
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Kemsley Community Centre, The Square, Ridham Avenue, Sittingbourne ME10 2SF on Tuesday, 7 December 2021 from 7.00 pm - 8.34 pm

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

APOLOGY: Councillor Roger Truelove.

473 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

474 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

475 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 (Minute Nos. 229 – 243) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

476 **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted the progress on actions.

Entrance to Skate Park and Dolphin Barge Museum - the Chairman reported that the graffiti fence was still to be installed. The old gate entrance had been closed off. There was an issue with emergency services and lorries not able to get through the gate, an emergency meeting was to be held to discuss this matter. The litter issues were under control.

Improvements to lighting in the Milton Regis area – the Chairman was still looking for potential contractors to provide quotes for the work.

Options for Roman Square and the square opposite Swale House – the Chairman reported that some work had been done and new planters had been installed in the area opposite Swale House. Work on greening the High Street was being looked at and if any Committee Members had ideas could they please email the Chairman.

Traffic flow outside the bus station – it was suggested that Jackie Davidson email both Kent County Councillors regarding his proposals as they came under the remit of Kent County Council (KCC).

Sittingbourne Tennis Club – the Chairman noted that the floodlights failed when it rained. It was hoped to have LED lights installed by September 2022.

Damaged bins not being replaced – the Chairman advised officers were looking into replacing the bins in Roman Ward.

Swale Media Arts Centre lease – Councillor Rowles reported that the Interim Property Services Manager had advised this should be resolved next week. Councillor Rowles would provide the Area Committee with a written update at the March 2022 meeting.

Blockages in Environmental Health and Planning Enforcement – the Chairman reported that he had spoken to senior officers and was advised the delays were due to staffing issues. Where agency staff had been taken on, it had taken them a while to get up-to-speed.

Milton Creek Country Park – the Chairman advised that the Green Spaces Ranger had confirmed bins were emptied three times a week and patrols were carried out regularly. There had been no recent reports of dog waste or fly tipping issues.

477 HIGH STREET ISSUES

A number of councillors had expressed concerns about taxis using Nellies Alley as a highway. The alleyway was privately owned so it was difficult for Swale Borough Council (SBC) to implement restrictions. It would need the permission from the owner and KCC to install a gate and sign.

The Head of Housing & Community Services suggested SBC could highlight the concern to taxi drivers through the taxi licensing bulletin.

Other problems with lorries, cyclists and electric scooters contravening highway laws in Sittingbourne High Street were raised by Committee Members. Discussions were ongoing about who was responsible for enforcement.

478 POLICE MATTERS

The Chairman advised that he had invited a representative of the Police to attend in the hope that targeted strategies could be discussed for issues raised, but no-one had been available.

The Head of Housing & Community Services was in attendance and advised that she could feed issues raised back to the Community Safety Partnership. She also stressed the importance of reporting issues via 101 so that they were logged to enable the Police to build a picture of incidents and develop operations or a community response. Reporting via 101 could be done by telephone or online.

The following issues were raised:

- Electric scooters were being used illegally and in a manner that was unsafe and could potentially cause a death. The Police appeared to be ignoring the issue;

- elderly people were avoiding the Town Centre in the evenings due to anti-social behaviour. A Member added that he witnessed a number of Police in Sittingbourne Town Centre on the evening of 2 December 2021 and asked if information could be provided to Ward Members on the incident. The Head of Housing & Community Services agreed to look into it;
- drug dealing was taking place in locations where CCTV has been removed. The Head of Housing & Community Services said that reporting incidents to Crime Stoppers would help action to take place as an evidence base could be built-up, if residents were not confident calling the Police. As legislation had changed for the placement of CCTV, reporting was more important for evidence to install cameras and reviews to take place;
- Members reported varying outcomes with reporting incidents but often no action took place;
- the Chairman had emailed the Cabinet Member for Environment about the responsibilities of Enforcement Officers when it came to dealing with alcohol issues. There was some confusion about drinking in the High Street but power could only be utilised if those drinking were also causing a nuisance;
- Members praised the SBC Anti-Social Behaviour Officer who had issued Public Protection Orders. a private landlord in attendance also praised the SBC Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for her help in dealing with ASB in private rented properties; and
- a member of the public asked about the Landlords Forum. The Head of Housing & Community Services advised that the Forum had been put on hold due to the Covid-19 Pandemic but officers were looking at developing it. An online Landlords Forum had recently taken place jointly with Maidstone Borough Council.

479 CREEKSIDE PLAN

The Chairman advised that he had spoken with charities about developing an overarching project to rejuvenate the Wharf. He already had a number of ideas from the charities and was in discussion with the Legal Team about forming a group and taking this forward. The Chairman would circulate the ideas to the Area Committee Members.

480 PUBLIC FORUM

The Chairman advised that Gareth Randall had requested to speak on the following items but was not in attendance:

- He wanted to thank Members and officers for their support for Sittingbourne Christmas Lights and Sleigh Rounds; and
- he suggested the idea of restoring some of the borough's old street signs as a heritage project. The Chairman said that this could be discussed further at a later meeting when Mr Randall was in attendance.

The Chairman advised that Malcolm Winskill, who was not in attendance, had asked if Christmas lights could be arranged for Milton Regis. The Chairman responded that much of Milton Regis High Street was in a conservation zone which restricted what could be done. The Chairman had looked into planting a permanent

tree but funding would be required for lighting along with various permissions. The Chairman said he would contact Mr Winskill to discuss further.

A local landlord spoke about his ambitions for the Kemsley Arms and gave an update on this project.

Jackie Davidson commented on bus services, in particular route 347 only having one bus instead of two. Residents were not able to use the new facilities in Sittingbourne without a reliable bus service. Stagecoach had said they would not come to Sittingbourne without a depot. The Head of Housing & Community Services said that a meeting was due to take place with KCC, SBC and the bus operators and she would raise this matter at the meeting.

Jackie Davidson mentioned the problems at Staplehurst Road where motorists were turning right when it was left turn only. As there was no enforcement there was no deterrent. The Chairman agreed to ask the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to monitor the area.

481 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

KCC Councillor Mike Dendor said that the Local Children's Partnership were looking for a retail space where young people could go for apprenticeship advice. The space would need to have a window area. If anyone knew of suitable properties, could they please let him know.

482 UPDATE ON WORK PLAN - TO INCLUDE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS 2021-22

Due to an issue regarding a bid being brought to the attention of the Chairman today, it was agreed to defer this item to give officers time to carry out due diligence. An extraordinary meeting would be arranged for early February 2022 for this item.

483 MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY CABINET

No issues were raised.

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No issues were raised.

Chairman

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