
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Teynham Community Hall, 89 Station Road, Teynham ME9 9DU on Thursday, 15 June 2023 from 7.09 pm - 8.49 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Mike Henderson, Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann, Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin (Chair), Julien Speed and Chris Williams (Vice-Chair).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish Councillors Beverley Ferrell (Oare Parish Council (PC)) and Jeff Tuff (Dunkirk PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Adrian Oliver and Larissa Reed.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Claire Martin and Terry Thompson.

97 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

99 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 February 2023 (Minute Nos. 732 – 743) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the change below:

Minute number 739, paragraph one should refer to Abbeyfields and not Abbey Street.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 May 2023 (Minutes Nos. 37 – 38) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

100 NEW COUNCILLOR INTRODUCTIONS

Each Eastern Area Committee Councillor introduced themselves.

101 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Active Travel update - the Active Travel Coordinator referred to the update report included in the agenda pack. He displayed a map showing the route of the Faversham Cross Town Path which went from Lower Road, Faversham, through the town to Love Lane, Faversham. The project was being funded by the £995k secured from Active Travel England through the Active Travel Fund 4 bid, it was

hoped that work would begin by March 2024. The Active Travel Coordinator also gave updates on the Capability & Ambition Fund, Sustrans Projects, Cycling UK, Swale Cycle-re-Cycle, Explore Sittingbourne & Faversham Map, Coast to Downs and Schools Kent County Council (KCC) Capital Grant.

102 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 discussion took place and the following actions were agreed:

- A Member referred to a statement in the report regarding anti-social behaviour, and said that incidents were continuing in her Ward. It was agreed to invite a representative of Kent Police to attend a future meeting.
- Members noted that attendance at Area Committee meetings was variable. It was noted that there was often greater attendance when there were issues that were of interest to the wider Eastern area community on the agenda. It was agreed that Members would suggest relevant topics for inclusion at future meetings.

103 EASTERN 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 Eastern 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?

- Planning;
- bins;
- litter;
- fly-tipping;
- graffiti;
- housing overcrowding;
- air quality;
- enforcement; and
- affordability of housing (social housing, social rent targets and self-build).

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

- Anti-social behaviour;
- pot-holes;
- fly-tipping;
- air quality;
- flooding;
- public transport;

- climate change;
- loss of biodiversity;
- electric vehicle charging; and
- pushing back on the poor waiting lists for special educational needs provision.

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

- Better planning enforcement;
- improved public transport;
- youth provision;
- bring housing back into use;
- partnership working;
- air quality;
- water and sewage; and
- lobby government/passing things back up that were competing with our objectives.

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

- Biodiversity gains through reduced mowing;
- recycling hub and centre for re-useable goods;
- better cross agency communication on travel and public transport to try to improve transport across the area;
- air quality;
- develop a problem-solving approach to electric vehicle charging to be shared across our area;
- local discussions and input into Section 106 spending and finding a way for this to happen without the challenge of pre-determination;
- look into the possibility of area committees being able to crowd fund;
- look at how area committees could apply for external funding; and
- the Council to collate sources of external funding and disseminate to parish/town councils.

104 PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

105 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Lloyd Bowen referred to the traffic problems on roads that resulted from a lack of communication by Kent Highways by not coordinating road closures.

Councillor Bowen asked about the authenticity of letters being sent out to residents from Solar Together with the SBC logo on. The Chief Executive said she would check this and advise the Area Committee.

Councillor Carole Jackson spoke about the piece of land at the end of Whiting Crescent, Faversham and asked if a reconditioned slide or swing could be installed. The Chief Executive responded that it wasn't just the cost of equipment that would fall to SBC, but officers would have to carry out playground inspections, which would be difficult due to reduced resource. The Chief Executive said she would raise the matter with the Head of Environment and Leisure.

The Chair requested that KCC be invited to the September 2023 Eastern Area Committee meeting to discuss the consultation that would be coming out on the proposed closure of Faversham household recycling centre.

Councillor Chris Williams spoke about vehicle engine idling in the Abbey Ward and suggested signs be installed to remind drivers this was enforceable. He also suggested the area be patrolled and advice given to drivers.

106 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

107 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