

AGENDA

EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 29 September 2020

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting Via Skype*

Membership:

Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Alastair Gould, Carole Jackson, Denise Knights, Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Eddie Thomas, Tim Valentine and Mike Whiting

Quorum = 4

Pages

INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC

*Members of the press and public can listen to this meeting live. Details of how to join the meeting will be added to the website after 4pm on Monday 28 September 2020.

Privacy Statement

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1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice-Chairman

3. Apologies for absence

4. Declarations of interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the meeting while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

5. Public forum

The purpose of this item is to enable members of the public to direct questions to the Chairman or suggest agenda items for future meetings

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|----|---|---------|
| 6. | Purpose and role of Area Committees in Swale | 5 - 10 |
| 7. | Health and wellbeing | |
| 8. | Local issues | 11 - 12 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Brown tourist signs- Heritage issues- Conservation issues – including ponds | |
| 9. | Improving the Parish to Town connections | |

Issued on Monday 21 September 2020

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Council, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

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Eastern Area Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	Tuesday 29 September 2020
Report Title	Purpose and role of Area Committees in Swale
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	David Clifford, Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Bob Pullen, Policy and Performance Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To note the committee's terms of reference and membership.2. To agree to consider further how the committee can discharge its functions.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report explains the purpose of area committees in Swale and describes what functions the Eastern Area Committee has in order that it can consider how it will discharge those functions.

2 Background

- 2.1 One of the objectives of the administration which was formed at Swale Borough Council following the 2019 local elections was to diffuse power among members and improve public engagement in decision-making. Over the past year the administration has been putting in place arrangements to establish area committees in Swale in order to help meet this objective.
- 2.2 Membership includes all ward Members in the area and the committees' boundaries are aligned with those of the wards it covers (see Appendix I). Substitute members are not permitted on area committees and only those councillors who are members of Swale Borough Council are able to take decisions.
- 2.3 However, public attendance and participation in the area committees is expected to be an important feature of them. With this in mind, the council have incorporated provisions in the Constitution for there to be a 20-minute session for members of the public to ask relevant questions and make relevant comments to the committee. Questions will be for the chair to answer, but the chair will have discretion to invite other Members to contribute. Furthermore, the chair also has

discretion to extend the 20-minute session which is a provision which is not available to chairs of any other type of committee the council operates.

2.4 It is envisaged that part of this session will be given over to suggestions for members of the public or local organisations, including parish and town councils, to propose items for future agendas for consideration by the committees.

2.5 The purpose of the area committees is to enhance the quality of life and of council services in the relevant area and to bring local insight to bear in council decision-making. In common with all four area committees across Swale, the Eastern Area Committee's specific terms of reference are to:

- develop a work programme to enhance core services within the area and take a report to council on an annual basis to provide an update on progress;
- agree spending decisions in relation to specific funding allocated to members of the area committee;
- provide area intelligence to the cabinet and heads of service, and assist with policy development on relevant matters; and
- make recommendations to cabinet on issues in the committee's area and respond to any other specific matter referred to it by cabinet, the council or a senior council officer.

2.6 With regard to point 2 of the terms of reference, each Member will receive an identical amount of specific funding, established in each annual council budget, to be allocated to projects in consultation and agreement with the area committee at large. This will be £4k each and £48k in total as there are twelve Members representing the seven wards covered by the area committee.

2.7 Members may make proposals for allocating any part of the amount remaining to them at any meeting of the committee, and the committee's agreement will be decided by a simple majority of Members present. The pooling of individual Members' amounts is permissible.

2.8 Any amount for which an allocation has not been agreed by the area committee by the end of the financial year (i.e. by 31 March 2021), will be forfeited, and no rollovers will be permitted. Any funding allocation agreed by the committee but unspent by the end of each electoral cycle (i.e. by May 2023) will also be forfeited.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 It is important that given the investment in time and resources to establish area committees everything is done to make them as effective as possible.
- 3.2 Cabinet have undertaken to ensure area committees are consulted on key issues that affect their areas and that they will listen and respond to feedback and intelligence provided by the committees.
- 3.3 The committees are duty bound by their terms of reference to report to council on an annual basis and one mechanism enabling them to do that would be to develop a work programme and measure what progress has been made.
- 3.4 It is recognised that each area committee could have a different focus and it may be large, strategic issues that pre-occupy an area or more local schemes which have a big impact on local people or communities.
- 3.5 It will be for each committee to decide and set its own work programme and Appendix II lists some of the issues the area committees in local authorities in other parts of the country focus on. The committee might want to consider whether these or similar issues are ones they want to focus on.

Eastern Area Committee

Membership = 12 Quorum = 4	
Meeting dates (all 7pm start):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tuesday 29 September 2020 - Thursday 17 December 2020 - Tuesday 23 March 2021 	
Ward	Member
Abbey	Denise Knights
	Hannah Perkin
Boughton and Courtenay	Alastair Gould
	Tim Valentine
East Downs	David Simmons
Priory	Benjamin A Martin
St Ann's	Carole Jackson
	Julian Saunders
Teynham and Lynsted	Lloyd Bowen
	Mike Whiting
Watling	Ben J Martin
	Eddie Thomas

Examples of matters which council area committees in other parts of England are considering

- Public open space, allotments, and other recreation or leisure facilities;
- Tourism facilities;
- Heritage and conservation issues;
- Facilities for local children, young people, the elderly and disadvantaged members of the community;
- Police community support officers, neighbourhood policing teams and community safety;
- Crime & grime and other enforcement operations;
- Waste collection services;
- Energy conservation schemes;
- Street cleansing and lighting;
- Road safety;
- Public transport and car parking;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Area based regeneration schemes and town & district centre projects;
- Area action plans;
- Community assets;
- Local community improvement schemes;
- Local community development issues;
- Strategies for community engagement, consultation and involvement exercises on matters of local community interest in its area.

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EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE MEETING – TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2020

Agenda Item 7 – Local issues

(i) Brown Tourism Signs

There are many demands for more brown signs to support our leisure and tourism offer across Swale. However, it is not straightforward and cheap to get these signs put up. We would like to see Area Committees provide a prioritised list of sites they would be interested in funding signage for, and an indication where they would like those signs to go.

These are the guidelines for signage on Highways England roads:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-brown-tourist-signs-on-roads-the-highways-agency-manage>

(ii) Heritage issues

Swale has around 50 Conservation Areas (CA) many of which have not been reviewed for several decades. Earlier this year Swale launched a new Heritage Strategy, part of which includes the reviewing of these Conservation Areas over the period of the Strategy. Conservation Areas are estimated at costing between c£3000 and c£6000 depending on their size and complexity. The Strategy has a time frame for many of the CA reviews, but Area Committees may choose to fund certain CA reviews as an addition to the current timeframe. If a Committee agrees a figure for funding one we can commission a review.

(iii) Conservation issues – including ponds

It is important that the Council has an up to date and accurate picture of the ponds in our borough, their current condition, and the ownership details. This does not include private ponds in peoples' gardens.

There is both a strategic need for this information and also a heritage, conservation and tourism aspect. Ponds are often signifiers of underground waterways which we need to be aware of, and are also strong promoters of biodiversity. They could also be used in promotional material encouraging visitors to our rural areas.

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