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## ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Virtual Meeting held via Skype on Tuesday, 25 January 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.14 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cameron Beart (Substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Steve Davey, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Mike Henderson, Carole Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Elliott Jayes, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles (Chairman), David Simmons and Sarah Stephen.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Grace Couch, Janet Hill, Charlotte Hudson, Kellie MacKenzie and Jo Mapp.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Roger Clark, Mike Dendor, Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, Angela Harrison (Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing), Hannah Perkin, Julian Saunders (Cabinet Member for Environment), Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine (Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency) and Corrie Woodford.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Richard Darby and Pete Neal.

### 547 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2021 (Minute Nos. 385 – 393) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 548 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 549 UPDATES FROM CABINET

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing drew attention to her update report which had previously been circulated to all Members and she welcomed questions from Members.

A Member raised concern that Sheppey Matters had no knowledge of the grant allocation detailed in the Cabinet Members update on the Sheppey Digital Cafes project run with oversight by Sheppey Matters as part of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund from Kent County Council (KCC). The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing stated that she was also concerned that they were not aware and agreed to look into the matter and update the Committee.

### Post Meeting Note:

*Update from the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing about this is attached as Annex 1 to these minutes.*

A Member asked whether Swale Borough Council (SBC) were working to improve the issues in relation to statementing and considering special needs children? The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing explained that KCC were responsible for this not SBC and she hoped that KCC were working to improve the situation as she was aware of the issues.

In response to a question from a Member about the Faversham Community Fridge and whether it would work better with the Faversham Food Bank, the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing explained that the Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing had been working with Macknade on the project. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing reported that the Council were liaising with Macknade and a charity called "Hubbub" who had a countrywide network of community fridges. The Council were also seeking to secure community fridge funding from the Co-op, however there were certain stipulations around this including: where the fridge would be located; needed to be able to open fully within six months; and required a team to sustain it for three years. The Deputy Cabinet Member considered the Community Fridge could work in correlation with the Faversham Food Bank and was liaising with them about this. She explained that the Community Fridge would be looking to service the whole community which was also one of the Co-op funding stipulations. The project was not just about food emergency but also, to prevent food waste and she hoped that a more central location in Faversham could be found.

A Member spoke about the community fair share project based at Faversham Baptist Church which aimed to recycle food and agreed to forward the relevant contact details to the Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing hoped that once the community fridge was up and running in Faversham community fridges could also be set-up in other areas of the Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Environment drew attention to his update report which had been circulated to Members and welcomed questions from Members.

There were no questions from Members.

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency gave a verbal update as follows:

- The Annual report on progress against the Climate and Emergency Action Plan would be considered by Full Council in February 2022;
- the Council would be awarding a contract for the "Faversham Car Club" by the end of February 2022. The specification was for two hybrid cars and one Electric Vehicle (EV), although the EV may be delayed as a specific charger was required which meant the club might commence with just the hybrid vehicles;
- the Council had appointed a co-ordinator on an 18-month fixed contract for active travel. The post would draw together initiatives on walking and cycling including work with Faversham Town Council and he hoped that the work could be extended to Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey;

- funding from the Improvement and Resilience fund was being put into the Climate and Ecological emergency;
- the Council had received a grant from central government for tree planting; and
- 48 local businesses had applied for Green Growth grants. The funding would help them to reduce their carbon footprint.

A Member asked what work was being carried out in respect of improving biodiversity in the Borough, as they were concerned it all seemed to be about climate change. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency spoke about the tree planting grant which had biodiversity benefits and said that the Council were working with the Kent Wildlife Trust on their “Wilder Carbon” initiative providing offsets for carbon, and biodiversity net gain. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency spoke about the Green Grid meetings with external parties working on ecology and he hoped that the meetings would commence again in the Spring. The Cabinet Member for Environment reported that the Council required the contractor of the new Grounds Maintenance contract to reduce the use of pesticides and changing some of their grass cutting and maintenance regimes to support greater biodiversity. A Member noted that the draft Swale Local Plan required a 20% increase in biodiversity net gain as a standard for future developments.

A Member spoke about Public Money for Public Goods under the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and considered there would be opportunities within agriculture to increase biodiversity and also for Council owned land. The Member welcomed the return of the Green Grid meetings which he had previously attended. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency advised that the Green Grid meetings were open to all Members and parish councils and that they should contact Grace Couch (Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer) [climate@swale.gov.uk](mailto:climate@swale.gov.uk) about attending the meetings.

## **550 BUDGET 2022/23 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report. He drew attention to Appendix I of the report, the Medium-Term Financial Plan and gave a brief overview for Members. He said that the biggest financial pressures were from environment and leisure as expected, due to various increase in costs and loss of income from car parking also increased corporate overheads. He reminded Members that in the summer of 2021 the Council looked at a potential savings requirement of £3.7m savings which was now reduced to £2.3m through savings on the expenditure budget. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance reported that funding from Government was now confirmed as £984,000 which was £494,000 more than the Council had budgeted for. The Council would also receive an additional service grant of £296,000, a lower tier grant of £192,000 and a revenue support grant which was also more than expected. He stated that the Council were £665,000 better off than on the 8 December 2021 which meant the budget savings requirement had been reduced to £1.6m which could be covered by Council reserves.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance reminded Members that the report would be considered at the Budget Scrutiny Committee meeting due to be held the following evening and encouraged Members to attend.

There were no questions from Members.

## **551 ELECTRIC VEHICLE STRATEGY - PRE-CONSULTATION**

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency introduced the report which presented the draft Electric Vehicle Strategy 2022-2030 as set-out at Appendix I of the report. The report clarified the Council's position on the EV charging infrastructure, including the debate between on and off-street charging. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency said that the Strategy gave a vision for the provision of EV chargers to encourage people to use cleaner vehicles in Swale. He said that the Strategy contributed to the Climate and Ecology Emergency and managing air quality, and the Council's approach was to lead by example and had switched its own fleet of vehicles to EVs. The Council also encouraged its contractors to change to EVs as per the Council's new Grounds Maintenance Contract.

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency said that there were EV chargers in all three of Swale's major towns and the Council could monitor their usage. To ensure that areas with no off-street parking were not disadvantaged the Council was liaising with KCC about provision of EV chargers from streetlamps and closely monitoring installation of cable gullies which was being trialled in other areas. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency drew attention to paragraph 2.30 of the report which set-out the five objectives of the Strategy and paragraph 2.9 of the report which set-out questions for Members to consider.

Members were invited to ask questions.

Points and questions raised by Members included:

- When would EV chargers be installed in Queenborough?;
- agreed with the stated objectives of the Strategy;
- asked the Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency to pursue lamp post charging with KCC;
- the Council should explore free car parking for EV users;
- when considering planning applications the Council should insist that EV charging points were installed;
- installing EV charges in lamp columns would be an incentive to people to purchase EVs;
- were the EV charging bays in the Council's car parks specifically marked for EV use?
- were the Council's wardens asked to issue fines for anyone parking in an EV bay that did not have an EV?;
- welcomed adequate EV charging points at visitor centres in the Borough but it needed to be advertised;
- more could be done to exclude HGVs from roads they did not need to use;

- referred to the diagram on page 49 of the report which outlined the distribution of EVs throughout Kent and noted that the level purchased in affluent areas was higher. Did the Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency think that those getting EVs was cost led?;
- referred to private residential EV charging points on the zap-map and asked how this worked?
- what incentives were being made to taxi companies for in-town usage of EVs?; and
- did the Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency consider that the increased cost of electricity would be a factor with the take-up of EVs?

In response the Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency explained that the Council were guided by data and density of areas with a lack of off-street parking in terms of providing EV chargers. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that they would be keeping a close eye on Queenborough and would be looking at that in the next tranche of installations. He advised that the Council were looking to make some applications to a government scheme for EV charging and would be looking at the criteria to choose the most suitable locations for EV chargers.

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency said that the Council could, via the planning process, support EV charging especially in key strategic areas. He said that the Council could look at EV users paying a lower fee for car parking in the Borough and noted that people could charge their vehicles overnight in council car parks as they was no charge for overnight parking. The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency confirmed that EV bays in Council car parks were marked off and could only be used by EVs that were plugged in and charging. He explained how the zap-map app worked and said that it identified all chargers in an area. Several Members spoke positively on the app and a Member also suggested the 'Need to Charge' app which he thought should also be promoted at EV charging sites.

The Climate Change Officer spoke about the Kent Realising Electric Vans Scheme (REVS) which allowed local businesses to borrow commercial EVs for a trial period and if they liked the EV they could purchase it interest free. The Climate Change Officer reported that currently Swale had the best take-up of the scheme in Kent with 25 businesses trialling and three taking up the offer of the loan.

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency said that with regard to taxis the Council's new Licencing Policy was an opportunity to encourage taxi operators to move towards EVs. He was aware of a Government grant scheme to assist with this but acknowledged that it was not his area to change but he was liaising with the Cabinet Member for Community about it.

## **552 ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report presented for comments from Members, the Environment Response and Prosecution Policy set-out at Appendix I of the report, which was intended to compliment the corporate enforcement policy. The Cabinet Member for Environment drew attention to the Introduction section of the Prosecution Policy which identified the ways the Council

was seeking to exercise its regulatory activities namely by being: proportionate; accountable; and consistent. He asked Members to consider whether they felt the policy met those objectives.

The Environmental Enforcement Manager explained that the Prosecution Policy had been written in 2015 and Members were asked to consider the “refreshed” version to update on changes to methods used by the Environmental Enforcement Team (EET) and changed guidance as set-out in Section 8 of the report. The policy also covered EET Fixed Penalty Notices and working with relevant partners.

In response to a question from a Member, the Environmental Enforcement Manager advised that the EET worked with other agencies in relation to homelessness to ensure they received the help they needed.

### Chairman

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

## **Environment, Health & Wellbeing Cabinet Advisory Committee**

### **Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Post Meeting Update – Cabinet Member Cllr. Angela Harrison**

At the Cabinet Advisory Committee meeting held on 25 January the update report from the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing detailed a grant allocation that has been made to Sheppey Digital Cafes project run with oversight by Sheppey Matters as part of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant received from Kent County Council (KCC) for the Digital Inclusion project. It was raised by a committee member (who is a Trustee) that Sheppey Matters had no knowledge of this project nor the grant allocation, so the Cabinet Member agreed to take this away and provide an update.

The grant allocation was made following discussions held between Swale's Community Engagement & Social Inclusion Officer and an officer representing Sheppey Matters. There had been an ongoing dialogue via email between these officers surrounding the potential for a project of this nature and how Sheppey Matters could assist with the delivery and a meeting was held at Swale Media Arts Centre at the end of November / beginning of December time. It was agreed that Sheppey Matters would formulate a detailed proposal for the scheme and Swale would make the grant allocation to avoid the funds being allocated elsewhere.

Since that time, Swale chased this proposal document so that we could finalise the grant allocation prior to the Community Engagement & Social Inclusion Officer leaving his role at Swale Borough Council at Christmas time. Swale discussed the lack of grant payment with KCC and they agreed to leave the allocation as it currently stands and await the proposal. We now know that the officer from Sheppey Matters hasn't been working and it appears the information regarding these discussions had not been shared with his colleagues.

Swale's Community Development Manager and Sheppey Matters Chief Executive Officer have been in discussion about the project and grant allocation over the last few days since it came to light that Sheppey Matters were not aware of the project plans and it was agreed that Sheppey Matters would look into what projects the fund could potentially support in place of the Digital Cafes. Swale agreed to approach KCC to gain approval for reallocating the funds and would make contact with each of the four existing grant recipients to identify how the now unallocated funds could further support the digital inclusion projects being delivered by each.

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