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## POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Committee Room - Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 16 October 2019 from 7.00pm - 9.14pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Steve Davey (substitute for Ken Rowles), Mike Dendor, Derek Carnell (substitute for Corrie Woodford), Alastair Gould (Chairman), Ann Hampshire, Angela Harrison (substitute for Julian Saunders), Alan Horton (substitute for Ken Pugh), Benjamin Martin, Paul Stephen (substitute for Sarah Stephen) and Ghlin Whelan (Vice-Chairman).

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Katherine Bescoby, Sarah Porter and Bob Pullen.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart and Peter Marchington.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Sarah Stephen and Corrie Woodford.

### 300 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 301 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 September 2019 (Minute Nos. 236 – 241) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 302 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Steve Davey advised that if any discussion took place regarding the High Street, Sittingbourne, he would declare a disclosable pecuniary interest as he was temporary manager of The George public house.

### 303 CONSTITUTION REVIEW - AREA COMMITTEES

The Chairman of the Area Committees Working Group, Councillor Benjamin Martin, updated the Committee with the interim feedback from the survey. He advised that they had received 163 responses, 54% of which had been in support of establishing Area Committees. Whilst the survey had not yet closed, and a full report would be considered at the next Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) meeting, he drew attention to some draft recommendations which could possibly form the basis of the report to the next meeting, and explained that there were some areas where he welcomed feedback from members. This included the involvement of parish and town councils; whether there should be three or four Area Committees and how the split should be made if there were four; and the possible terms of reference of the Committees.

The following summarises the debate:

- There should be an opportunity for flexibility so that Area Committees could adapt to suit local circumstances, for example by having discretion to select from a standard list of terms of reference and agreeing their own frequency of meetings;
- Parish and town councils could be asked to give written representations which could be tabled in advance of the meeting but in areas with a large number of parishes consideration needed to be given on how to manage parish/town council representation at meetings.
- If there were two Committees for Sittingbourne (urban and rural) whether this was the right split or the right name; it was recognised that different wards would have different issues and some areas would be more willing to engage than others; in parished areas there would be a greater number of representatives when compared to unparished areas.
- Terms of reference – further advice was sought as to whether executive decision-making could be delegated to Area Committees; there was some discussion regarding opportunities for consulting on planning applications but this would create possible issues regarding the potential for pre-determination for members of the Planning Committee; further consideration could be given to considering ‘strategic development matters’ rather than individual applications.
- Funding – how would the funding be allocated between the Committees?; whether an amount of funds could be allocated to each borough member and those members could work together for the benefit of local community?; whether there was a way of enhancing the current local member grant scheme?.
- Public – how to encourage responses to the survey, recognising how the survey had been promoted via social media and at district offices (in paper) and Inside Swale; the need to consider resources involved in doing this; whether the public wanted to be involved in Committees or did the residents expect ward members to ‘get on with it’.

During the debate some Members expressed concern that the survey was not valid given that it was anonymous, but did welcome feedback from the public. Officers confirmed that full details of the results of the survey and an in-depth analysis of the results would be included in the report to the next PDRC.

The Chairman clarified that the purpose of the survey was to get ideas from the public and he thanked the Committee for their feedback. This would be considered further by the Working Group, and a full report would be considered at the next PDRC meeting on 20 November 2019.

#### **304 SWALE ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY - INITIAL DISCUSSION**

The Chairman introduced a discussion asking for ideas on how the Council could promote a modal shift in transport, away from personal car use, for a variety of

reasons including improving air quality, reducing congestion, climate change and health reasons.

A number of points were made which included:

- Bus services: improvements were needed to buses and frequency of services which had declined in recent years; recognition that services needed to be viable; did the council have any powers to run bus services, referring to a service previously provided by Maidstone Borough Council? Could bus services run on a continuous loop? Could there be different frequencies at different times of day or on certain days? Could taxis be used as an alternative to buses when there was low demand? Can buses and trains work together more (for example a single ticket for one journey).
- Electric cars: how could their use be promoted in the town?; encouraging developers to include charging points; the Council could set an example by having a fleet of electric cars;
- Improvements were needed to public footpaths and pavements to make them more attractive to use and to link different areas;
- It was recognised that a lot of the work would require input from Kent County Council (KCC) and members asked whether the effectiveness of the Swale Joint Transportation Board could be improved;
- Identifying why car journeys were required (for example lack of local shops) and incentives to encourage people to walk; stopping parents from dropping their children at school (such as vehicle exclusion zones and/or a 'no kerb parking ban'), and the need to stop cars parking on pavements;
- The need to improve broadband in some areas, but it was recognised that an impact of on-line shopping was decreased footfall on local high streets;
- Encouraging flexible working arrangements, such as working at home, which would reduce congestion;
- Ways to make the cycle network better and safer, encouraging reduced speed limits (such as '20 is plenty'), joining up the 'missing links' and stopping cars from parking on cycleways;
- The need to consider alternative methods of travel (for example, such as a metro railway system) but there was acknowledgement that resources were limited;
- Train services - ways to get commuters from villages to train stations without driving; the impact of the high speed link on local train services and whether the Government could be lobbied to make improvements?; ways to encourage train use where parking facilities were limited (such as on the Isle of Sheppey);

- The need to consider ways to encourage 'active travel' such as cycling and walking; and for education such as cycling proficiency and green cross code awareness;
- The need to identify the problems, the reasons for the problems, whether they were necessity or choice and what the Council could do about it (in terms of power and/or influence) taking into account limited resources available;
- KCC had an active travel plan and it was suggested that contact should be made with them to ask how the Council can be involved in their discussions and work on this area.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and suggested that further work was required to identify where the Council could influence others such as the Swale Joint Transportation Board, KCC and the Quality Bus Partnership; and ways in which the Council could look to make improvements to encourage alternatives to use of the car via the Local Plan review (such as improving cycle networks).

It was suggested that the Cabinet should be asked to consider feedback from the meeting, and to report back to a future PDRC meeting regarding what the Council could do in terms of its powers; where the Council could influence others; where the public could be encouraged to change their habits in terms of travelling by car; and how much budget would be allocated to this project so that options could be prioritised.

### **305 MARINE ASSETS STRATEGY - INITIAL DISCUSSION**

The Chairman invited the Deputy Leader to introduce a discussion on how the Council could promote tourism and recreational use of Swale's marine assets, and to support the marine community.

Topics of discussion centred on the following themes:

- The need for publicity/improved communications and a joined up approach. For example, did people going to Faversham for a boating holiday know of other attractions such as Conyer or on the Island?;
- The need to be realistic about the resources available to the Council for this non-statutory area, in terms of assets and budget, and the priority that should be given to it when resources were already stretched;
- The need to consider ways to encourage people to stay longer than one night, for example when stopping-off at Queenborough;
- Practical issues to consider in terms of difficulties for boats to launch on the Isle of Sheppey, and the environmental impact of any possible measures to rectify this; whether options were available to increase the number of moorings or if a marina was possible; and the fact that the creeks were tidal, which limited their use.

- Ways to encourage people to travel by water, which was quicker in some cases than other forms of road transport, and options to explore such as travelling by water from Queenborough to Southend or London, or even to Faversham, and for specific tourism events;
- The need to consider the Peel Ports Masterplan;
- There were already a number of organisations such as sea cadets, sailing, catamaran and yacht clubs and boatyards, and whether they worked together to promote events and whether the Council could assist;
- The quality of resources available in Swale were poor in comparison with other areas (for example shower blocks, facilities, restaurants, tourist attractions, etc.) and how improvements could be made;
- Opportunities that could be available to provide visitor attractions using Council owned assets (such as at Faversham (TS Hazard) and Sheerness (Beachfields));
- Whilst sailing could be seen to be a niche market, there were also opportunities to improve tourism for those who stayed on the land, and how other policies could impact on this such as policies regarding beach huts, tourism and the environment;
- What could be done to encourage local businesses to encourage tourism around the coast, such as boat trips, and opportunities for local development which enhanced the area, such as at Conyer Creek;
- What could be learnt from other areas to improve tourism and bring money to the local area, such as that seen at Whitstable.

Members were thanked for their contributions and ideas, which would be considered further, and a report would be considered at a future PDRC meeting. In the meantime the Chairman suggested that a list of the various organisations around the Swale coast should be collated and any suggestions for these from Members would be welcome.

### **306 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Policy and Performance Officer outlined the work programme which had been attached to the agenda. A Member suggested that there may be benefits in considering the Air Quality and Public Health Policy, and the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan either at the same meeting or in closer proximity than currently suggested.

Chairman

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