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SWALE RURAL FORUM

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Leysdown Village Hall, Wing Road, Leysdown, Isle of Sheppey, Kent, ME12 4QR on Tuesday, 19 August 2014 from 7.05 - 9.04 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor David Simmons (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Councillors Barnicott, Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Bowles, Gerry Lewin, Pat Sandle, David Simmons, Ben Stokes and John Wright.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

Parish Councillor Baldock, Mr Peter Blandon (Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and Mr Tom Gates (KCC Representative).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martin Goodhew, Kieren Mansfield, Kellie Mackenzie and Lyn Newton.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Andy Booth, Peter Marchington and Ken Pugh, Mrs Harris and Mr Pursord (Leysdown Parish Council and Mick Drury (Lower Halstow Parish Council).

APOLOGIES: Councillors June Garrad, Nicholas Hampshire, Parsons, Pinchbeck, Prescott, Tucker and Wade and Chief Inspector Tony Henley.

183 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 May 2014 (Minute Nos. 24 – 33) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

184 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

185 PUBLIC SESSION

Mr Pursord, Leysdown Parish Council, asked that the B2231 to Leysdown be upgraded to an 'A' road. He stated that it made no sense that the road was classified as an A road from the Sheppey Bridge to Rowetts Corner, but a 'B' road to Leysdown.

Parish Councillor Baldock stated that he had understood that it had originally been intended that the whole of the B2231 should be upgraded to an A road. He suggested a letter be sent on behalf of the Forum supporting the re-classification of the B2231 to an A road to the Kent County Council (KCC) Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport. This was agreed by the Forum.

- Chairman

Councillor Pat Sandle agreed that the re-classification of the road was needed to improve access to the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey and that A road status would ensure improved maintenance of the road and Police enforcement.

Councillor Pat Sandle suggested that the local KCC Councillor could use their Highways funding to support the proposal.

Mr Purssord, raised concern about the planning application for a supermarket in Minster and the impact it could have on local businesses.

Councillor Barnicott, also Chairman of Planning Committee, stated that the Parish Council would be consulted on any planning application and could raise objection to any application on reasonable planning grounds.

Mr Purssord stated that to mark the Centenary of World War One Leysdown Parish Council had applied for funding for a bandstand on The Spinney, Leysdown.

186 UPDATE FROM KENT POLICE

The Chairman noted the apologies of Inspector Wade and Chief Inspector Henley (Kent Police) and drew attention to the tabled Operation Nonagon updates.

There was some discussion about the increase in rural crime figures for Kent recently published and it was agreed that the figures for Swale be provided by Kent Police.

- Inspector Wade

Councillor Booth, a Ward Member for Minster Cliffs, raised concern about the number of barn fires recently on the Isle of Sheppey which was unsettling for the local community.

Councillor Bowles raised concern that six of the parishes in his ward were not included within the areas covered by the Special Constables from North Division as part of Operation Nonegon.

Councillor Gerry Lewin welcomed the report and praised Kent Police for the Operation Nonegon initiatives which he hoped would continue.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

187 INFORMATION ITEM - ANN BARNES (KENT CRIME COMMISSIONER)

The Forum noted that Ann Barnes (Kent Crime Commissioner) had provisionally accepted an invitation to attend the Swale Rural Forum on Tuesday 26 May 2015. Mrs Barnes' secretary would confirm her attendance in February 2015.

188 RURAL APPRENTICESHIPS

The Chairman welcomed Kieren Mansfield (Economy and Community Services (ECS) Manager) to the meeting.

The ECS Manager introduced the Apprenticeship Update attached to the agenda. He explained that following a recent Government review of apprenticeships,

employees would be expected to contribute financially and manage the training of apprenticeships.

The ECS Manager stated that there was a concern that this would place too much of a burden on employees and make them less likely to want to engage in the apprenticeship process.

The ECS Manager drew attention to the table contained in the update which showed that apprenticeship numbers were down from the previous year, although Swale was performing better than most districts in Kent. The ECS Manager considered that one reason for the low take-up could be as a result of more young people staying on at school until 18 years old. He advised that in Swale they had noticed a drop in the number of apprentices from the Sittingbourne area and would look to improve publicity locally.

In response to concerns about engagement with rural businesses, the ECS Manager indicated that there were ongoing reservations within the farming community that they would not be able to offer sufficient opportunity to create full-time apprenticeships, and thus a single employing body to share apprentices would be required. This was a role undertaken by Apprentice Training Agencies (ATA) but many ATA's were closing.

Some Members were concerned that the Government proposals would discourage many small businesses from employing apprentices. There was also a risk that employers would be less likely to ensure recognised qualifications.

Councillor Bowles moved the following motion: "That the Economy and Community Services Manager liaise with Councillor Tom Gates (KCC Representative) to produce a letter to be sent to the relevant Members of Parliament outlining the Forum's concerns in respect of changes to Apprenticeships". This was seconded by Councillor Barnicott and agreed by the Forum.

Resolved: That the Economy and Community Services Manager liaise with Councillor Tom Gates (KCC Representative) to produce a letter to be sent to the relevant Members of Parliament outlining the Forum's concerns in respect of changes to Apprenticeships.

- ***Economy and Community Services Manager***

189 THE LEADER PROGRAMME

Lyn Newton, Economy and Community Services (ECS) Manager introduced the report which provided a background of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) LEADER Programme and details of the new RDPE LEADER Programme for Kent 2014-2020.

The ECS Manager indicated that the administrative area of Swale had been split between two of the three proposed LEADER areas, under the current proposal, as follows:

West Kent Leader will cover the rural areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and part of rural Gravesham.

Kent Downs and Marshes Leader will cover the rural areas of Ashford, Maidstone, Medway, Swale (west of Faversham) and the Romney Marshes.

East Kent Leader will cover the rural areas of Thanet, Canterbury, Dover, Swale (East of and including Faversham) and Shepway (north of the Romney marshes).

The ECS Manager highlighted the potential risks of splitting of the Eastern wards of the Borough into the East Kent LEADER area, with the remainder of the Borough being with the Kent Downs and Marshes area. She stated that the split potentially gave Swale maximum coverage but this may not be achieved if one of the bids that included Swale failed. The three LEADER areas were based on economic coherence rather than political boundaries.

The ECS Manager stated that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had also included four new hub towns: Sheerness, Minster, Faversham and Sevenoaks. She explained that whilst this would not result in an increase of funding, the applicants from within the hub towns could be eligible to benefit from grant support dependent upon each Local Development Strategy (LDS), and drew attention to the eligibility map which was attached to the report.

The ECS Manager stated that LDS for funding under the new programme needed to be submitted by 5 September 2014.

Kieren Mansfield, ECS Manager stated that in preparing the LDS's officers were being asked to make a special case for Sheerness and Minster to be included in the Kent Downs and Marshes Programme, although the area was at its population threshold of 150,000. He indicated that there was a clear case for Sheerness, but was struggling with Minster in terms of demonstrating its role as a service area for the rural community.

Councillor Bowles raised concern about the sub-dividing of Swale which he felt could result in some parishes being disadvantaged. He stated that the paper would be considered at SBC's informal cabinet meeting on Tuesday 26 August 2014.

In response to queries, the ECS Manager stated that it was not a 'fait accompli' but any amendments to the LEADER areas would require consultation with other districts to establish whether they would agree to move some communities to other LEADER areas. He stated that the classifications for eligibility however were not challengeable and there was no cap on bids as previously but these would probably be set within each areas LDS.

Councillor Ken Pugh provided some reasons to support Minster as a hub town and agreed to liaise direct with the ECS Manager with further reasons.

Discussions ensued and the following points were made: could lead to an increase in administration and bureaucracy; and need to ensure that application forms for grants were straight forward and easy for applicants to complete.

Councillor Bowles stated that as soon as the LDS had been agreed both Hugh Jarvis and Keith Harrison (KCC) should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Forum to present on how organisations could apply for grants.

- Democratic Services Officer

190 WORLD WAR I COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Chairman welcomed Lyn Newton ECS Manager, SBC) and Martin Goodhew (ECS Project Officer, SBC) to the meeting.

The ECS Project Officer provided an update on SBC's work with the local community to commemorate the Centenary of World War One. He stated that 38 project forms had been received and spoke about the Plant a Real Poppy Campaign and that 51 poppy planting sites had been identified within Swale, with approximately 14 million poppy seeds being distributed.

The ECS Project Officer reported that SBC had launched a grant scheme with an annual budget of £10,000 available for local projects, which would receive an additional £5,000 in-year from Council under-spends. He stated that of the eighteen applications for funding received, seventeen had already been paid totalling £8,772. The ECS Project Officer stated that full details of all applications were available to view on the Council's First World War website, www.swale.gov.uk/centenary-ww1/ where application forms could also be downloaded. The ECS Project Officer stated that the website also included a timeline of key dates locally and community projects and activities.

The ECS Project Manager stated that SBC were also providing officer support to enable local groups to promote events. He also spoke about the World War One Centenary Steering Group which Councillor Bowles chaired.

Mr Mick Drury, Lower Halstow Parish Council, thanked SBC for the two WW1 grants they had received for village projects which included funding for a Memorial wood plinth at Lower Halstow Brickworks which they hoped would receive planning permission before 11 November 2014.

191 RURAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Members noted the Rural Roundup attached to the agenda.

Councillor Pat Sandle suggested the following should be included within the six tips to prevent road accidents during harvest: Ensure lights on sides of trailers so they are visible to on-coming traffic.

192 PARKING PROBLEMS OUTSIDE VILLAGE SCHOOLS AND SPEEDING IN RURAL AREAS

Parish Councillor Sandle spoke about KCC Highways apparent confusion over the definition of a pedestrian crossing and raised concern about safety of pedestrians accessing schools due to speeding traffic. She considered it was not too much to ask for the Police to target speeding drivers annually in rural areas.

Bill Ronan (Community Engagement Manager, KCC) advised that, as stated at the last meeting, a meeting between KCC, school representatives, County and Borough Councillors and the Police had taken place to discuss the issue. He stated that a Project Plan was being worked-up with elected Members being asked to highlight 'problem sites' within their wards so that enforcement and 'short/sharp/shock' tactics could be targeted at those areas.

Parish Councillor Baldock, had also attended the meeting as a County Member. He stated that a leaflet drop to parents was planned which Police would then follow-up with warnings. He stated that the Police were keen to support communities where others were also taking action.

Mr Drury, representing Lower Halstow Parish Council, considered that a Police Community Support Officer or enforcement officer presence on an ad-hoc basis was required outside Lower Halstow Primary School.

Discussion ensued and the following further points were raised: Ann Barnes needs to be made aware of the problem; schools produce travel plans; schools do encourage parents to be responsible; often not safe for villagers to walk their children to school in rural areas as there are no footpaths; and should consider providing car parks outside of village centres.

193 INFORMATION ITEM - MARKET SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE IRRIGATION SERVICES SECTOR IN KENT

The Chairman introduced the report for noting which set out details of market survey and analysis of the Irrigation Services Sector in Kent. The Chairman stated that Alan Turner (Economic and Spatial Development Officer, KCC) would present the report formally at the next meeting on Tuesday 18 November 2014.

194 VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING - BADLESMERE VILLAGE HALL

The next meeting on Tuesday 18 November 2014 will be held at Badlesmere Village Hall.

Chairman

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

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Operation Nonagon – 23/7/14 - Results/Activities.

Over 70 Police Officers, 8 PCSO's & 8 KCC Wardens participated in Op Nonagon 0800-2400 to mark the launch of The Rural Task Force.

SWALE

Swale Local District Policing Team, & Community Policing Team conducted High Visibility Patrolling of the rural areas of Swale, stop & searching 3 people, in suspicious circumstances in Faversham. This visible presence & Policing activity helps reassure local rural communities, whilst preventing & detecting crime. The teams then executed a search warrant at a Faversham address and seized 3 items, a petrol lawnmower, petrol strimmer and petrol chainsaw. No one was present at the time but later a male was arrested and charged with handling stolen goods. Pictures of seized item below.

Officers from Tactical Operations, assisted Swale District in by executing a Search Warrant at a farm, near Faversham. An extensive search of the property and land was carried out and intelligence gained.

2 teams of Special Constables from North Division, conducted High Visibility Patrols throughout the day in Swale Rural areas. Areas covered - Lynsted, Kingsdown, Doddington, Tory Hill, Rodmersham, Tonge, Stockbury, Hartlip, Upchurch, Lower Halstow, Bobbing, Iwade and the Isle of Sheppey all visited and residents spoken to.

Swale PCSO's conducted High Visibility patrols through-out the evening, in the following rural areas; Isle of Sheppey, Doddington, Upchurch, Newnham, Newington, Torry Hill, Lower Halstow, Milstead, Iwade, Bredgar, Tunstall, Borden, Stockbury, Painters Forstall, and Eastling.



ASHFORD

Ashford Community Policing Team worked proactively throughout Ashford rural areas from 1500 – 0400. The team conducted Bail checks on known offenders to ensure their curfew compliance.

At 23.33 officers attended a burglary in progress at The John Wesley Primary School, Ashford. 3 males were located at the scene, arrested and conveyed to Canterbury Custody where all three were later charged with the offence of burglary.

GLT also proactively engaged in Op Nonagon - targeting rural crime in the Ashford and Sittingbourne area. Upon the team being deployed, three officers attended a pedestrian vs car RTC and PC AZIZI administered essential and necessary first aid to the pedestrian who suffered a significant leg injury and was air lifted to hospital. Shortly after coming away from the location a vehicle failed to stop for Police on the A28. After a short distance the vehicle crashed and the driver made off on foot. Following an area search the driver was located and arrested for dis-qualified driving, failing to stop, dangerous driving and other driving offences. A search of the vehicle revealed a large quantity of stolen cable. The male was further arrested for theft.

Ashford PCSO's distributed over 100 Crime prevention leaflets around the Molash, Chilham and Challock areas. Property marking labels were distributed & well received. KCC Wardens also patrolled with PCSO's in rural wards. Through prolonged engagement with these rural communities valuable intelligence has been gained.

Rural areas patrolled were The Romney Marsh, Rolvenden, Woodchurch, Great Chart Hothfield, Pluckley, Bethersden, Smarden, Biddenden Appledore and Tenterden.

Arrests and drugs seizures as part of rural day of action Op Nonagon 12

Kent Police officers executed a series of warrants as part of their ongoing work to crackdown on rural crime across the county.

The latest Operation Nonagon took place on 5 June and saw the Rural Partnership Team working alongside local officers from Ashford, Maidstone, Swale and Tonbridge and Malling and the Special Constabulary.

Inspector Andrew Judd from the Ashford Neighbourhood Policing Team said: 'This was just the latest in a series of days of action conducted between the four districts, known as Operation Nonagon. We know that burglary, vehicle crime, and fuel theft are the most common types of crime experienced in rural areas and we are committed to disrupting criminal activity and catching those responsible.'

The day of action resulted in a 35 year-old man being taken into custody after a warrant was executed at Jack Dunbar Place, Ashford. The man was arrested for possessing drugs with intent to supply drugs after officers found 60 grams of a white powder, plus a large quantity of what appeared to be herbal cannabis, and other paraphernalia. The man has been bailed until 5 September while officers continue their enquiries.

In Tonge a father and son were arrested after a warrant was carried out at a farm in Church Road, where 59 plants, believed to be cannabis plants, were found and seized. The two males were charged with cannabis production and will appear at Maidstone Magistrates Court on 26 June.

A separate warrant was carried out at a property in Agate Court where plants believed to be cannabis were found in a bedroom.

And in Willow Avenue, Faversham, a 38 year-old man was arrested on suspicion of cultivation of cannabis and was bailed until 4 August.

Elsewhere, officers carried out additional patrols and intelligence checks in Golden Green, Wrotham and Borough Green in West Kent and in Raspberry Hill Lane and Old Ferry Road areas of Iwade. Visits were made to local farms where landowners were given crime prevention advice.

Tactical roadside checks on around 60 vehicles in East Farleigh, Staplehurst High Street and on the A20 at Harrietsham resulted in eight traffic offence reports for offences such as speeding, no MOT and not wearing a seatbelt.

One driver was given a warning to rectify a vehicle fault, and 11 more were given words of advice.

Similarly in Smarden, three HGV drivers were issued with fixed penalty tickets for driving vehicles which exceeded the traffic weight limit for the village centre. Extra officers, together with Kent County Council community wardens, were also deployed to patrol local villages on the day.

Insp Judd added: 'This operation involved more than 50 officers and we will be conducting more days of action soon. In the meantime local officers will continue to patrol rural areas as part of their daily business, with every ward in the county having a named PCSO. If you see anything suspicious in your area call us on 101, or use 999 if a crime is in progress.'

For more on what Kent Police is doing to curb rural crime, click www.kent.police.uk/rural and follow @kentpolicerural on Twitter.

ENDS

