

---

## SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

---

**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 23 February 2023 from 7.00 pm - 8.01 pm.

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Roger Clark.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually):** Ben Sherread, Programme Manager, Community Services Consultation, Kent County Council.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors James Hall, Roger Truelove and Tony Winckless.

### 709 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 710 **Declarations of Interest**

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

### 711 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 December 2022 (Minute Nos. 512 – 522) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 712 **Kent County Council Community Services Consultation**

The Chair introduced Ben Sherread, the Programme Manager at Kent County Council (KCC), leading on the Community Services Consultation.

Ben Sherread explained which services were involved in the proposals within the consultation. The consultation proposed changes to the way KCC used their buildings to deliver some community services. They invited feedback on the proposals and the deadline was 26 March 2023. Once KCC had reviewed the responses, the revised proposals would be taken to Cabinet at KCC in June 2023 with a decision taken in July 2023. The changes would not take place until early 2024 and it would take three to four years to fully implement.

There was a link to the full consultation document in the agenda pack. Ben Sherread advised that there were drop-in events throughout Swale where residents could go along to talk about the proposals and ask questions.

A discussion took place on the proposals for the Sittingbourne area and the following comments were made:

- Councillor Mike Dendor said that KCC had already left New House Youth and Sports Centre, Chalkwell Road, Sittingbourne. There were two parts to the building and the front needed a new roof. Although the sports hall was useable, it was difficult to separate it from the front. In terms of the Children's Centre and Youth Hub, the building was already closed. Ben Sherread said he would get an update on the situation and feed it back after the meeting;
- Members suggested villages and community halls should be looked at to be used as alternative venues;
- digital exclusion was raised as a potential issue where some services would be outreach only. Ben Sherread responded that most of Kent had good broadband speeds but there was a KCC programme looking to build virtual provision;
- Councillor Ken Rowles advised that 34 High Street, Sittingbourne could be used as a Community Hub;
- Rebecca O'Neill from Brogdale (Community Interest Company) CIC asked about youth provision and pointed out that family hubs were not usually suitable for teenagers. She also stated that the Skate Park in Sittingbourne had space for a community hub to be built and asked what provision was being looked at to move this forward. Ben Sherread said he would pick these issues up separately with Rebecca O'Neill outside the meeting;
- scope for additional income from tenancies in the buildings when they were not in use was raised. Ben Sherread advised that the future of the buildings, if the proposals were agreed, would be subject to KCC's Disposal Policy, looking at what alternative use could be made of the buildings;
- the Chair asked if KCC would be looking at Community Asset Transfers. Ben Sherread said he would look into this issue and get back to the Chair outside of the meeting.

#### 713 **Bus Services**

The Area Committee agreed to postpone this discussion until it was possible for representatives from the bus companies to be in attendance.

#### 714 **Matters arising from previous meetings**

Members noted the progress on actions.

Kemsley Arms – Councillor Mike Dendor advised that the matter had advanced, the Section 106 terms had been agreed and the application had been delegated to officers. It was hoped that approval was imminent.

Improvements to lighting in the Milton Regis area – the Chair advised that a survey would be conducted to see if residents would be happy for clock tower chimes to operate. The Milton Regis Society had been looking for evidence to show that the clock drum had previously been lit internally.

Swale Media Arts Centre Lease – Councillor Ken Rowles advised that the Board had been unsuccessful with their application to transfer to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) but this had been down to items missing from the documentation submitted and it was hoped to resolve this easily.

Town Centre Volunteer Group – The Chair advised that as the In Bloom group would be disbanding, a replacement was being worked on.

Nellie's Alley – The Chair advised this matter had been resolved as ACPOA Parking had agreed to raise and lower the Nellie's Alley bollard on Saturdays.

Active Travel Fund – The Chair commented that he had heard the Government would be cutting the Active Travel funding. He requested an update from the Active Travel Coordinator.

**715 Public Forum**

No issues were raised.

**716 Matters referred to Area Committee by Service Committees**

No issues were raised.

**717 Matters to be referred to Service Committee Chairs for consideration**

No issues were raised.

Chair

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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