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## SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in Kemsley Community Centre, The Square, Ridham Avenue, Kemsley, Sittingbourne ME10 2SL on Tuesday, 7 September 2021 from 7.00 pm - 9.55 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Derek Carnell (Vice-Chairman), Steve Davey (Chairman), Mike Dendor, Tim Gibson, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Ken Rowles, Roger Truelove, Ghlin Whelan and Tony Winckless.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Simon Algar, Janet Dart, Jhilmil Kishore, and Larissa Read.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Marisa White – Area Education Officer East Kent.

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Simon Clark.

### 229 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 230 CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Steve Davey was confirmed as Chairman and Councillor Derek Carnell was confirmed as Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

### 231 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ken Rowles declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary interest in the Swale Media Arts Centre.

Councillor Mike Dendor declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary interest in the Kemsley Community Centre of which he was a Trustee.

Councillors Derek Carnell, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor and Tony Winckless declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary interest in the Milton Creek Country Park of which they were Trustees.

Councillor Steve Davey declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary interest in Sittingbourne in Bloom.

### 232 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2021 (Minute Nos. 46 – 60) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 233 SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION

The Chairman welcomed Marisa White, the Area Education Officer for East Kent and the Swale Borough Council (SBC) Leader, Cllr Roger Truelove to the meeting for this discussion.

The Leader stated that he was pleased to see so many members of the public at the meeting and went on to explain that it was important for the matter of secondary school provision to be discussed at individual Area Committees as each area had specific issues they would want to discuss.

The Leader set out the Administration's view of the situation of secondary school provision in Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey. SBC were not an education authority but they, along with many parents and pupils, were concerned about secondary school places and that a large number of Sittingbourne pupils had been allocated schools on the Isle of Sheppey. There was also a skills gap in Swale. He expressed that it was important to get the right kind of secondary education that would be of benefit to the pupils and the local economy.

The Area Education Officer went through her presentation, explaining the figures and the pressures on secondary schools. She also went through the options Kent County Council (KCC) had considered for new secondary provision and the issues that had been encountered, making progress difficult. The North West Sittingbourne allocated school site could not move forward until the site was purchased by the developer, which at present looked unlikely to happen for some time. Discussions with the Oasis Academy indicated it was unlikely to release the West site at this time, meaning any new provision on the Isle of Sheppey would be subject to the identification of a new site. The favoured option was for the Department for Education (DfE) to work with the Oasis Academy to release the West site, but site searches continued. If one were found it would take several years to implement and whilst KCC did not have the funds to purchase a site, if that was the only option, they would have to re-prioritise to pay for it.

The expansion of the intake at existing Sittingbourne schools could only provide temporary respite, due to highways and other local issues constraining the possibility of significant expansion. Other issues added to the pressures, such as parents not understanding the process of choosing school preferences, which resulted in unpopular outcomes.

A discussion ensued and below is a summary of comments:

- Selecting all Sittingbourne schools did not always guarantee a school place in Sittingbourne;
- the primary school attended affected the outcomes due to selection criteria;
- some criteria seemed unfair. Marisa White responded that certain criteria was set by the DfE but representations could be made to them to request change;
- where schools were expanded, their facilities should be increased to allow for the extra pupils;
- pupils should be encouraged to be aspirational;
- where pupils were allocated schools some distance from home, this could affect the work/life balance of the whole family;
- there should be communications with parents at years 3 and 4 so they were aware of the process well in advance;
- performance in Swale schools needed to be addressed, Marisa White responded that local authorities had no jurisdiction over academies, the

responsibility was with the DfE but KCC could talk to the schools and the DfE; and

- a suggestion was made that unused buildings could be fitted out as a school, Marisa White responded that local authorities were not allowed to do that but the DfE could if there was a need.

Marisa White said that KCC would be meeting with the DfE and would be able to discuss the points raised.

The Chairman thanked the Area Education Officer for attending the meeting.

## **234 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted the progress on actions.

With reference to exploration of issues facing ward members in the Sittingbourne area, the Chairman advised he had carried out some ward walks which highlighted a number of issues including speeding, parking problems and drug taking.

The Chairman advised that he met with Essential Land regarding the entrance to the Skate Park and Dolphin Barge Museum. He would chase up the outstanding issues including the fence, parking and littering.

The Chairman met with Richard Emmett regarding the bomb shelter at Trotts Hall Gardens and there could still be evidence of a shelter there. More investigations would take place.

The Conservation & Design Manager gave an update on the Periwinkle Water Mill site and advised that the greenery that needed to be cleared was from neighbouring land.

The Chairman advised that he spoke to the occupants of Roman Square and the Working Group about brightening up the area.

An issue was raised about fly-tipping and dog waste at Milton Creek Country Park. The Chairman would discuss this at the Trust meeting.

A Member commented that bins in his ward which had been set alight had been removed but not replaced. The Chairman agreed to take this up with officers.

David Croft gave an update on Sittingbourne Tennis Club. There were still issues regarding the legal agreement to be sorted out. The Club would like to take on the toilets and facilities at Milton Recreation Ground, an SBC officer was looking into the lease arrangements and would report back. David Croft asked if there were plans to replace the bulbs in the floodlights with LED bulbs, the Chairman agreed to check with officers. An issue was noted about the barrier into the car park and anti-social behaviour. David Croft also thanked the Council for the work carried out for the Club.

**235 SITTINGBOURNE HIGH STREET AND MILTON REGIS CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS**

The Conservation & Design Manager and the Senior Conservation Design Officer gave a presentation about the Sittingbourne High Street Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Review.

The public consultation was carried out over a period of 7 weeks and was due to end on 19 September 2021. The document was available online and in Sittingbourne library to view. Feedback was welcomed and would help to decide what should be included in the appraisal document. The responses would be collated and presented to the Strategic Management Team, the Local Plan Panel and then on to Cabinet on 27 October 2021 for adoption.

A member of the public asked if it would be possible to get the Milton Library listed. The Conservation & Design Manager responded that Historic England were responsible for statutory listing, and this could be suggested to them. The Council would also be developing a Local Heritage List and nominations would be invited from parishes. It was suggested that this should be added to the agenda for the next Area Committee meeting to be discussed.

The Air Cadet Squadron building at Westlands School was discussed as it was under threat. It was suggested this should be passed to the Western Area Committee to consider as it came under that area.

**236 PUBLIC FORUM**

Gareth Randall brought the Committee's attention to the Government Fund Changing Places Toilets. Local Authorities were invited to submit expressions of interest by 26 September 2021 to install larger accessible toilets for people who could not use standard accessible toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers. The Chief Executive advised that this had already been considered by Cabinet Members and officers were looking at putting in a bid for the Swallows Leisure Centre. Other toilet blocks were also being looked at.

Jackie Davidson talked about traffic flows outside Sittingbourne Railway Station. He asked if he could work with the SBC Engineering Manager to produce some plans.

Jenny Bowles raised the issue of there being no floral displays in Milton Regis. It was suggested that an In Bloom group could be set up such as the Sittingbourne In Bloom.

The Chairman read out an email from Sioux Peto about the maintenance of the Saxon Shore Way. Kent County Councillor Mike Dendor responded that KCC were aware and would follow this up.

Kent County Councillor Mike Dendor agreed to look into the rights of way to Milton Creek not being maintained.

**237 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED**

No issues were raised.

**238 CLOSED CHURCHYARDS**

The Conservation and Design Manager explained that over £1 million of works needed to be carried out across Swale on closed churchyards to ensure they were maintained for heritage and health and safety reasons but the Council did not have this funding. The Area Committee agreed to bring this back to a later meeting.

**239 SITTINGBOURNE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND SLEIGH ROUNDS**

Gareth Randall gave an update on the planned switch on event and the proposed sleigh round in residential areas. Sittingbourne Lights were considering putting in a funding bid to the Sittingbourne Area Committee for the installation of garland lights on lighting columns.

**240 UPDATE ON WORK PLAN**

Members agreed the Work Plan proposals and the criteria for scoring funding applications should be that bids should demonstrate they would have a positive impact on the appearance, environment and facilities in the Sittingbourne Area.

**241 MONITORING REPORT - FUNDING ALLOCATIONS 2020-21**

Members noted the Monitoring Report for funding awarded during 2020/21.

It was noted that Milton Creek Country Park Trust (MCCPT) had an underspend of £318 due to not being able to repaint the bee mural at present. The MCCPT asked if it would be possible to use this money towards the mural on a storage container the MCCPT had recently received a grant for. The Area Committee Members who were not on the MCCPT agreed this request.

**242 MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY CABINET**

No issues were raised.

**243 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET BY COMMITTEE**

- Swale Media Arts Centre lease – to chase a resolution; and
- to raise the issue of blockages in Environmental Health and Planning Enforcement.

Chairman

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