
WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 8 June 2023 from 7.00 pm - 9.05 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Ann Cavanagh (Vice-Chair), Roger Clark, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Paul Stephen (Chair) and Sarah Stephen.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish Councillors Angela Gladwin (Bobbing Parish Council (PC)), Gareth Randall (Bobbing PC), Vivien Rich (Tunstall PC) and Steve Tolhurst (Iwade PC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Councillor Nicola Butlin (Borden PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Charlotte Hudson and Adrian Oliver.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Peter Marchington.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Tim Gibson.

APOLOGY: Councillor James Hunt.

75 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

76 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

77 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 February 2023 (Minute Nos. 658 – 666) and the Meeting held on 17 May 2023 (Minutes Nos. 43 – 44) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

78 **NEW COUNCILLOR INTRODUCTIONS**

Each Western Area Committee Councillor introduced themselves.

79 **WALKING AND CYCLING PROJECT UPDATE**

The Active Travel Coordinator gave an update on the Walking and Cycling Project. He said that the four walks and two rides – the Swale Trails – were on the cusp of being finalised and would be launched during the Great Big Green week. He showed the Area Committee some of the photographs and maps that would be

used in the leaflets available for distribution and said the leaflets could be provided in both print and digital formats.

Members discussed a location for the launch and preferred a venue in the Western area.

Councillor Sarah Stephen thanked the Active Travel Coordinator for all his work on the project.

80 ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT

The Policy & Engagement Officer introduced the report which would also be going to the Full Council meeting on 21 June 2023. The report provided background information about the Area Committees and described how they had evolved since their inaugural meetings in September 2020.

One of the objectives of the Administration formed in 2019 was to diffuse power amongst Members and improve public engagement in decision-making, Area Committees were set up to help achieve this objective. The meetings provided people in the community with the opportunity to speak directly to their local councillors and raise issues that were a concern in the area. They were also a useful way to provide updates on projects coming up in the area and to consult with the community.

Meetings during the first year of Area Committees took place during the pandemic when it was not possible to meet face-to-face, but the ability to attend remotely proved very popular. Many people were keen to continue attending the meetings remotely, so it was decided to trial hybrid meetings in community venues. The 'Owl' was therefore purchased and provided there was reliable Wi-Fi at the venues, the meetings could be attended either in person or remotely.

For the first three years, Area Committees were allocated funding. They each set work plans which were used to develop priorities and criteria for awarding funding to projects and activities. The report set out how the funds were operated and listed how a total of £534,000 of funding was allocated across the four Area Committees over three years to a wide variety of projects overseen by both external organisations and internally led by SBC.

As part of the budget setting process for 2023/24, Members considered how to deal with the budget gap which resulted in funds being unavailable to allocate to the four Area Committees this year.

A Member requested an amendment to paragraph 3.5 before the report went to Full Council, that the flooding issues were in Faversham Recreation Ground and that work was ongoing. The Policy & Engagement Officer agreed to make that change.

81 WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

The Policy & Engagement Officer introduced this item and explained that although there was no longer funding available for Area Committees to allocate to support

their priorities, it was still possible for areas to agree priorities and work towards achieving them without funding.

One of the first tasks for the new Council was to create a Corporate Plan which would set out what the Council wanted to achieve over the next four years. This would help to make sure Council resources were allocated in an accountable and effective way.

Area Committees were being asked to have an input into the Corporate Plan at an early stage by outlining their own aspirations for their individual areas. The aspirations of this Area Committee could be issues that were the responsibility of SBC to achieve, or things that were the responsibility of external organisations which the Council could try to influence. They could also be ambitions the Area Committee would like to work towards in the future.

When considering what these aspirations should be, the Policy & Engagement Officer said it was important to bear in mind the challenging budget position which was likely to continue over the next few years and the capacity of SBC to deliver them on top of the previously agreed workloads.

A discussion activity took place with everyone in attendance splitting into groups to discuss what the priorities for the Western Area were. Four questions were asked, and a summary of ideas included the following:

What issues affected residents in your Ward that fell within the responsibility of SBC?

- Transferring land assets to parish councils;
- promote rural tourism;
- fly-tipping, and litter;
- anti-social behaviour;
- parking/idling outside schools;
- planning – including input on the design of housing developments;
- grounds maintenance;
- landscaping SBC properties in the Western area;
- protection of conservation areas;
- social housing;
- air quality; and
- housing levels.

What issues affected residents in your Ward that fell within the responsibility of external partners?

- bus services – better provision to tackle isolation and loneliness;
- good schools in local areas, school places;
- speeding on roads;
- NHS, doctors, hospitals;
- maintenance companies on new developments;
- roads – potholes;
- pavements;

- water companies dealing with leaks;
- provision of high-speed Wi-Fi;
- local roads being used as ‘rat-runs’;
- youth services;
- lack of household waste collection centres;
- home to school transport;
- mis-use of quad-bikes;
- housing levels; and
- fly-tipping.

What changes would you like to see that could improve the life of residents in the future?

- Better air quality and environment;
- keep/protect green spaces;
- training and jobs – rural apprenticeships;
- education;
- health services;
- road safety and maintenance;
- Wi-Fi;
- bus services;
- putting infrastructure in before building houses; and
- anti-social behaviour.

What were the top three issues you would like the Area Committee to take forward in the coming year?

- Buses;
- school placements;
- protection of countryside and wildlife;
- school parking/idling;
- highways – roads and pavements;
- health services;
- infrastructure to go in before building homes;
- fly-tipping, litter; and
- maintenance companies in new developments.

82 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Youth provision in villages – Members noted the final report from VIBE following their face-to-face ‘meet-ups’ with young people in the Western Area. The report concluded young people did feel safe but they were bored and wanted more places to play, either by improving local play areas or provision of youth clubs. Members asked what VIBE would be doing to take this forward. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would follow up with Brogdale CIC (Community Interest Company) to see what their plans were. Some Parish Councils said they

were not aware that the VIBE team had visited their areas. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would check that those areas had been included.

Rose Hill & Meads Woodland Management & Work Plans – a Member asked why the Meads Woodland Management Friends Group went to Annual Council as an Outside Body appointment. The Head of Housing & Community Services said she would ask the Monitoring Officer why this was and if it should be an appointment made by Western Area Committee instead.

83 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

84 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Sarah Stephen presented a proposal on behalf of the East Kent Memorial Gardens Charity to locate a baby memorial name board in the King George V Park in Sittingbourne. A lockable area had been identified and there would be no cost to SBC. Councillor Sarah Stephen moved the following motion: *That the Western Area Committee agreed the principle of installing the baby memorial name board in the King George V Park in Sittingbourne, subject to authorisation by Planning and Property Services.* This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Councillor Sarah Stephen raised the issue of speeding along Woodstock Road, Sittingbourne up to the Kent Science Park. She commented that there was nowhere for people to cross and suggested that the installation of a pedestrian crossing near Cromers Road, Sittingbourne would reduce the speed of vehicles. Councillor Sarah Stephen was advised that as that part of Woodstock Road was unparished, it be discussed at the Swale Joint Transportation Board.

Councillor Sarah Stephen raised the issue of Fulston Manor School students parking at a dangerous junction at the Eden Village estate, Sittingbourne. Although there was provision for them to park at the school, they preferred not to as the gate was locked during the day. The issue was causing some anti-social behaviour problems. It was agreed that the Chair of Western Area Committee would write to Fulston Manor School regarding this matter asking that they were firm with pupils throughout the next academic year.

Resolved:

- 1) *That the Western Area Committee agreed the principle of installing the baby memorial name board in the King George V Park in Sittingbourne, subject to authorisation by Planning and Property Services.***
- 2) *That the Chair of Western Area Committee writes a letter to Fulston Manor School asking that the school monitor their pupils parking outside of the school in the next academic year.***

85 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

86 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

Chair

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