
SWALE RURAL FORUM

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Selling Village Hall, Selling, ME13 9RQ on Tuesday, 18 November 2014 from 7.00 - 9.12 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Nicholas Hampshire, Gerry Lewin, Prescott (Chairman), Ben Stokes, Wade and John Wright.

Other Organisations: Parish Councillor Mike Baldock, Mr Peter Blandon (Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Mr Tom Gates (KCC Representative), Mr Kevin Attwood (Swale National Farmers Union), Inspector Gavin Wade, Chief Inspector Tony Henley and Inspector Dave Smith (Kent Police).

OFFICERS PRESENT: George Chandler, Bill Ronan and Alan Turner (all KCC), Kellie Mackenzie and Emma Wiggins (SBC).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Barnicott, Lesley Ingham, Pat Sandle and David Simmons, Canon Caroline Pinchbeck and Parish Councillor Tucker.

340 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 August 2014 (Minute Nos. 183 – 194) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Lloyd Bowen as in attendance.

341 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

342 PUBLIC SESSION

The Chairman welcomed the 14 members of the public in attendance.

There were no questions.

343 UPDATE FROM KENT POLICE - PRESENTATION ABOUT RURAL CRIME FIGURES FOR SWALE

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Tony Henley, Inspector Gavin Wade and Inspector Dave Smith (Kent Police) to the meeting.

Chief Inspector Tony Henley gave a presentation on rural crime figures for Swale which included an overview of the new policing model for Swale, following a comprehensive spending review in 2011. He explained that approximately 1,300 Police officers had left the service over the 3 ½ year period and further significant cuts were expected for 2015/16 so the Police were under significant pressure.

Chief Inspector Henley outlined the ways in which the Police were managing the new policing model which included: managing expectation; checking configured in the best way to meet demand; staff training; and looking for innovation whilst ensuring that the core values of the Police were protected. Chief Inspector Henley also gave a breakdown of calls received by Swale Police over a weekend period – 321 calls were received; 42 were classed as urgent and were from the urban community and 7 urgent from the rural community.

Chief Inspector Henley stated that in June 2014 there had been a significant re-organisation of Kent Police. Following the re-organisation, he now had greater responsibility but also more staff than he had previously.

Chief Inspector Henley spoke about the Kent Police Crime Performance Review undertaken in 2012 which identified that 1 in 10 reported crimes in Kent were not being recorded properly. Chief Inspector Henley stated that a national Crime Performance Review had been undertaken, as highlighted in the press that very day, which identified that other forces throughout England were not recording 1 in 5 crimes properly. He explained that Kent were therefore ahead of the game in respect of addressing the issue.

In response to a query from a Member, Chief Inspector Henley stated that the figures related to all crime not just anti-social behaviour. He spoke about how some of the incidents reported were not what we would consider crime, but still had to be logged as such examples included: shooting with a water pistol incident; and being knocked into with a shopping trolley.

Chief Inspector Henley drew attention to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies' (HMIC) report on Crime Data Integrity in Kent which had recently been published. He explained that this had identified that 96% of crimes in Kent had been accurately recorded and 8 out of 10 victims of crime in Kent were satisfied with the way they had been treated.

Chief Inspector Henley stated that he was very proud to say that crime had reduced more in Swale than any other area. He provided crime statistics for each ward of Swale which could also be viewed on the Kent Police website: <http://www.kent.police.uk/>

Chief Inspector Henley introduced Inspector Dave Smith (Rural Liaison Team). Inspector Smith explained that he was based in Aylesford as part of the Rural Liaison Team which currently had eight officers. Inspector Smith stated that the team worked with 120 partners including farmers; the National Farmers Union; and local gamekeepers.

Inspector Smith gave a short presentation on the work of the Rural Liaison Team and the Operation Nonegon days of action undertaken across the county to reduce crime in rural areas. Inspector Smith provided an update on a recent Operation Nonegon which resulted in 11 arrests, of which 6 were for burglary. A further Operation Nonegon was planned. He also spoke about a fly tipping incident in Stalisfield where the team were working with KCC Highways to resolve.

Inspector Smith spoke about hare coursing and that officers were being re-educated about the practice and its impacts on the farming community. He spoke about Operation Parody which focused on combating hare coursing on the marsh areas of Kent and Operation Salmon a county-wide operation to combat all forms of poaching. Inspector Smith drew attention to the 'Rural Matters' magazine, copies of which were available for members at the meeting.

The Chairman advised those present that as there was no time for questions if any person wished to forward a question to democraticservices@swale.gov.uk these would be answered in writing.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Henley, Inspector Wade and Inspector Smith for attending the meeting.

344 MARKET SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE IRRIGATION SERVICES SECTOR IN KENT

The Chairman welcomed Alan Turner (Economic & Spatial Development Officer Growth, Environment and Transport, Kent County Council (KCC)) to the meeting.

Mr Turner gave a presentation on the marketing survey and analysis of the Irrigation Services Sector in Kent. Mr Turner gave an overview of the work of the Kent Rural Board's water Task Group and the research they had undertaken on the irrigation services sector in Kent. Mr Turner explained that lack of irrigation water posed a significant threat to Kent food production and was crucial to Kent's economy. Mr Turner outlined the aims of the survey, the work carried out and the equipment used to monitor irrigation.

Mr Turner outlined the economic opportunities for growers and that great investment by irrigators would: grow the supply sector; grow the Kent economy; increase yields; increase shelf life; and reduce labour inputs. Mr Turner outlined the barriers to development which included: some sectors viewed water as a cheap commodity; few irrigation advisors on the ground to support irrigators and a technical skills gap/lack of training and education for growers; and inflexibility with regard to legislation for water sharing and legislative barriers affecting ability to capture and store water.

Mr Turner outlined how to develop the industry; the conclusions of the survey and recommendations which included: encouraging uptake; promote best practice; and promote communication within the supply chain.

In response to queries, Mr Turner advised that he was unsure how changes to extraction trading licences would be taken forward at this stage. Mr Turner had been encouraged by the Environment Agency's stance in dealing with the issue. In terms of moving water around the Borough, this could be achieved by working closely with Kent based water companies. Mr Turner stated that there had been a chronic shortage of technical engineers for some years and should be addressed by colleges specialising in rural professions..

The Chairman thanked Mr Turner for his presentation.

345 UPDATE ON THE FIBRE HIGH SPEED BROADBAND FOR WORMSHILL AND THROWLEY EXCHANGES

The Chairman introduced Parish Councillor Brian Clarke (Bredgar Parish Council) to the meeting.

Parish Councillor Clarke advised that on behalf of Bredgar Parish Council he had been tasked with looking at how the planned installation of Superfast Broadband in Bredgar was progressing. Parish Councillor Clarke spoke about the significant negative impacts the lack of fast broadband was having on residents and local businesses.

Parish Councillor Clarke asked when the Phase 4 works for Superfast Broadband in Bredgar were planned to start and complete?

Parish Councillor Adam Jastrzebski (Throwley Parish Council) spoke about similar problems in Throwley. He stated that they could not see that any technical works had been commenced and were concerned that what had been promised would not materialise.

Mr George Chandler (KCC Broadband Project Manager) gave a presentation on provision of Broadband for the rural parts of Kent and Medway. Mr Chandler stated that provision of broadband in Kent was extremely important to KCC and that the target was to ensure basic broadband service of at least 2Mbps in every home and superfast broadband to 91 % of premises in Kent and Medway. Mr Chandler showed maps which identified areas which

currently had superfast broadband and those with 2Mbps broadband and advised that further details on progress each area could be viewed at www.kent.gov.uk/broadband

Mr Chandler stated that they were expecting that rural Swale would be up to 2Mbps by the end of 2015 and British Telecom (BT) would provide the relevant technology to enable this. Mr Chandler stated that three masts were to be erected in January 2015 as part of the FWA trial by MLL Telecom these would be at Swale House; Kent Science Park and at a farm in Swale and would be live by March 2015.

In response to a query, Mr Chandler advised that to benefit from the erection of the three masts houses would need to be fitted with antenna and the areas to receive these would be 'cut' by postcode and liaison with the local authority.

Mr Chandler advised that with regard to completion of Superfast Broadband in Bredgar, one of the three cabinets which currently serves Bredgar would be able to provide Broadband by the end of January 2015. With regard to provision at Throwley he understood that currently the cabinet was too small and a solution was being sought by BT.

In response to queries, Mr Chandler advised that the cabinet in Hartlip would hopefully be operational by the end of December 2014. The other two cabinets in Wormshill may be completed under Phase II or III.

Discussions ensued and the following points were made: should consider requesting investment from local residents, some may be in a position to contribute; the logical solution to problems in Throwley would be to extend the dry optical fibre, suggest BT 'drag' the cables from Eastling?; and dry chalk areas would cause problems for providing Broadband.

The Chairman thanked Mr Chandler for attending the meeting.

346 COMMUNITY WARDEN SERVICE

Mr Richard Palmer (Newington Parish Council) spoke against KCC proposals to reduce the number of Community Wardens. Mr Palmer considered it would be a mistake to reduce the service and stated that the Community Warden in Newington provided an excellent service and had helped to reduce anti-social behaviour in the village. Mr Palmer requested the support of the Rural Forum in ensuring the service continued.

Bill Ronan (Community Engagement Manager, KCC) explained that KCC needed to save £1.28 million, and as such a review of the Community Warden Service was required. Mr Ronan explained that not all wards had a Community Warden and that the main purpose of the review was to ensure that the service was cost effective. Mr Ronan reported that the public consultation for the review concluded on 9 November 2014.

Parish Councillor Baldock spoke in support of the Community Wardens. Parish Councillor Baldock was aware how important the Newington Community Warden was, particularly in relation to the elderly within the community and considered their knowledge had actually helped to save lives.

Councillor Bowles considered that the service could be managed at a local level by 'cutting out' the top level. He advised that Swale Borough Council had responded to the consultation.

There was some discussion about parishes contributing to the service and Councillor Bowles considered that parishes possibly would consider this, but not if the geographical boundaries of the service were altered.

347 RURAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The Chairman introduced the Rural Roundup which was attached to the agenda.

Members welcomed the document and in particular The Leader Programme 2014-2020 Update and information about the Sport & Physical Activity Grants.

The Head of Economy and Communities reported that with regard to The Leader Programme 2014-2020, a further update would be provided at the next meeting by Huw Jarvis (Kent Downs and Marshes Leader).

- Democratic Services Officer

Parish Councillor Baldock requested that an update on the Youth Community Services provided by KCC in rural areas be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

- Democratic Services Officer

At this point Bill Ronan (Community Engagement Manager, KCC) gave an update on the meetings held and action proposed to reduce parking problems outside village schools. Mr Ronan reported that a pilot scheme was being introduced at five schools: Eastchurch; Ospringe; Grove Park; Westlands; and Rodmersham Primary School. Mr Ronan further reported that a meeting was arranged at Swale House, Sittingbourne on Tuesday 9 December 2014 from 12pm until 2pm between the relevant Cabinet Members, Police, KCC, SBC and school representatives to work collectively to see how the project could be progressed.

Resolved: That the Rural Roundup be noted.

348 VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING (10.02.15)

The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting would be on Tuesday 10 February 2015 at Lower Halstow Memorial Hall, School Lane, Lower Halstow, Kent, ME9 7ES.

The Chairman spoke about the difficulties in securing different venues for the Swale Rural Forum meetings and asked members of the Forum to contact Democratic Services at democraticservices@swale.gov.uk if they were aware of any village halls available on Tuesday evenings.

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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