

# Agenda

## Western Area Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday, 15 February 2024  
Time 7.00 pm,  
Venue: Committee Room - Swale House\*

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Ann Cavanagh (Vice-Chair), Lloyd Chapman, Roger Clark, James Hunt, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Paul Stephen (Chair) and Sarah Stephen

Quorum = 3

---

Pages

### Information about this meeting

\*Members of the press and public can listen to this meeting live. Details of how to join the meeting will be added to the website by 14 February 2024.

### Recording and Privacy Notice

Swale Borough Council is committed to protecting the security of your personal information. As data controller we process data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

This meeting may be recorded. The recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy and may be published on the Council's website. By entering the chamber and by speaking at a meeting, whether in person or online, you are consenting to being recorded and to the recording being published.

When joining a meeting online, your username will be visible to others in attendance. In joining the meeting you are consenting to us processing your username. You may use a pseudonym as your username but the use of an inappropriate name may lead to removal from the meeting.

If you have any questions about how we look after your personal information or your rights under the legislation, please email [dataprotectionofficer@swale.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotectionofficer@swale.gov.uk).

#### 1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Visitors and members of the public who are unfamiliar with the building and procedures are advised that:

- (a) The fire alarm is a continuous loud ringing. In the event that a fire drill is planned during the meeting, the Chair will advise of this.

- (b) Exit routes from the Committee Room are located on each side of the room, leading to the stairs opposite the lifts.
- (c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.
- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIS) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 (Minute Nos. 461 – 472) as correct records.

5.	Land assets in the Western Area	5 - 10
6.	Public Forum	
7.	Swale Traffic Forum	11 - 12
8.	Swale Local Bus Focus Group update	
9.	Housing Support Fund	13 - 22
10.	Matters arising from previous meetings	23 - 26
11.	Local issues to be raised	
12.	Matters referred to Service Committee Chairs for consideration	

**Issued on Wednesday, 7 February 2024**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in alternative formats. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, please contact **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Cabinet, please visit [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

This page is intentionally left blank

## **LAND ASSETS IN THE WESTERN AREA**

When looking at the maps showing the Council owned land assets in the Western Area, concerns were raised by Members about their clarity and accuracy. Maps have been created showing land ownership by ward and by parish, via the GIS team, at a scale that should provide for easier identification of sites.

Given their size to achieve the scale required for clarity, a link will be circulated prior to the meeting that provides access to these files, which will remain available. Print outs of the maps could be provided on request.

In respect of the maps' accuracy, officers have a good degree of confidence in what the Council has recorded on its mapping system. However, there may be few anomalies, for instance where there is a recent transaction. It is possible to check accuracy on a case-by-case with the Council's held property records and/or with the Land Registry. However, doing such systematically across the estate would be something that the Council would find difficult to resource and a 'one and done' check of the whole mapping system isn't possible.

Officers have reviewed the specific concerns raised in the minutes of the November Committee.

- The Meads Woodland is identified on the mapping system as land that the Council leases in (i.e. is not Council-owned).
- The land referred to at Bapchild is currently unregistered.
- The land beneath the roads around Quinton is recorded as land owned by the Council, but forms part of the publicly maintained highway.

In November 2023, Swale Borough Council adopted a new Property Asset Strategy, which sets out the principles for a Disposal Policy and a Community Asset Transfer Policy. These will be subject to an imminent consultation on the principles prior to a final Policy for each being presented to the Council's Regeneration and Property Committee. A copy of these principles can be found below and once commenced the consultation will be shared.

## **Principles for a Disposal/Asset Review Policy.**

The Council's disposal policy will reflect the aims of this strategy in respect of continual asset review, rationalisation and streamlining of the property portfolio. It is key that the Council continually assesses the financial viability of its assets to guide disposal decisions, but also takes account of the wider set of considerations. The continual review of the Council's Assets ensures the efficient and effective management of the Council's property portfolio, maximising value for money, contributing to the Council's long-term goals, and promoting economic development.

## **Criteria for Disposal**

The following criteria shall be considered in determining the potential disposal of an asset:

### **Financial Viability**

The financial viability of retaining or disposing of an asset will be assessed. This includes a thorough evaluation of the ongoing maintenance and whole life costs, potential income generation, the projected market value of the asset and whether this can be enhanced in advance of any disposal.

### **Long-term Council Goals**

The alignment of the asset with the Council's strategic goals will be considered. These goals may include service delivery objectives, community needs, and the Council's sustainability targets.

### **Community Benefit**

The potential community benefit of retaining or disposing of an asset will be assessed. This could include the potential for the asset to be used for community facilities, affordable housing, or other community or operational use.

### **Regeneration**

The potential for the asset to contribute to economic development or wider regeneration in the borough will be considered. This could include the potential for job creation, business development, and the promotion of economic growth.

### **Legislative Framework and Government Guidance**

This policy will comply with the relevant UK legislation and Government guidance, including but not limited to:

- The Local Government Act 1972: which gives local authorities the general power to dispose of land held by them in any manner they wish.
- The Localism Act 2011: which introduced the "General Power of Competence" providing local authorities with greater freedom to act in the best interests of their local communities.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's (MHCLG) Non-Statutory Guidance on Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (February 2020):

which provides guidance on achieving best consideration for the disposal of assets.

The Council's Property Asset Disposal Policy will ensure that decisions regarding the disposal of Council-owned assets are made in a transparent and accountable way, maximising the financial, social and economic benefits for the borough and its residents.

#### Surplus Properties

An asset shall be deemed to be surplus to the Council's requirements if one or more of the following apply:

- (a) It makes no contribution to the delivery of the Council's services,
- (b) It has no viable potential with regard to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan
- (c) An alternative and more cost effective service delivery site has been identified.

A site is deemed to be under-used if:

- (a) The income it generates is below that which could be achieved from one or more of:
  - (i) An alternative use
  - (ii) Disposing of the site and investing the income
  - (iii) Intensifying the existing use, mindful of the viability of doing so
- (b) A significant part of the site is vacant and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future and has no potential with regard to the delivery of the Council's Priorities.
- (c) The cost of retaining the asset outweighs its likely income generation

## Principles for Community Asset Transfer Policy

Community Asset Transfers (CATs) can provide significant benefits to both local councils and community groups by empowering communities, promoting local stewardship, and potentially reducing expenditure for the council. However, the process needs careful handling, particularly when it has resulted in subsidy from the Council to the community group and ultimately does not absolve the council from repair obligations.

The CAT policy should consider the following points:

1. **Risk Management:** Identify potential risks and develop a risk management strategy. This could include financial risks, the risk of asset mismanagement, and the risk of community conflict. A comprehensive risk management strategy will help to mitigate these risks and ensure the long-term sustainability of the asset transfer.
2. **Community Engagement:** Engage the wider community in the decision-making process for asset transfers. This can help to ensure local buy-in and support and may also open up additional sources of support and funding or alternative transferees.
3. **Clear Communication:** Be transparent about the nature of the transfer and its potential implications. Ensure community groups understand that they are receiving a valuable asset that equates to a subsidy and what their responsibilities will be, particularly regarding property maintenance and repairs. This can prevent misunderstandings and mismanagement down the line.
4. **Long-term Financial Planning:** Community groups will be required to develop robust long-term financial plans that account for ongoing maintenance and repair costs. This might involve setting up a sinking fund for future repairs or seeking external funding sources.
5. **Legal and Contractual Clarity:** Ensure that the legal agreements surrounding the asset transfer are clear about who is responsible for what specifically regarding outgoings and repair obligations.
6. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement a monitoring and evaluation system to track the performance and impact of the transferred assets. This will allow the council to intervene if necessary and provide additional support to the community group. This will also prepare the Council should it become clear that the asset is likely to fall into disrepair or be mismanaged.
7. **Exit Strategy:** Every transfer should have a clear defined exit plan in place for what happens if the community group is no longer able to or have failed in managing the asset. This might involve transferring the asset to another group, selling it, or returning it to council control.

Community Asset Transfers will place a resource burden on the Council, above and beyond the required community engagement around an opportunity and the management of any transfer. The extent of this will depend on the capacity of interested community organisations to understand the obligations that come with a



particular Community Asset, prepare a sufficiently robust business case to satisfy the Council and subsequently manage the asset successfully.

To pro-actively pursue Community Asset Transfers the Council may also need to consider resourcing support and training for community groups to ensure they can build and present a sustainable business model and manage and maintain the assets effectively. Whilst some external funding may be available to support this on occasion, no existing resource is currently available to support this.

Where a business case is unsustainable, or progress towards a business case is not within appropriate timeframes, Council Officers will need to make recommendations based on property, strategic and financial considerations. This would maintain the focus on minimising risk and maintaining the long-term viability of the Councils Assets, which is key to supporting the wider delivery of services.

This page is intentionally left blank

<b>Western Area Committee</b>	
Meeting Date	15 February 2024
Report Title	Swale Traffic Forum
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Report Author	Adrian Oliver, Active Travel Co-ordinator
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the content of the report.</li> <li>2. Nominate a representative from the Western Area Committee to sit on the Swale Traffic Forum.</li> <li>3. Feedback any traffic issues that can be raised at the first Swale Traffic Forum end February/beginning March 2024.</li> </ol>

## 1 Background

- 1.1 The Policy & Resources Committee has approved the pursuit of establishing a multi-agency group – Swale Traffic Forum – to monitor the wider road network to ensure that the current programme of works and any future planned works, delivers the mitigations to allow for the regeneration of the shared space rural lanes and recommend interventions where and when appropriate.
- 1.2 The Swale Traffic Forum (STF) is to assist Kent Highways and National Highways with traffic management plans by providing local knowledge, during significant works such as those at Junction 5 of the M2/A249, Key Street and Grovehurst roundabouts, to endeavour to maintain the flow of traffic along key corridors without impacting residential streets or the rural road network.
- 1.3 The STF will assist with communications to help drivers avoid and reduce congestion.
- 1.4 The STF aims to bring together Swale Members & Officers and representatives of industry, education, Kent Highways and National Highways:
  - The Chair of the Swale Joint Transport Board
  - The Vice-Chair of the Swale Joint Transport Board
  - One representative from each of the four Area Committees
  - At least one representative from Kent Highways
  - At least one representative from National Highways
  - At least one representative from industry
  - At least one representative from Swale Schools
  - Appropriate Swale Borough Council officers
- 1.5 The Chair and or Vice-Chair of the Swale Joint Transport Board are responsible for reporting on the activities of the STF to the Joint Transport Board.
- 1.6 Kent Highways and National Highways representatives to investigate recommendations from the STF and report back.
- 1.7 The work and effectiveness of the STF will be reviewed annually to aid members decisions on the relevance and continuation of the meetings.
- 1.8 The STF will meet every other month – six times a year. The members can decide to meet more or less regularly if the volume of key corridor works necessitates.
- 1.9 Meetings will be held during the working day on Teams and organised by Swale Borough Council.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.
- 2.2 Nominate a representation from the Western Area Committee to sit on the Swale Traffic Forum
- 2.3 Feedback any traffic issues that can be raised at the first Swale Traffic Forum end  
February/beginning March 2024

## Household Support Fund (HSF)

### Area Committees update for Swale.

Household Support Fund has provided vital Government funding to deliver critical services to the residents of Swale who are impacted by the current Cost of Living Crisis and energy prices. Over the four rounds (Oct 2021 – Jan 2024), we have developed support packages by working with local voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS) and have delivered support to the most vulnerable through a network of frontline delivery.

### Funding Allocations

Household Support Fund is a Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) provision which is funded to Kent County Council and then we receive local allocations dependant on a variety of measures including poverty levels.

- Round 1 (6<sup>th</sup> October 2021-31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) – £244,416.22
- Round 2 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2022-30<sup>th</sup> September 2022) – £558,940.00 (In-house voucher scheme delivered & pensioner payments)
- Round 3 (1<sup>st</sup> October 2022-31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) – £279,923.87
- Round 4 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2023-31<sup>st</sup> March 2024) – £505,445.00

### Current funding position

The current round of funding will end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, and we have not received any updates from Government or Kent County Council that there will be a further round of funding, this will have significant impact on Swale residents, Swale Borough Council and Swales VCS.

### Delivery model

In rounds 1 & 2 (Oct 2021-Sep22) we developed a service offer that consisted of a combination of funding VCS partners and delivery of a voucher scheme by officers in-house. This formed the basis of the service offer that we have been delivering ever since by using the evidence from the first rounds to show resident need and how we could respond with the staff resources and funds available to us.

As the scheme developed, we stopped delivering in-house and moved to funding all services through Swale's VCS to bolster existing service provision and creating a new voucher scheme working in collaboration with Children & Families.

The VCS organisations delivering the scheme were able to increase their volumes of support and develop their existing service offers to respond to the immediate crisis. New and innovative support offers were developed through working with the VCS, of which as a Local Authority we were unable to deliver due to a lack of resources and delivery mechanisms.

The current delivery model consists of the following service offers being delivered Swales VCS:

Organisation	Service offer
Age UK (Faversham & Sittingbourne)	Hot meals & food shopping
Age UK (Sheppey)	Hot meals & food shopping
Children & Families	Emergency food parcels
Children & Families	£100 Mastercard (Billed fuel support)
Citizens Advice Swale	Fuel advice (and other advice services)

Diversity House	Emergency food parcels (Multicultural)
Fuel & Water Advice Service (Children & Families)	Fuel and energy advice (inc. fuel vouchers)
Swale Foodbank	Emergency food parcels
Swale Foodbank	White goods
West Faversham Community Association	Hot meals (children)

## Partnerships

The Fuel and Water Advisor service was created in 2019 through SBC Special Projects Fund after we declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The development of this contract included providing support to residents to tackle fuel and water poverty in the borough.

Children & Families delivered this successful project over a period of 3 years, and we were able to fund the extension of this much needed service through HSF until the end of March 2024. The District Councils Network are promoting this as a stand out service model and we are proud of the work this project has done to support many residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and access to emergency fuel support and advice. Due to the proven track record of this project and the continued need for a service of this kind, Children & Families have been successful in gaining a further year's funding through local energy provider schemes.

In addition, development of HSF in conjunction with the local VCS has allowed us to strengthen the relationship we have as an authority with the VCS and wider statutory partners. There is a collaborative voice through the Cost of Living Partnership Group and working closely with frontline partners helps us to get a true picture of the issues and experiences our residents are facing at this time as well as engaging local MPs within the group.

## Data

The following data has been collected over the lifespan of HSF and shows the numbers of households that the scheme has assisted.

Although the service delivery differs the data collection has remained the same for reporting. The number of households differs from the volume of support provided as we have provided multiple support to the same household in some instances.

Round 1							
Time Period	Food Support <i>(Vouchers, Food Parcels, Food Shopping, Hot Meals)</i>	Energy and Water <i>(fuel vouchers, essentials linked to energy/water ie. warm packs, hygrometers)</i>	Wider Essentials <i>(white goods)</i>	Advice Services	Housing Costs <i>(rent arrears)</i>	Total Volume	Total Households
6 months							
06/10/21-31/03/22	443	155	258	0	0	856	683
Round 2							
Time Period	Food Support <i>(Vouchers, Food Parcels, Food Shopping, Hot Meals)</i>	Energy and Water <i>(fuel vouchers, essentials linked to energy/water ie. warm packs, hygrometers)</i>	Wider Essentials <i>(white goods)</i>	Advice Services	Housing Costs <i>(rent arrears)</i>	Total Volume	Total Households
6 months							
01/04/22-30/09/22	1753	3982	0	0	0	5735	1773
Round 3							
Time Period	Food Support <i>(Vouchers, Food Parcels, Food Shopping, Hot Meals)</i>	Energy and Water <i>(fuel vouchers, essentials linked to energy/water ie. warm packs, hygrometers)</i>	Wider Essentials <i>(white goods)</i>	Advice Services	Housing Costs <i>(rent arrears)</i>	Total Volume	Total Households
6 months							
01/10/22-30/03/23	6380	2313	33	0	4	8730	5861
Round 4							
Time Period	Food Support <i>(Vouchers, Food Parcels, Food Shopping, Hot Meals)</i>	Energy and Water <i>(fuel vouchers, essentials linked to energy/water ie. warm packs, hygrometers)</i>	Wider Essentials <i>(white goods)</i>	Advice Services	Housing Costs <i>(rent arrears)</i>	Total Volume	Total Households
1 year Apr23-Mar24							
01/04/23-31/12/23	15,055	1149	76	338	3	16,621	15,960
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>23,631</b>	<b>7599</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31,942</b>	<b>24,277</b>

The fund has provided **2,710** £100 digital Mastercard's to households to enable them to decrease their fuel bills or support their families with fuel or food supplies.

The fund has provided **11,614** emergency food parcels to households who would have otherwise gone without essential food supplies.

Through the Fuel & Water Advisor service **4444** households have been provided with essentials to reduce fuel consumption such as, as water hippos, radiator reflector panels, draft excluders, and hygrometers to help reduce damp. As well as advice on energy/water bills and fuel vouchers for those on pre-paid meters.

In exceptional circumstances the fund has contributed to rent arrears for families who are not entitled to any other form of additional funding support, and they have shown that they are valid cases to receive the support to avoid homelessness or transition from temporary accommodation.

### **Voluntary and Community Sector impact**

Through the development of HSF, we have been able to improve and build on the relationship that we have with Swales VCS. Covid significantly impacted the sector as they saw increasing numbers of residents turning to them for support because of the pandemic. In addition, the impact of the fuel crisis as well as the Cost-of-Living crisis have all played a part in putting incredible strain on their services.

We acknowledge that residents trust the VCS in Swale and are turning to them more and more and so collectively we agreed to design a scheme that would benefit residents first and foremost but also allow the VCS to tackle some of the issues they are facing and reduce pressure to our own frontline services. Without HSF these organisations will without doubt no longer be able to deliver the level of service offer they have been, and many residents will start to feel the effects of a reduced service.

We have spoken to the core delivery partners from Swales VCS and captured their comments and feedback regarding HSF funding ceasing post March 2024 – see attached **Appendix I**.

### **Implications of the fund ending post March 2024**

For Swale residents

- Reduction in availability of emergency support ie. food parcels, fuel vouchers
- Increased wait times to access services
- Increase in mental health issues due to worry of not being able to access support
- Some services that are currently funded by HSF will become chargeable to residents who are unable to afford the costs ie. Age UK hot meals

For Swale Borough Council

- Increase of Safeguarding cases
- Increase in contacts to Housing and Homelessness services
- Increase in non payment of Council Tax
- Increase on pressure on SBC to find alternative support options

For the Voluntary & Community Sector in Swale

- Possible centre closures due to lack of funding
- Organisations unable to meet the demand and therefore having to turn people away or redirect them back to SBC
- Organisations needing to charge for services that are currently available through HSF
- Increased stress and pressures to small organisations without the capability to cope



## Appendix I

### Household Support Fund (HSF)

Voluntary and Community Sector Statements to support Household Support Fund Review Paper January 2024.

#### Children & Families – Ian Townsend-Blazier

##### Emergency food parcels and £100 digital Mastercard's

The HSF has enabled us to support thousands of the most vulnerable members of our community across Swale. Through this work we are able to support those on prepayment meters, billed support and food support. As a local charity the funding has helped support the sustainability of these much needed services. If children/families are unable to meet their basic needs (food, clothes, shelter, warmth) they are unable thrive, concentrate, learn, etc. which impacts their life chances and creates costly interventions later on in life. We are currently in a period where the energy cap has re-risen, food costs and fuel costs are still high and are unlikely to see any deflation.

The services we provide are not just about sort fixes, but long term sustainable changes.

The support team that provides our emergency support are now regulated by Ofgem who undertake 3<sup>rd</sup> party Quality assurance reviews. Below is a quote provided by one resident to Explain on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2023 regarding the difference HSF makes to peoples lives from the support we provide.

"I'm not disappointed in anything. I've not got one bad thing to say, she saved my life. She's done things I never thought was possible. I've gone through so much, I nearly took my own life. She's just listened to me, she has done so many other little things and helped me out with my housing, bills and my health, I've lost my wife. She made me realise that I've got something worth living for. Rebecca has been for me ten all the way. I didn't expect half the help I got from Rebecca. It was very good for me, I have been in a dark place and she pulled me out financially and mentally and helped me get on track. It's been a huge help, she dropped my bills down and support me with emergency credit when in need so I could heat my home and eat. The people who helped me got it down to a 000 kind of thing, especially around Christmas it's been useful. They were awesome, Rebecca, she something else. She is phenomenal, she saved my life. She has this calmness about her, it's not something you can learn. She's got it like she's every man's wife. People should know what good people have. It's only good things can come out of it."

---

#### Citizens Advice Swale – Fiona Spall and Jude Lee

##### Fuel (and other) advice services

The HSF fund has been instrumental in helping CAS to support residents through the COL crisis. The fund has contributed significantly to salary costs and enabled us to meet increasing demand. The wrap around service offered by CAS means that residents are provided with more than just a fuel or food voucher. We provide a holistic service, which includes comprehensive energy advice, income maximisation, benefit checks and support with debt and finances. In the calendar year we made an income gain of **£167,804.12** through HSF alone in addition to helping clients repay over **£37,000** in financial liabilities. In

the last three months alone we've supported 122 clients through funding from HSF. The majority of these clients presented with multiple complex issues requiring ongoing casework or specialist referrals

The impact on residents should funding be pulled would be extremely detrimental to the community and leave a gap in support where demand is growing. Energy prices rose again in January and many of clients are struggling to heat or eat due to the cost of living. The HSF project allows us to make contact with households that are hardest hit and to increasing their income, and helping them to better manage their finances, this in turn relieves the pressures on statutory services and improves mental health and wellbeing

This recent client story demonstrates the difference we can make through HSF:

*Our client contacted us following his move to a very rural and isolated location. He has carpet and curtains in just one room and the Community Support worker has been helping him. Our client described his day to day life as full of pain and despair, he is very lonely and isolated.*

*He was provided with food from the foodbank but this is mostly canned and he can't use a can opener due to dexterity problems with his hands so it's still sitting in his cupboards. He doesn't have the basic utensils required for serving food.*

*Our client has no family support and multiple health conditions which makes it very difficult for him to get out and about. He's unable to read or write and has no digital awareness, having just a basic phone for making calls. On top of this he has a basic income from Universal Credit and can't afford bus fares to get into town.*

*He suffers from depression and has recently had some suicidal thoughts due to his living conditions and ability to see a way forward. He's been turned down three times for Personal Independence Payments, but we're now helping him with an appeal.*

*After several phone calls we've been able to make progress in trying to secure a better quality of life for him through the HSF scheme*

*So far we've managed to secure a £50 cash donation to buy the small items he needs for his kitchen and submitted an application for fuel support*

*Vincent De Paul charity is going to carry out a home visit to see if they can help with white goods, curtains, floor coverings etc.*

*A referral has been made to the Community Practitioner who'll carry out a home visit to see what help and assistance he needs to manage his day to day affairs*

*Age UK is going to contact him about their Community Shopping service (a shop to the value of £45 for him at no cost to him and deliver the food).*

*A referral was also made to Age UK for its Befriending service.*

*Our client was also under the impression that he had to wait another two years before he could retire, but our adviser was able to reassure him that his retirement date was in 2024. At this point his financial situation will improve as he'll be able to access other benefits to assist him.*

*During the follow-up phone call when all of the above was explained to the client, he was more positive and said he wasn't feeling as hopeless as he had been since his move. Speaking to him on the phone there was a definite lift in his demeanour; he appeared much more relaxed.*

---

## **Swale Food Bank (Trussell Trust) – Esther Hurwood**

### **Emergency food support & white goods**

Due to Universal Credit payments being too low to afford the essentials, including food, combined with the Cost of Living Crisis, we are currently needing to support many more clients than we ever have before. We are spending around £1000 per week to ensure enough food & supplies goes to those most in need. The Housing Support Foundation has enabled us to support these families and individuals which have been sadly let down by statutory services and a welfare system that is not fit for purpose. Removing this support from ourselves and many of our professional partners at a time when the whole nation is in crisis financially is a blow to the many we are trying to support.

One family we have supported over the last year is a single mum of 4 children. As the Cost of Living crisis hit, her landlord had no choice but to increase her rent by £300. Housing Benefit agreed to cover this for her, but then Universal Credit decreased her payments by £300, meaning she is now minus £300 per month. This incredible woman is attending college to learn new skills in the hope that she will be able to work a full-time job in the future and come off of benefits completely. If, in addition, we now have to remove food support from this family as a result of losing the HSF, we don't know how she will cope. It is almost certain that she would need to leave her college course to try and get lower paid work, in order that her family can continue to eat.

Having helped 6436 people with emergency food last year, and with a predicted 49% increase in households requiring our support this year, we ask that the Housing Support Fund is not discontinued at the end of this financial year. Far too many households require this support in order to provide food for their children for it to be withdrawn.

---

## **Age UK (Sheppey) – Louise Johnson**

### **Hot meals and food shopping**

We are a charitable organisation that relies on funding, grants, fundraising or charging for our services to be able to be sustainable. Due to the cost-of-living crisis many in our community have been struggling to pay for extra services so have been socialising less or not eating properly. We have been able to offer free two course meal delivery or food packages to those most in need due to the funding from SBC. Without this funding we would not be offering this service so those that are really struggling and vulnerable would find themselves in an even more vulnerable situation. If funding was to stop unfortunately, we would be able to continue the service without charging for it.

Over the months we have had people writing into us to tell us how the service has helped them. Here are some quotes.

“Just a short letter to let you know how much my weekly food parcels have helped out and how grateful I am to have received them. I can’t tell you how much it means to get that extra help”

“I just wanted to say a huge Thank you for our food parcel over the past few weeks. It is so sad really that at 70 years of age I’ve had to turn to a charity to help feed my husband and I but without the help of Age UK I really don’t think we would have managed. The quality and variety of foods we have had through Age UK have been impressive. It has given me the opportunity to prepare and cook some of the nicest, tastiest meals we’ve had for some time. I have always loved cooking and I have to say I have been able to immerse myself in making so many delicious meals from roast dinners, to soups, pastas, jacket potatoes, quiches, pies, puddings and snacks that have not only filled our bellies but also helped my mental wellbeing as I suffer from anxiety and depression, often not being able to step outside the door. Not having the worry of how I was going to feed us as we are really struggling financially to cover our basic needs at present, whilst being busy cooking had made such a difference to me emotionally too so I cannot thank Age UK enough”

“Having my food parcel every week for 4 weeks has helped me so much, just having food that helps with everyday meals makes all the difference. I have been struggling with food shopping and paying bills, sometimes leaving shopping overpaying my bills so thank you so much”

“I have been very fortunate to have received 4 wonderful food parcels via Age UK, which I understand was due to funding from the council. These have been a lifeline for me, as it enabled me with the money saved to pay off a couple of outstanding bills, which I am so grateful for, plus the parcels enabled me to have a little extra money to be able to buy my grandchildren a small token gift to Christmas. I hope that the council will fund these parcels again so as to help more people. I will be forever grateful”

---

## **West Faversham Community Association – Louise Asekokhai**

### **Hot meals – young people**

I just wanted to put forward a few words from West Faversham regarding the difference the HSF grant makes to our service users.

We provide hot, free meals for young people. The grant allows us to cook a variety of tasty meals for the young people that use our clubs, we often get the children arriving early asking what's for dinner, which means that the meal we are providing is likely to be the only proper hot meal they are being offered. Some of the young people have started to bring their siblings along for food, and often visit the community fridge to take other food home for the rest of the family.

I believe from the feedback we receive that we are ensuring many forgotten about young people, some which do not attend fulltime school are getting a decent meal a few times a week which they would not have from anywhere else. Without the grant money we are going to struggle to provide the quality, variety and quantity we offer, and young people will miss out on being fed properly.

Young people need good quality, healthy food to grow and develop, and if they are left hungry they are more likely to shoplift food and start on the wrong path.

It may not seem a lot to many people, but we know that many of the young people we see on a regular basis rely on the meals we offer.

This page is intentionally left blank

## Western Area Committee meeting: Progress on Matters Arising – February 2024

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
1.	Youth provision in villages	<p>Further to the Western Area Committee youth provision project, where Brogdale CIC carried out a survey looking at youth provision needs in the Western area, Rebecca O'Neill, the CEO at Brogdale CIC attended the November 2023 meeting to talk about what the next steps could be.</p> <p>Further the KCC funding ceasing on March 2024 she went through what other funding the organisation had secured and suggested other potential sources of funding that could be identified.</p> <p>It was suggested that Brogdale CIC approach some local businesses as they may be willing to assist.</p> <p>It was also suggested that Brogdale CIC also approach parish councils direct as they may be able to provide funding to benefit their areas.</p>	Brogdale CIC have followed the advice given by Area Committee Members. No further action requested.
2.	Land assets in the Western area.	<p>It was requested at the Area Committee meeting on 8 June 2023 that a list of land in the Western Area be obtained so that Members could consider transferring land assets to Parish Councils.</p> <p>The maps provided at the November 2023 meeting were not of a high enough resolution to see the detail. They should also be presented by parish rather than by ward.</p> <p>Councillors also reported that the maps were not up-to-date.</p>	The land asset maps should be updated and presented by parish rather than by ward. They should be provided in a higher resolution so they could be enlarged. This item will be discussed under item 5.

3.	Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Area Reviews.	<p>The Conservation &amp; Design Team advised that the Planning and Resources Committee agreed to re-designate and adopt Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Areas at their meeting on 18 October 2023.</p> <p>The press notifications to London Gazette and a local newspaper advising of the 21-day notice period, for the re-designated and adopted Conservation Areas for Bredgar and Hartlip was scheduled to be published on 1 December 2023. Adoption notification letters to the local residents within the new Conservation Area boundaries were sent out on 29 November 2023.</p>	<p>The Conservation &amp; Design Team advised there was no further update since the last meeting. Both the Conservation Areas are now adopted and uploaded on the SBC website. All required notifications have been completed.</p> <p>A new Conservation Area for Bexon is being programmed to be undertaken during summer of 2024.</p>
	Article 4	<p>The briefing about Article 4, Conservation Area Reviews that was provided at the November 2023 meeting did not contain enough detail. Members agreed that a fuller update should be provided and an officer attend the February 2024 meeting to give guidance.</p>	<p>As the Conservation Officer was not available to attend the February 2024 meeting, a separate briefing session on proposed Article 4 designation for the adopted Conservation Areas will be arranged as soon as possible. A suitable date to be agreed with Members.</p>
4.	Supporting residents to reduce their energy costs	<p>In 2022/23 Western Area Committee agreed to allocate £4,523.13 to the Fuel and Water Home Advisor Service, via Children and Families, to provide homeowners with energy efficient packs to be given out after advice was given.</p> <p>A leaflet was produced for Area Committee Members and Parish Councils to distribute to residents.</p>	<p>The Fuel and Water Home Advisor has confirmed that all the energy efficient packs purchased with the allocated funding have now been distributed to households in the Western Area.</p>



		The funds have been spent of energy efficient packs, and various campaigns have taken place to promote them to households in the Western Area.	
5.	Heritage issues	<p><b>Local Heritage List</b> - A selection panel date is to be confirmed to finalise the received nominations to be registered on Swale Borough Council (SBC) Local Heritage List register.</p> <p>The next steps will be to organise map plots of all the finalised assets on the SBC GIS system and publish a detailed schedule of the final Local Heritage List on the SBC website.</p>	The Conservation & Design Team advised there was no further update at the present time.

This page is intentionally left blank