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## SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Minster Working Men's Club, Liberty Hall, Union Road, Minster, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1HW on Tuesday, 14 September 2021 from 7.00 pm - 9.25 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cameron Beart (Vice-Chair), Richard Darby, Oliver Eakin, Angela Harrison, Councillor Ken Ingleton (Chair), Elliott Jayes, Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Lee McCall, Padmini Nissanga and Bill Tatton.

**NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:** Parish Councillors Mike Brown (Eastchurch PC), Paul Day (Leysdown PC), Chris Reed (Sheerness TC) and Ashley Shiel (Queenborough TC).

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Martyn Cassell, Janet Dart, Jhilmil Kishore and Emma Wiggins.

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

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Pete Neal and Ken Pugh.

### 260 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 261 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

### 262 **CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Ken Ingleton was confirmed as Chairman and Councillor Cameron Beart was confirmed as Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/22.

### 263 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 (Minute Nos. 65.1 – 75.1) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 264 **SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION**

The Leader reported that Kent County Council (KCC) and Swale Borough Council (SBC) were working together to support the academies with the support of the local MP. 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 the large number of Sittingbourne pupils that had been allocated schools on the Isle of Sheppey. There was also a skills gap in Swale. It was important to get the right kind of secondary education that would benefit 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 KCC had considered for new secondary school 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:

- The old Halfway Houses site could be an option for a new school;
- the Oasis Academy had been in special measures for some years; Marisa White responded that the local authority have no power over academies, it was for the Department for Education (DfE) to deal with performance but KCC and SBC could provide support. There was a project ongoing that would look at what could be done to help;
- the huge developments of housing did not help, there needed to be more people on the Isle of Sheppey with skills;
- pupils on the Isle of Sheppey could achieve good results, there needed to be a commitment to involve parents as they had excellent input on how schools could progress;
- early education was being missed, children's centres had not opened. Marisa White responded that the project would look at early years through to post-16 and it was a good opportunity to engage with parents; and
- something needed to be done to bring the schools we had up to standard and to teach children in a way that industry needed.

The Chairman thanked the Area Education Officer and the Council Leader for attending the meeting.

## **265 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Members noted the progress on actions.

With reference to the restoration of the war memorial, Councillor Peter MacDonald provided a further update on the engraving. Work had started on the 987 names which would take some time and would not be ready by Remembrance Day.

A resident raised a specific planning issue, the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods undertook to take this matter up outside the meeting.

**266 SHEERNESS MARINE TOWN AND MILE TOWN CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS**

The Senior Conservation & Design Officer gave a presentation about the Sheerness Marine Town and Mile Town Conservation Area (CA) Reviews.

The public consultation would commence on 27 September 2021 and end on 5 November 2021. The document would be available in Sheerness Library, Swale House and online to view. Feedback would be welcomed and would help to decide what should be included in the appraisal documents. The responses would be collated and presented to the Local Plan Panel on 25 November 2021 and then on to Cabinet on 8 December 2021 for adoption by the end of February 2022.

In response to questions, the Senior Conservation & Design Officer advised the following:

- It would not be possible to review the whole of the Isle of Sheppey as there were 50 CAs in Swale and they could not all be done at once. Priority was being given to Conservation Areas that were on Historic England's Heritage at risk register. The Local Heritage list was Borough wide;
- however, several additional projects were also being undertaken on the Isle of Sheppey including development of Heritage at Risk Register and works related to Sheerness Port.
- with reference to shop fronts in Sheerness High Street being ripped out and replaced with UPVC, Planning Enforcement dealt with those matters;
- Historic England and KCC were consulted on all CA reviews; and
- a review of Blue Town CA would be carried out as part of Action Plan 2 of the Adopted Heritage Strategy.

**267 EASTCHURCH AVIATION MEMORIAL**

The Vice-Chairman explained that the works undertaken by SBC at Eastchurch Aviation Memorial were not satisfactory. The Head of Environment & Leisure advised that SBC were responsible for the Memorial and the condition survey that had been carried out. The work the Vice-Chairman referred to was part of a phase of works and the Head of Environment and Leisure felt that the works were judged before being complete but agreed that some works needed improvement. The Memorial also suffered from damp, changes to drainage had been carried out which allowed it to dry out before the work was carried out. The long-term aim was to remove the paint that had been applied incorrectly in past refurbishments.

Eastchurch Parish Council confirmed they were happy with the work now it had been completed but noted that substandard timber had been used on the benches.

The Head of Environment & Leisure said that SBC would continue to liaise with the Ward members and Parish Council over the ongoing works.

• **CLOSED CHURCHYARDS**

The Head of Environment & Leisure explained that a condition survey had been carried out on all closed churchyards that were the responsibility of SBC to ensure they were maintained for health and safety reasons. However, the Council did not have the funding to complete all the non-urgent heritage works and there were opportunities if Area Committees or Ward Councillors wanted to support this work. The Area Committee agreed to refer this back to Cabinet.

**269 PUBLIC FORUM**

Linda Brinklow speaking on behalf of Sustrans gave a presentation on the Eastchurch to Leysdown route for cycling and walking. Linda Brinklow advised she would submit the Sustrans plans for Eastchurch to Leysdown to the Department for Transport for consideration. However, landowner consents needed to be negotiated and SBC Cabinet support would be appreciated to achieve this in the form of writing to local landowners.

Jenny Hurkett from the Criterion at Blue Town raised the matter of coach parking on the Isle of Sheppey. The closest coach park was in Faversham. She asked if it would be possible for SBC to talk to Chalkwell Coaches.

Councillor Bill Tatton on behalf of Parish Councillor Pat Sandle raised the matter of the damaged outfall pipe at Warden causing flooding. The Head of Environment and Leisure advised a meeting with the Environment Agency and Cabinet Member for Environment was scheduled to discuss this matter.

Fay Morgan put forward a proposal for a Sheerness Tidal Pool to be constructed and asked for the Area Committee to consider looking into this. She explained that there were several health benefits for chill swimmers using tidal pools, improving physical and mental health.

**270 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED**

Councillor Bill Tatton referred to the closure of the DMC. The Chairman advised that this matter was being discussed at the Minster Parish Council meeting and the SBC Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

A Parish Councillor advised that 50% of drains in Sheerness were blocked and needed to be cleared as it was in the Sheerness Flood Area. Councillor Peter MacDonald advised that KCC were aware of it and it would be dealt with under their regular clearing schedule.

**271 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 Sheppey Area.

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

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

**273 MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE BY CABINET**

No issues were raised.

**274 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET BY COMMITTEE**

- Eastchurch to Leysdown cycling and walking route – a letter to be written to landowners;
- Shingle Blank Slipway; and
- closed churchyards.

**275 VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**

It was generally agreed that future meetings should take place in community halls. The Criterion at Blue Town was suggested.

As other Area Committees had requested to swap dates for the December 2021 round of meetings, Members agreed they would be in agreement to move the date of the next meeting to 30 November 2021.

Chairman

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