
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Lakeview Village Hall, Great Easthall Way, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3TF on Tuesday, 6 September 2022 from 7.00 pm - 9.10 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Davey (Chair), Mike Dendor (Vice-Chair), Tim Gibson, James Hall, Ken Rowles, Roger Truelove, Ghlin Whelan and Tony Winckless

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): Billy Attaway

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mike Whiting, Alex Durnell, Southern Water Sewer Network Manager for West Kent and Matt Smiley, Southern Water Operations Manager.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillors Monique Bonney, Ken Ingleton, Paul Stephen, and Sarah Stephen, Kent County Councillor John Wright, Divisional Member for Sittingbourne South, Kelly Robinson, Southern Water County Customer Manager, Sue Cobb, Southern Water Stakeholder Management Team, Anne Krausee, CityFibre Area Manager and Ben Englefield, CityFibre Area Build Manager.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Simon Clark and Ann Hampshire.

272 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

273 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Steve Davey, Mike Dendor and Tony Winckless all disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as Trustees of Milton Creek Country Park.

Councillors Steve Davey and Tony Winckless both disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as Members of the Milton Regis Society.

Councillor Ken Rowles disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Swale Media Arts.

Councillor Steve Davey disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Sittingbourne in Bloom.

Councillor Steve Davey disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Diversity House.

Councillor Mike Dendor disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Kemsley Community Centre.

274 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 June 2022 (Minute Nos. 124 – 137) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute No. 125 the following Declarations of Interests to be amended to:

“Councillors Steve Davey and Tony Winckless both disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as Members of the Milton Regis Society.”

“Councillor Ken Rowles disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Swale Media Arts.”

“Councillors Steve Davey and Tim Gibson both disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as Members of Sittingbourne in Bloom.”

275 SOUTHERN WATER

The Chair welcomed Southern Water (SW) to the meeting. In attendance were:

- Alex Durnell the Sewer Network Manager for West Kent;
- Matt Smiley the Operations Manager;
- Kelly Robinson the County Customer Manager; and
- Sue Cobb representing the Stakeholder Management Team.

The Chair asked for those in attendance to indicate if they wished to ask a question.

A summary of questions and comments raised are set out below:

- The plastic covers over stopcocks degrade and break resulting in SW being called out to replace them. Could more robust covers be sourced? SW would take this comment back but urged people to report them on the SW contact centre as a trip hazard;
- concerns were raised about the number of leaks and the length of time it took to carry out repairs. SW responded that the dry weather had caused movement in the ground which caused cracks in pipes. The drought order had put pressure on response teams, but more repair gangs had been recruited to deal with the leaks. Traffic management and obtaining permits for road closures from Highways could also cause delays with repairs;
- comments were made regarding apparent confusion about whether Kent County Council (KCC) or SW were responsible for some repairs where there were combined sewers and reinstatement of pavements;
- following a question, SW confirmed they had acoustic detection logging technology which helped to detect leaks;
- a resident asked about SW being consulted before permission was given to tarmac over residential grassed areas. It was confirmed that this was a Swale Borough Council (SBC) Planning matter and there should be a run off installed;

- some specific leaks were reported, and Kelly Robinson provided her email address kelly.robinson@southernwater.co.uk as a direct contact for reporting issues;
- a Member raised the issue of lack of investment in Swale and in particular the fresh water supply problems to the Isle of Sheppey and the impact of the dumping of sewage in coastal areas. SW responded that there were ongoing projects to stop the sewage incidents and work was underway to deal with the water supply to the Isle of Sheppey; and
- the KCC Divisional Member for Sittingbourne South asked about SW protocols for advising customers they should not drink water. SW responded that social media channels were used to advise residents about water quality issues. If a small area was affected, door knocks would take place. If an incident lasted over three hours, bottled water would be delivered to vulnerable residents. The next step-up would be to set up water stations. The KCC Divisional Member suggested that communication of problems should be proactive. SW advised there was a project ongoing to deal with this.
- Members stressed that communication was key and more attention should be paid to customers.

SW agreed to take back the issues raised. The Chair thanked the SW representatives for attending the meeting.

276 CITYFIBRE

The Chair introduced Anne Krausse, the Area Manager and Ben Englefield, the Area Build Manager of CityFibre (CF) who were in attendance virtually to give a presentation on their fibre network programme for Sittingbourne.

After their presentation comments and questions were raised, a summary of which are set out below:

- Following a question about build start dates, CF advised a build plan was being put together, but it would be before November 2022.
- Benefits for residents were queried, CF responded that increased competition was good for residents.
- A Member urged CF not to cause damage by digging up roads and grass verges.

The Chair thanked CF for attending the meeting.

277 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Engagement with the Police

The Chair advised a walkabout took place with the Police and Ward Councillors focusing on areas that could be dangerous to walk through, in particular for women and girls.

E-scooters

The KCC Divisional Member for Sittingbourne North said he was reassured that the Police were doing all they could to tackle this problem.

Kemsley Arms

The KCC Divisional Member for Sittingbourne North advised that Planning officers were recommending refusal of the application and therefore it had been called into Planning Committee to determine. He commented on issues relating to non-communication by SBC Planning and the length of time to get to this point.

Bus services

The Chair and Councillor Tony Winckless met with Jackie Davidson and would pursue some ideas to help improve Sittingbourne's bus services. The KCC Divisional Member for Sittingbourne added that he had met with Chalkwell and was arranging a meeting with the KCC Cabinet Member about school buses

Saxon Shore Way

The KCC Divisional Member for Sittingbourne advised that he had obtained the route which showed the Saxon Shore Way did not reach the Creekside until Swale Way and the Castle Road access was blocked. Sioux Peto added that it started at Gas Road and invited the Member to join a heritage walk. She commented that the footpaths needed to be cleared by KCC.

Town Centre Volunteer Group

The Chair would send an update via email to Members.

Swale Media Arts Centre Lease

Councillor Ken Rowles thanked the Area Committee for the previous funding allocation and how it had changed the front of 34 High Street, Sittingbourne which was now a marvelous venue. He mentioned that although both sides had signed the lease, their solicitor had still not received a copy. He advised that they would be changing from a CIC (Community Interest Company) to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) for funding reasons and had formed a committee. There was a gallery booked up to Christmas and a film festival coming up. The cost of heating would be an issue this winter. Councillor Rowles would provide a list of the outstanding repairs.

278 PUBLIC FORUM

Gordon Field commented on how there were two Ward Councillors in Murston but only one of them, Councillor James Hall, was proactive and contactable. The Chair responded that there was a complaint system on the SBC website.

Gordon Field asked why wardens were not seen in Murston as cars and vans were often parked on council land. He asked why only Tonge Road and Murston Road

were cleaned. The Chair suggested that these issues should be raised with the Head of Environment & Leisure via Councillor James Hall.

Lyn Kelly spoke about anti-social behaviour issues at Great Easthall Pond. The lifebuoys had been removed, littering, fires, fishing line and hooks left behind caused harm to wildlife and residents. She asked if the SBC wardens could supervise the pond as they had in other areas. The Chair responded that incidents should be reported to the Police via 101 and the concerns would be raised with the wardens so they could prioritise the area.

Clive Beach raised the issue of vandalism taking place in the alleyway at the back of houses on Coombe Drive, Sittingbourne. Residents had requested that the alleyway be shut and had raised this with SBC. The officer previously contacted at SBC was looking into ownership of the alley, but this had taken seven months so far. The Head of Housing & Community Services said that she would look into this and liaise with Councillor James Hall.

Jackie Davidson stated that Arriva had announced that from 2 October 2022 they would not be providing a service in Sittingbourne on Sundays. It was unlikely that Stagecoach would provide a service as they had previously said they would not come to Sittingbourne without a depot.

Councillor Ken Rowles noted that signs had been put up at Nellie's Alley, Sittingbourne but were being ignored as they were too small.

279 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

No issues were raised.

The Chair asked for this item be removed for future meetings as it was not relevant for this Area Committee as the issues were dealt with under other items.

280 UPDATE ON WORK PLAN - TO INCLUDE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR 2022-23

The Sittingbourne Area Committee was allocated a total of £37,000.00 for the financial year 2022/23. The funding scheme was opened-up for external organisations to apply to, the closing date for bids was Monday 1 August 2022. £77,027.30 of bids were received for consideration by the Committee. This meant that there was £40,027.30 worth of bids in excess of the allocation. All applications were assessed for eligibility by officers and a scoring process carried out. Officers submitted four options for the Committee to vote on as set out in pages 15 to 17 of the report.

Councillor Roger Truelove proposed that Option 2 be selected as it would help as many organisations as possible across a wide geographical area. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless and on being put to the vote Option 2 was agreed.

Resolved:

- 1) ***That £36,999.28 funding be awarded to projects in the following proportions:***
- a) ***Kemsley Community Centre Trust - £2,040.48***
 - b) ***Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway Ltd - £2,785.97***
 - c) ***Diversity House - £4,111.71***
 - d) ***Milton Regis Society - £3,841.71***
 - e) ***Member bid (Great Easthall shop feasibility) - £1,921.36***
 - f) ***New Leaf Support - £3,158.24***
 - g) ***Youth Resilience UK CIC - £749.33***
 - h) ***Ellie's Angels - £1,921.36***
 - i) ***Swale Media Arts Centre - £4,338.43***
 - j) ***Milton Creek Country Park - £4,323.06***
 - k) ***Member bid – (shrubbery/flowerbeds) - £1,921.36***
 - l) ***Sittingbourne Christmas Lights & Sleigh Rounds £1,556.30***
 - m) ***Dolphin Sailing Barge Museum £943.58***
 - n) ***Sittingbourne Community Radio - £3,386.39***

281 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICES COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

282 MATTERS TO BE REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

It was agreed to raise the issue of lack of communication from the SBC Planning Team and the length of time to deal with the Kemsley Arms application with the Chair of the Planning Committee.

Chair

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