventures and communities. Members discussed that some local towns appeared to be against promoting Swale as a whole; preferring to concentrate on their own locality. They commented that there was much opportunity for tourism in Swale, but that there needed to be a link between different areas, with an increase in marketing.

RESOLVED (1) That a Rural Forum Working Group be set up, consisting of Councillors Christine Coles, Jordan and Prescott (SBC), one representative from the NFU, to be confirmed to Democratic Services, Mr P Cumberland and Ms S Stoneham (Strategic Planning, Kent County Council (KCC)) or her substitute.

● DSO
● TDO

(2) That the Working Group develop a Rural Action Plan on behalf of the Swale Rural Forum.

● DSO

263 NATIONAL FARMERS UNION/KENT CONSTABULARY LIAISON MEETING – 27th JUNE 2005

A member of the NFU gave a report on rural policing issues highlighted at the recent liaison meeting. He raised concerns regarding rural crime and reported that the Police were keen to support KCC with fly-tipping issues. He also reported that concerns about slow responses to 999 calls had been alleviated by new Satellite Navigation systems being fitted in some patrol cars.

A Member commented on the need to look at policing in rural areas differently and the need to better the response time to 999 calls.

An NFU member reported that co-operation and help from the Police had improved in recent years.

RESOLVED *That the report be noted.*

264 **FLY TIPPING**

The Environmental Response Team Manager reported that partnership with KCC had provided access to extra resources, including two additional Enforcement Officers, when available, and a barrister dedicated to that type of work. He informed Members that SBC were one of the few authorities to sign up to this type of agreement. KCC had launched a media campaign, providing a central telephone number and a database to log all reports. SBC had received funding of £7000 which was to purchase four mobile Closed Circuit Television cameras. There had been no fly tipping prosecutions but two formal cautions had been issued and a vehicle directly involved in fly tipping had been seized. A new system was due to be active by the end of the week, whereby fly tipping would be recorded and 'hot spots' mapped electronically. Operation 'Stormfly', between SBC, Kent Police and the Environment Agency would also soon be operational. He also reported that fly tipping was now an arrestable offence.

Members discussed that magistrates needed to be aware that a £50 fine was not a big enough deterrent as the clear up costs to KCC and SBC were far greater.

RESOLVED *That the report be noted.*

265 **PLANNING FOR RURAL RESERVOIRS**

Councillor Prescott withdrew from discussions at this point due to his membership on the Planning Committee, but remained in the room.

A NFU member reported that due to global warming, farms would need more water in the future. The Environment Agency were trying to limit the licences they granted for farmers and new developments were now using much of the water previously available to farms.

Members discussed the need to look at the geology of the local area and review catchment areas and whether it was possible to use surface or underground water. It was considered that reservoirs could be developed as tourist attractions and farmers could work together to make additional revenue in that respect.

Members concluded that, as there were different geologic conditions in the area and that borehole and extraction licences would be needed, that this would become a matter for the Planning Committee and therefore treated on a case-by-case basis.

RESOLVED *That the report be noted.*

266 **RURAL, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMME**

A Member reported on the Rural, Social and Community Programme, a Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Consultation Document. It was suggested that the Rural Forum nominate a Working Group to consider the document and to respond on behalf of SBC. It was also suggested that partnerships be developed with states in Europe. A Member reported that money for rural areas would be available from the Social and Community Programme in the future and that

there was a deadline of 13th October 2005 to respond to the consultation. It was also agreed that an Officer from Community Services should produce a report for the Working Group for further discussion.

RESOLVED (1) That a Working Group be set up consisting of Councillors Bobbin and Gerry Lewin, one representative from the NFU, to be confirmed to Democratic Services, Councillor Dewar-Whalley (KAPC) and Reverend W Hornsby.

● DSO
● CCSO

(2) That an Officer from Community Services produce a report, for consideration by the Working Group and to submit a response to DEFRA by 13th October 2005, subject to the Working Groups findings.

● CCSO

267 MEMBERSHIP

A Member reported that the constitution had been reviewed as a whole and this was being presented at the next Executive Meeting on 7th September 2005.

Discussion followed and Members reported that some representatives nominated to be present at meetings often did not attend. It was considered important for rural areas to be represented and Members discussed ways of informing people of meetings. The issue of public speaking was discussed and the Forum agreed that agenda items from Parish Council Chairmen would be welcomed.

Members discussed other relevant organisations that could be approached for nominations for Rural Forum members.

RESOLVED That the Women's Institute, the Swale Youth Forum and the Community Hubs Project Officer for Swale be approached to nominate a representative to attend Rural Forum Meetings.

● DSO

268 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman thanked the NFU following the recent farm visits in May. Members had found the visit interesting and hoped there would be an opportunity for another visit in the future.

A Member informed the Forum that he would soon be attending the Local Government Association Rural Conference and Commission in York. It was agreed that Councillor Brenda Hammond, who would also be attending the conference, be invited to the next meeting to present a report.

● DSO

Chairman