

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

SWALE AREA COMMITTEE

Meeting held on 8th December 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

MINUTES

PRESENT Cllrs Jeff Tutt (Chair). Mike Baldock (Vice)
Paul Ray (Boughton) Amanda Saunders (Selling)
Steve Coates (Doddington) Ken Ingleton (Minster on Sea)
Dolley White (Sheerness TC) Clive Sims (Borden)
Brian Clarke (Bredgar) Robert Ball (Bobbing)
Linda Horne (Rodmersham) Stephen Harvey (Newington)
Janet Hill (Oare) Steve Parfitt (Bredgar) Roger
Sonia Jackson (Oare) Elliott Jayes (Minster on Sea)
Vivien Rich (Tunstall) Sally Wickenden (Newnham)

Ryan Shiel – Mid Kent Programme Manager, KCC

Apologies Cllr Mary Pape (Bapchild) Cllr Mik Larking (Bapchild)
Cllr Richard Palmer (Newington) CI Alan Rogers

Secretary Nicola Butlin

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcome all Councillors and Ryan Shiel from Kent County Council
2. The Minutes from the meeting on the 14th September were agreed
3. **Matters arising** – Miss Butlin thanked all Councillors for providing the information on their Parish Council full meeting days, saying she had had a good response with only 4 Councils

not having responded. From the information gathered, Tuesdays had the least impact on the Parish Councils.

4. Police Update – Miss Butlin had received a written report from CI Alan Rogers which she read out.

“Good evening everyone and I hope you have all been able to stay safe during this period? Policing has been significantly challenging over the last 9 months in the context of Covid, whilst we have adapted to the various changes against the Health Protection Regulations and continued to understand exceptions to the Regulations as they move between the iterations (we are now working under Regulation 5). We continue to attempt to engage, explain and encourage people to comply during our day-to-day encounters and have some understanding of repeat locations, repeat concerns where compliance may not have been made. Together with other partners we are trying to understand the behavioural influences as to non-compliance. There is much anecdotal commentary about the infection rate at Swale and we are trying to understand the intelligence picture. We know, for instance, that there are care home, schools and prison settings that influence the infection rate. As a society we all have a part to play in ensuring we encourage others to comply. Within the police we have experienced infections, confirmed Covid cases and symptomatic but have managed to maintain the service that would be expected. During this 9 months Kent Police has been proud to have the lowest absence rate in the Country and an independent inspection by HMICFRS made comment that Kent Police was exemplary in its response to Covid; both externally and ensuring that its officers and staff remained safe through the provision of Covid-secure environments and PPE.

Crime across Swale has dropped across most crime types, with 1,052 less victims of crime this financial year to date compared to last year, a reduction of 11.8%. That is phenomenal. There have been 116 less burglaries this year, a 41.1% reduction. The main crime type which has seen an increase is violence against the person, predominantly sitting across the Domestic Abuse arena, we have experienced a 18.4% increase, or a further 356 reports compared to last year. Some of this is about how the crime types are recorded because if a victim discloses more than one instance then each instance is another report (previously we would have a ‘master’ incident).

Whilst this is really good news around crime reduction I raised at our Community Safety Partnership meeting this week my concern around ‘hidden harms’ and potential under-reporting where some support services may have become more tricky to contact or engage where physical attendance is either necessary or preferred. Virtual contact with some people can result in disengagement and we should not underestimate that many in our society rely on the face-to-face support. We also need to anticipate the impacts of Covid in the future, higher unemployment and deprivation may lead to the rise in other crime types such as fraud and theft.

Seasonally we continue to plan and resource against anticipated rises in burglary, theft of and from motor vehicles during the dark evenings.

We are also preparing for some resource commitment to Operation Blythe, the response to the EU Exit where police will be supporting the traffic management plans, compliance and enforcement of those attending our ports. As a district the arterial routes of the A259, to

Key Street and through to Manston for those using the port of Dover will be an obvious pinch-point. I understand the wider planning has considered the communities and its impacts.

So lots going on, lots to think about for the future and like everyone I only hope that 2021 is a much better year than 2020 !

Lastly, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hope that you can meet with your families this year, grouping of a maximum of 3 families of course !”

Regards,

Alan”

There were no questions for Cl Rogers.

Cllr Baldock said the police handling of Covid-19 was very much appreciated and asked thanks be sent to Cl Rogers from this committee. He said it was commendable how Kent Police Force had not caused panics within the county, unlike other Forces in the country. This was seconded by Cllr Saunders and agreed by all.

• **Report from Cllr Palmer on PCC Meeting**

Brexit - Kent Police & KCC are working on this and feel that the plans in place will minimise the disruption in and around towns and villages

PCSO - Again stated PCSOs should be attending and working with Parish Councils - seems some are but others don't engage. My view is that PCVSOs are better out in the community and perhaps a monthly newsletter that the PC can share with residents

POLICING NUMBERS

The Force is currently working towards an uplifted establishment of 3,847.5 FTE by 31 March 2021. This compares with 3,787 officers in March 2010 and 3,181 in 2016 when the PCC came into office. 449 new officers in 2020/21 - Despite Covid-19, the officer recruitment process has continued with applications being shortlisted, eligibility checks completed and briefings all conducted virtually

POLICE & COVID

Due to the unprecedented nature of Covid-19, this has been a particularly difficult and challenging year. Public services though have had to adapt at pace in order to not only protect their workforce, but to continue delivering critical services that support and protect local communities

Like all forces, Kent Police has adopted the College of Policing's four phase approach to engagement – otherwise known as the four 'E's. Officers and staff will continue to maintain this approach.

1. Engage – officers speak to people and try to establish their awareness and understanding of the situation. They may ask people about their circumstances if they are out in public. Officers give people the opportunity to express their views. They listen and take people’s responses into account.

2. Explain – officers try to educate people about any personal risks they are taking, they will explain the social distancing regulations and highlight the responsibilities all share. Officers treat people with dignity and respect. They highlight their trustworthy motives by explaining wider social factors, such as the risks to public health and the NHS by not sticking to the rules.

3. Encourage – officers may need to guide individuals, suggesting they return home. Officers can encourage people to act reasonably, emphasising that staying alert and safe (social distancing) saves lives. They demonstrate consistency in their approach and are willing to explain why they are requesting a certain course of action. If an officer has been explicit in their request for someone to take action, has explained the risk and encouraged them to be reasonable to save lives and they refuse, then it may become necessary to:

4. Enforce – officers may, as a last resort, remove a person to the place where they live, using reasonable force only if it is a necessary and proportionate means of ensuring compliance. They may also fine individual(s) for breaching the Regulations.

Recognising that some may still be in the system, from 27 March to 19 October, the Force issued 127-130 Fixed Penalty Notices, equivalent to 7 per 100,000 population.

My view is Kent police have managed this Pandemic in an exemplary way and I hope this committee will show its appreciation. I do feel that in certain areas and certain people who continue to flout the rules that number 4, Enforcement needs to be engaged more robustly.

5.Speaker – Ryan Shiel, KCC

Ryan’s presentation is attached to these Minutes for reference.

He made the following comments:-

- HIPS is a living document that shares information from Parish Councils to KCC
- The document provides the information on local transport issues required in the Parish
- A Project Manager from KCC is assigned to go through the HIPS at least once a year
- Parishes can assist Kent Police in Speed Watch campaigns
- Be realistic with requests on HIPS
- Supply as much information as possible

Maintenance Enquiries are dealt with by Alan Blackburn who is the Swale District Manager and Andy Watson who is the Swale Highways Engineer.

Report problems online

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>

Highway Improvement Enquiries are dealt with by Sarah Ellcock who is the Swale Project Manager

Recent Parish schemes delivered in Swale are HGV signage in Boughton, Dunkirk and Hernhill. There was an issue of HGV's 'wandering' off route through the villages. The signage is simple and to the point so can be understood by all nationalities.

Main Road in Queenborough had an issue with cars parked dangerously near to the Station. New double yellow lines were installed, a simple solution with maximum effect.

Lynsted had an issue with speeding through the village. It was decided to insert gates as this makes drivers aware they are about to drive through a village, which slows speed down.

Questions

- Cllr Saunders – Selling has a major problem with cars parked on a hill, over the pavement, obstructing the path and vision for oncoming traffic. What is the solution

Ryan suggested looking at parking restrictions and asking where would the cars go? Would moving the cars create another issue? Ensure one problem solved does not create a further problem

- Cllr Baldock – Some things can be achieved with a reasonable outlay and not a lot of money

Ryan said big priorities have to be on HIPS longer. Advises Parishes do quick ones that can be achieved easily, prioritise as best as possible. Ryan and Sarah will assist with this.

- Cllr Clarke – Bredgar have gates, but they need to be maintained otherwise they rot and collapse. Is that a priority to go through HIPS to maintain them?

Ryan said this was the case with a lot of 'gated' parishes. However, they are now using a white pvc instead of wood, which will need less maintenance. He said this wasn't a priority on HIPS, but if they need replacing as gone beyond repair then the pvc ones would be sort and to still put it on HIPS

- Cllr White – on the Isle of Sheppey there are 11 primary schools. Is there any way to use the HIP regarding schools, e.g. improvements to highway, air quality etc?

Ryan said the school would liaise directly with KCC regarding school travel plans.

- Cllr Saunders – Is there a backlog currently?

Ryan said at the moment there wasn't, but not advisable to put in a request this side of Christmas.

The Chair thanked Ryan for attending, who confirmed if anyone had any further queries to contact himself or Sarah.

5.GP update - Cllr Baldock confirmed a meeting had taken place via Zoom and the topic of future speakers had been discussed. Suggestions included James Freeman to talk on new planning laws.

Cllr Baldock reported that a Motion had been passed by Swale Borough Council at their Full Council Meeting. The GP Committee agreed this should be brought to this meeting for discussion.

Resolved

That the following amended motion be referred to the Policy Development Review Committee and be reported back to Full Council:

1) That the Swale Kent Association of Local Councils be asked on an annual basis to nominate two Parish Representative Members to sit on each of the four Area Committees, with the condition that those representative members are members of a Parish or Town Council within the relevant Area Committee geography.

2) That properly nominated Parish Representatives of the Area Committees, with the one exception detailed in (3) below, enjoy the same rights as Borough Members to debate propose and vote for recommendations made by the Area Committees to Swale's Cabinet.

3) That Parish Representative Members of the Area Committees not be permitted to vote on spending decisions made under delegated powers by the Area Committee.

4) That Officers be instructed with drafting the necessary changes to the Constitution to allow recommendations 1 to 3 above and to present their report to the General Purposes Committee in accordance with the Constitution.

Cllr Baldock was not happy that the Full Council had voted in agreement with the Motion without first liaising with SAC or even asking SAC for comment. He saw little point in delegates from SAC attending the respective Area Committee Meetings when each Parish Council was sending a delegate anyway. He felt this would be problematic as the SAC delegate would be representing the whole of SAC! Cllr Harvey said the delegate would have to be very committed to represent SAC.

Cllr Tutt asked if the delegate would have voting rights? Cllr Baldock confirmed the SAC Area Committee representatives would have no extra rights from that of the Parish Councils.

Cllr Tutt said he would look at the Motion and correspond with Swale Borough Council. Members agreed for the Chairman to write a very strong letter to SBC.

Cllr Hill said parish councils had received emails from their Ward Councillors prior to the Motion going to Full Council. Cllr Baldock said this was incorrect so far as Western Area Committee was concerned. Cllr Hill confirmed Eastern Area had received communication.

Cllr Ingleton confirmed his agreement with Cllr Baldock and does not understand the advantage of having a SAC delegate.

Cllr White fully supported Area Committees, but said communication needs to be more open and transparent. She asked if the Area Committee Minutes can be attached to the SAC Minutes?

Cllr Ball said the Parish Council only have an indicative vote. Cllr Baldock said it is necessary to comply with the law of the Local Government Act 1972 and the legal department were still checking this.

Cllr Baldock asked this be on the Agenda at the next SAC meeting.

7. Correspondence – None

8. Any other business –

- Cllr Saunders asked that Cllr Palmer be thanked for his report.
- Cllr Tutt thanked Cllr Sims for his excellent report at the KALC AGM regarding the litter Motion, which he confirmed was successful and now going to NALC.
- Cllr Wickenden (Newnham) – Does the 20mph extend out to the villages around Faversham? The village is regularly used as a cut through from the M2 to the M20.

Cllr Baldock said a lot of villages were trying to take this forward and wanted KCC to adopt a policy in this regard. The 20mph limit had been proved to work.

Cllr Ingleton said Minster on Sea have been trying to get 20mph limit on 2m wide lanes, but they have been told by

KCC that the speed limits are based on pollution in towns, but in rural areas they do it differently. He said they were currently in a stalemate situation.

Cllr Harvey suggested asking for a policy document from KCC and what the legal position is.

Cllr Clarke said he agreed with everything that had been said. He had tried in Bredgar, but couldn't get it because of KCC Policy. The speed limits recorded have to be 24mph or less, but they were recording 25/26mph so didn't pass the criteria. As a result Bredgar have had to step down with this campaign.

Cllr Baldock confirmed Cllr Clarke was correct and there are differences between 20mph limits and 20mph zones.

He said it would be cost effective for KCC if they did a county wide limit for residential areas, rather than piecemeal. He said a critical mass of support is needed from Parish Councils. He suggested KALC do a countywide survey of Parish Councils with a 'yes' or 'no' in support.

- Cllr Hill, as a note of warning to Councillors, had taken photos of wind turbines and shared with Swale Borough Council and KCC. However, she found her photos in a glossy report by KCC with no credits. She asked Councillors to be careful if they want their photos to be credited.

9. Speakers

Cllr Sims suggested a Police Public Order talk relating to illegal encampments. It would be helpful to have advice and information on this.

Cllr Harvey requested James Freeman be contacted urgently to confirm a talk from him on the new law with planning.

10. The date of the next meeting is 9th March 2021

Location to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9pm.