
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Committee Room, Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne ME10 3HT on Thursday, 12 December 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.35 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Tim Gibson, Mark Last (Vice-Chair), Charlie Miller, Karen Watson, Tony Winckless and Ashley Wise.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Charlotte Hudson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Derek Carnell and Carrie Pollard.

VICE-CHAIR IN-THE-CHAIR

Following the resignation of Councillor Angie Valls, Councillor Mark Last (Vice-Chair) took the chair for this meeting and would be referred to as 'Chair' for the remainder of these minutes.

498 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

499 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

500 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 September 2024 (Minute Nos 274 – 284) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

501 COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Head of Housing and Community Services gave an update on the Swale Community Safety Partnership Plan which was created each year and set out the priorities for the Partnership, based upon data and consultation with partners and the public.

The Partnership were keen to undertake a consultation with Elected Members at County/Borough/Parish Level to contribute to the review of these priorities.

The survey would close on 3 January 2025 and could be accessed via this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/qTwncsZGi1>

502 EMPOWERING YOU IN SWALE

The Head of Housing & Community Services gave a presentation on Empowering You in Swale, the focus of which was community development.

Community development enabled people to work collectively to bring about a positive change. The aim was to work collectively promoting positive social change within the borough, connecting with communities and partners to understand the key issues and improve lives.

The four Empowering You in Swale priorities were:

- Creating skilled, educated and working communities.
- Growing healthy communities.
- Empowering stronger, more sustainable communities.
- Developing strong partnerships for our communities.

The meeting considered the following questions:

1. Do you think these are the correct priorities?
2. Are there any other localised issues that you feel should be included?
3. Are you aware of any specific projects/services that we can collaborate with through the strategy?:

Below is a summary of points raised:

- The Council should look at student engagement especially where young people were struggling with education;
- damp and mould in private rental properties was a problem that needed addressing;
- good results with enforcement action should be celebrated, getting the message out that enforcement could be used as encouragement for good practices and fines were reinvested back into preventative work;
- people could be encouraged to use the Bob Fowler Allotments in Sittingbourne, it was beneficial for mental health;
- suggested working with landlords to prevent evictions;
- communications and workshops were important, so people knew what assistance they were entitled to;
- homeschooled pupils missed out on immunisations and health and hygiene education. Any safeguarding concerns needed to be reported via the Swale Borough Council (SBC) Safeguarding Team;
- should explore how young carers could be supported; and
- it was important to continue the good work with rough sleepers and the homeless.

The Chair suggested that representatives from partner organisations should be invited to speak at future Sittingbourne Area Committee meetings to provide updates on work being undertaken.

503 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

Periwinkle Mill and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) – Members requested that some communications go out on how the UKSPF had been spent in Swale. Members requested an update be brought to a future Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting.

504 PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Jackie Davidson introduced himself and said he had a background in data, statistics and carrying out surveys for local authorities. He said that a report had recently come out which stated that railways nationally and in the south-east were losing a lot of money due to a drop in passenger numbers. Mr Davidson said he had carried out a survey looking into why this was, but the survey had been too small to be statistically significant. He said he would like to carry out a bigger survey and had an outline design, and was hoping that students would be able to assist with this piece of work with the support of the Sittingbourne Area Committee.

Mr Davidson said he had heard a lot of comments about the Chalkwell bus services being unreliable. He believed they did not have enough drivers and vehicles to run the service and that a bus depot in Sittingbourne would be beneficial.

Members discussed transport issues and agreed the following actions:

- 1) Before committing to carrying out a survey, the Head of Housing & Community Services would speak to the Active Travel Co-ordinator to find out what data they had;
- 2) invite the bus companies and a representative from Southeastern Trains to come along to a future Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting;
- 3) the Chair would write to Kent County Council (KCC) to find out when the Government Funding allocated to improve bus services would be activated in Swale; and
- 4) Councillor Karen Watson would report back to the Sittingbourne Area Committee after she had attended the next Bus Forum meeting on 30 January 2025. Members would then consider if transport issues should be added as a standing item on the Area Committee agenda with an Area Committee Member taking the lead.

505 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Further to the installation of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at Milton Recreation Ground, Sittingbourne, a Member asked if they could monitor the whole area. Councillor Tony Winckless agreed to liaise with the Swale CCTV Control Room to test them out.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour when walking along poorly lit footpaths were reported. Members stressed the importance of reporting all incidents to the Police via the 101 service. Councillor Ashley Wise said he would check to see if the situation could be improved by adjusting the existing street lighting.

506 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