
EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Faversham Guildhall, Market Place, Faversham, Kent ME13 7AG on Thursday, 28 September 2023 from 7.00 pm - 9.06 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann, Ben J Martin, Hannah Perkin (Chair), Julien Speed and Chris Williams (Vice-Chair).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Trevor Martin and Josh Rowlands (Faversham Town Council (TC)).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Parish/Town Councillors Louise Bareham (Faversham TC), Susan Elworthy (Newnham Parish Council (PC)), Alan Stewart (Graveney with Goodnestone PC) and Paul Townsend (Teynham PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Christopher Blandford, Janet Dart and Claire Stanbury.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Richard Palmer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould and Mike Henderson.

318 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

319 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 June 2023 (Minute Nos. 97 – 107) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

320 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

321 PARKING POLICY

Councillor Richard Palmer, in his capacity as Chair of the Parking Policy Member Working Group, gave a short presentation about the development of a draft Parking Policy.

He said that there was currently no formal Parking Policy, and it was something the Community Committee would like to be developed. They had agreed that a Parking Policy Member Working Group should be set up to work with officers to develop a draft policy.

The membership of the Working Group had been drawn up from the Community Committee with one representative from each political group, plus the Chair.

The Working Group had met twice to discuss the main themes that should be included in the scope of the policy. Councillor Palmer went through the proposed scope of the policy and asked if the Area Committee had any comments on it and whether they considered anything was missing.

The following comments were made:

- Residents in terraced housing paid for a permit to park outside their houses but often found the space was not available. Before evening charges came in, they were able to park overnight at Central Car Park, Faversham for free, now they had to pay to do so, effectively paying twice. Was there any way around that?;
- evening charges in Faversham caused displacement to Preston Street. It had become unsafe and people now parked on both sides of the road which made it impossible for access by emergency services;
- on the Isle of Wight, residents and visitors could purchase monthly or annual permits to park anywhere for that period, could that be an option at Swale?;
- were placement of yellow lines going to be reviewed?;
- in Whitstable it was possible to park all night for a flat fee, this helped businesses;
- were Kent County Council (KCC) likely to be removing powers for on-street parking?;
- consideration needed to be given to smaller hotels who did not have their own car parks, their guests were disadvantaged by the current evening charges;
- could ANPR be used rather than pay and display?;
- the voluntary sector was impacted by the evening charges, how could volunteers be supported?;
- people were being put off from going out in the evenings as paying for parking was an additional cost;
- would Electric Vehicle (EV) parking charges be reviewed?;
- there were already differential parking charges in some places, for example the multi-storey car park in Sittingbourne was subsidised for the cinema; and
- Faversham did not receive subsidies that were given to other groups in Swale.

322 REPORT ON THE BUS CONSULTATION PROJECT

The Programme Delivery Co-ordinator presented the report in the agenda pack which set out the findings of the bus consultation report prepared by Project Centre Limited.

Eastern Area Committee members had agreed on the 3 February 2022 to award £10,000 to undertake a public consultation on local bus services. Preparation commenced in September 2022 with discussions undertaken with key stakeholders including members and KCC, to help shape the project brief. The project brief was to design and manage a public consultation to find out what residents would like to see from local bus services and produce a summary report on the findings of the consultation.

KCC had statutory responsibility for bus services in the county. Swale Borough Council (SBC) had limited influence over the bus services in the borough but could provide a consultative and lobbying role to the County authority and bus companies as they designed services in the future. SBC also had a role as the local planning authority.

The Programme Delivery Co-ordinator went through the key findings of the consultation report.

The following questions were raised:

- Had all the £10,000.00 allocated to this project been spent?;
- some of the graphs and conclusions did not provide a great deal of useful information and some Members felt the report was not good value for money;
- page 11 of the report referred to responses received from the ME13 postcode area and included areas such as Aylesford, Chatham, Gillingham, Maidstone, Rochester, Sheerness, Snodland and West Malling which were incorrect;
- were any other schools other than the Abbey School consulted?;
- what will the report be used for?;
- not all parish/town councillors had heard about the online community event. In future could Chairs be included in the email invitations and could plenty of advanced notice be given?

The Programme Delivery Co-ordinator responded that £9,800.00 had been spent on the consultation and the report. The remaining £200.00 was set aside for a youth event, but this was not required as the Abbey School incorporated the consultation activity into the school day. The comments about the quality of the data and value for money would be fed back as well as the incorrect inclusion of areas outside the ME13 postcode area. No other schools apart from the Abbey School were consulted as they had an active Youth Council which included local students from a range of demographics. The report would be used for lobbying and consultation responses for matters relating to bus services. The request to include Chairs of parish and town councils in email invitations, and giving sufficient notice, was noted for the future.

323 CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Rich Lehmann gave an update on the development of the SBC Corporate Plan. He went through the proposed priorities and asked for comments. The priorities were discussed, and the following amendments were suggested:

Community:

To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.

Economy:

Working with our businesses and charitable organisations to improve a sustainable economy which delivers for local people.

Environment:

To provide a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable environment and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.

(It was suggested that reference be made that the borough be more resilient for the challenges ahead).

Health & Housing:

Everyone to have access to decent and affordable homes and improved health and wellbeing.

(It was suggested that reference should be made to housing not damaging health and it should be safe and secure)

Running the Council:

To proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver our priorities in an open, transparent and efficient way, working within our resources, and upholding standards in public life.

324 FLOODING IN THE EASTERN AREA

The Chair said that flooding in the Eastern area had often been discussed and actions agreed to find solutions to the problem. Going forward she said it would be helpful for the Area Committee to agree a way forward on the wider issue of flooding in the area. She asked if a Member would be willing to lead on this matter and liaise with the Member of Parliament, KCC, Southern Water (SW) and the Environment Agency.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Chris Williams, agreed to take the Eastern Area Committee lead on flooding issues in the Eastern Area.

It was agreed that Area Committee Members, town and parish councillors and members of the public would feed their comments and specific issues to Councillor Williams and he would collate all the information and prepare a document to bring to the December 2023 Eastern Area Committee meeting, so that further actions could be considered.

It was agreed that the Area Committee Chair, on behalf of the Eastern Area Committee, would lobby the Parliamentary Members for Sittingbourne & Sheppey and Faversham & Mid Kent, on the impact national planning policy had on flooding issues.

Mr Taylor, a member of the public, talked about the problems in Whitstable Road, Faversham and the recent works undertaken by KCC. The Chair said that since the works had taken place, they had not been tested by heavy rainfall, so it would be best to wait until that had happened before taking that issue forward with KCC and SW.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Vice-Chair, Councillor Chris Williams takes the Eastern Area Committee lead on flooding issues in the Eastern area.**

- 2) *That Area Committee Members, town and parish councillors and members of the public feed their comments and specific issues to Councillor Williams and he would collate all the information and prepare a document to bring to the December 2023 Eastern Area Committee meeting.*
- 3) *That the Area Committee Chair, on behalf of Eastern Area Committee, lobbied the Parliamentary Members for Sittingbourne & Sheppey and Faversham & Mid Kent on the impact national planning policy had on flooding issues.*

325 CONSULTATION ON THE CLOSURE OF FAVERSHAM HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE

The KCC Divisional Member for Swale East advised that the consultation on the proposed closure of Faversham household recycling centre would be launched mid-October and would close mid-December 2023.

The Chair said that as the consultation deadline would be very close to the December Eastern Area Committee meeting, she would set up a small email group to prepare a response that could go from the Area Committee and town and parish councils. This suggestion was agreed by Committee Members.

Resolved:

- 1) *That the Chair sets up a small email group to prepare a response to the consultation on the proposed closure of the Faversham Household Recycling Centre, that could be submitted to KCC by the Area Committee and town and parish councils.*

326 PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Taylor, a member of the public, raised the issue of foul sewage disposal from the Preston Fields development. He asked if SBC had checked if SW carried out works to reinforce the sewage network to cope with the additional sewage from new developments. A Member responded that once a planning application was determined there would be recommended conditions from statutory consultees, such as KCC, SW and the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board. Prior to the commencement of works the developer would have to submit how the plan would meet the recommended conditions. SBC planning officers checked that the conditions had been met, however, SW were not accountable to SBC which was a flaw in Government policy. The Chair confirmed that this was something that could be included in the letter that the Area Committee would send to the Swale Members of Parliament.

Faversham Town Councillor Crayford asked about the SBC policy to only remove graffiti if it was offensive. He asked for clarification on the definition of offensive. It was agreed that the Policy & Engagement Officer would find out and advise Councillor Crayford.

327 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Whiting Crescent, Faversham – Councillor Carole Jackson asked for her request for the installation of play equipment to be resubmitted to officers for consideration.

Active Travel update – the Policy & Engagement Officer was asked to find out and circulate to Area Committee Members the date of drop-in session for the Cross Town Path project.

328 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

A Member asked what the current position was on the consultation for the Permanency of the Town Centre Pedestrian Scheme and if the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee could provide an update at the December 2023 Eastern Area Committee meeting.

Councillor Carole Jackson raised the issue of an empty property on South Road, Faversham. The Policy & Engagement Officer said she would make enquiries with the relevant officer.

The Chair raised the issue of the increase in case work that councillors were experiencing regarding people who were about to be made homeless. She asked if it was possible for the SBC Communications Team to liaise with Housing to put out some signposting messages on social media. The Policy & Engagement Officer was asked to pass this request onto the relevant teams.

329 MATTERS REFERRED TO AREA COMMITTEE BY SERVICE COMMITTEES

No issues were raised.

330 MATTERS 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