

SEFTON AREA PARTNERSHIP OF LOCAL Councils
Aintree Village-Formby-Hightown-Ince Blundell-Little Altcar
Lydiate-Maghull-Melling-Sefton-Thornton

Minutes of the Meeting of the Area Partnership held on Thursday 31st March, 2016 at Maghull Town Hall

PRESENT:

Cllrs G.Lee (Chair, Melling), S.Gent (Aintree Village), P.Gill (Aintree Village), M.Coles (Formby), D.Warren (Hightown), I.Cowell (Clerk, Ince Blundell), A.Ibbs (Little Altcar), L.Kolassa (Little Altcar), J.Bailey (Lydiate), M.Byrne (Maghull), J.Desmond (Maghull), C.Jones (Sefton), D.Miles (Thornton), P.Bond (Environment Agency), J.Coule (Sefton MBC), D.McCullough (Sefton MBC)

APOLOGIES:

Cllrs J.Colbert (Aintree Village), P.Wiencke (Formby), R.Baker (Melling), A.Carr (Melling), J.Duffy (Clerk, Sefton), M.Duffy (Sefton)

1. GUEST SPEAKER

1.1 Jill Coule – Head of Regulation & Compliance, SMBC

“Future of the Area Committees”

1.1.1 Overview

The Consultation process regarding the future of the Area Committees started in December 2015. It is recognised that life has moved on since they were established in 2000, and whilst it is appreciated that the internet and social media have directly impacted on these; providing residents with another means of reporting issues affecting them to SMBC, it is also noted that some residents do not use these mediums thus meaning there is still a need for the Area Committees and other ways of reporting matters to, and communicating with Council Officers. Representatives from the Police and other Key Partners, in addition to Parish Councillors, Borough Councillors and members of the public attend these meetings. Notably attendance at Area Committee meetings can fluctuate greatly, since attendance is often determined upon whether or not the Agenda items for discussion are of interest to local residents. In Southport attendance is often higher, potentially due to the fact that Southport does not have any Parish/Town Councils.

Jill was keen to stress that SMBC are merely in a ‘listening mode’ at present, and as part of the process each Area Committee has been visited to gather opinions and suggestions.

1.1.2 Comments / Questions

- (a) Cllr Lee stated that he has attended many Area Committee meetings over the last 12 years. Prior to the establishment of the Central Sefton Area Committee Cllr Lee believes the East Sefton Area Committee meetings were better attended as the meetings were smaller and the issues discussed more relevant to local residents.
- (b) Comment was made that it is often difficult to access Central Area Committee meetings given the area this covers is huge geographically and very dispersed, and the issues discussed are often too diverse and irrelevant.
- (c) It is felt that Area Committee meetings are too ‘stage managed’; given that the Agenda is decided in advance and important issues raised at the meeting itself are often turned down despite numerous residents wanting to discuss such matters.
⇒ *Jill provided clarification that the deadline for raising Agenda items is 12 noon of the day prior to the meeting.*

- (d) It is felt that SMBC is not listening to local residents and they are merely 'going through the motions'. SMBC must listen and consult with local residents. Notably SMBC's commitment to the Parish Charter is seemingly lacking, and it is not working. An example was given whereby a recent enquiry with a Planning Officer had proven that the Officer was not even aware what the Parish Charter was! Cllr Coles also re-iterated that his offer to Ian Willman to present the Parish Charter to staff had still not been taken up.
- (e) It was stressed that as unpaid volunteers Parish and Town Councils are very much a part of the democracy of SMBC. We speak on behalf of the local residents we represent and must be listened to. We are not just there to make up the numbers. It was requested the Clerks' meeting with SMBC be reinstated.
- (f) The lack of mention of Advisory Committees in the SMBC Constitution was raised, as was the fact that the general public perceive the Consultation on the future of the Area Committees to be just a tick box exercise. It is felt that Area Committees have lost their way, and to ensure healthy democracy there needs to be a move away from making decisions behind closed doors. The rationale behind the scrapping of the Sefton East Area Committee is unknown since it was clearly more local and cohesive, plus it was a good problem solving mechanism.
- (g) Is it not possible to return to the original format? Was the reduction in the number of Area Committees simply a cost cutting measure?
 ⇒ *Jill confirmed that the reduction in the number of Area Committees from 5 to 3 was a cost cutting measure. Admittedly the current structure of Area Committee meetings does seem to allow for less public engagement and must be reviewed. Jill was keen to assure us that SMBC are listening to us, and SMBC have Area Committees although they are not obligated to do so, since a working relationship between Local Authorities, Parish and Town Councils can be conducted in other ways. It is recognised that each Area Committee is very different due to their unique and varying issues.*
- (h) Face to face intervention will definitely still be required. Doing things online solely will exclude the non-computer literate or those without internet access.
- (i) It was queried how decisions currently made at Area Committee meetings would be made if the Area Committee meetings were disbanded? Could any of these decisions be discharged to Parish and Town Councils?
 ⇒ *Alternatives have been suggested in the report to the Area Committees. Some functions can be discharged via an Officer to other Committees, etc. Most functions would fall to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.*
- (j) The lack of visible representation by Ward Councillors at Area Committee meetings was raised.
- (k) The Police reports given at Area Committee meetings are very useful, and similarly the explanations provided as to how problems will be tackled. It would however be helpful in some cases if the public was consulted about their ideas as to how to tackle particular problems.
- (l) Reference was made to a recent article published in The Champion newspaper, which requested people to write to Jerry McConkey of SMBC about the state of the roads. Surely the Parish Charter is a better mechanism for addressing such issues?

Jill stated that any solutions will be presented to Cabinet who will make the final decision, and she assured us that our views would be reflected in this report. Jill is very keen to be involved in discussions to discover people's wishes and views. Jill is happy with the level of engagement so far which has included 3 Area Committee meetings, and 6 engagement exercises promoted via local press. All suggestions will be looked at and common themes identified. SMBC are currently looking at other models and options used by other Local Authorities. There will be a publication late Summer/early September 2016 explaining the next steps.

A show of hands took place, which unanimously showed that those present believed the current Area Committees are a waste of time. It is also felt that Ward Councillors should be more visible both at meetings and generally. Jill concluded by thanking us for a really helpful discussion, and also offered

to speak to individual Parish and Town Councils about SMBC's statutory obligations. Jill understands the frustration in contacting some SMBC departments, and stated she would circulate a list of the PAs for the various departments given there have many lots of changes in the last 12-18 months.

1.2 Paul Bond – Flood Resilience Team, Environment Agency

“Resilient Communities”

1.2.1 What does the Environment Agency do?

- The Environment Agency has responsibility for main rivers and the sea
- They work with main Authorities to gather and share information
- They work with Key Partners to resolve issues to co-ordinate a response
- They issue flood warnings
- They engage and work with Communities to help build resilience

1.2.2 What can Communities do to protect themselves?

Resilient Communities make the best use of local knowledge, skills and resources alongside the deployment of emergency procedures and resources to protect themselves. It's important that Communities know,

- Where to find support
- How to help each other
- What statutory Support Agencies can provide

1.2.3 Drivers for Environment Agency Community Resilience Work

- Improving forecasting and warning for surface water flooding
- Linking technology and society
- Working in partnership to respond and adapt to flooding
- **Delivering more for less** – in light of the projected state of public finances, the next five years will be particularly challenging. There is a pressing need to deliver current and future services with less public funding which is likely to require new or extended services to be funded through efficiency savings. It may also prompt calls for simplification and more integration and centralisation of services, whilst continuing to engage with customers and partners locally.
- The **Flood and Water Management Act** will have a major influence on how and by whom Flood and Coastal Risk Management will be delivered in England and Wales. In addition, the Environment Agency's *Strategic Overview role in England* for all sources of flooding and coastal erosion will be influential, as well as the Environment Agency *Flood Incident Management Strategic Overview 2010-15* and the forthcoming *Working Principles for Flood Detection and Forecasting*.
- **Living with climate and environmental change** through mitigation and adaptation will become more important. There is likely to be a drive towards actions and measures, which help society to adapt to the wider impacts of climate change rather than just individual hazards, such as flooding. Better understanding and predicting the effects of climate change on flooding in terms of frequency and consequence as well as effective interventions will be crucial to this.

- **Societal change** – predicted trends towards higher population and demographic change are likely to continue. This will put more people, many of them vulnerable, at risk of flooding.

1.2.4 What can we do?

- Have a Plan detailing areas/properties at risk of flooding, location of Flood Protection equipment, known vulnerable and infirm residents, and local Flood Wardens/organizations to contact in the event of a flood.
- Promote the Plan and update it regularly
- Sign up for Flood Warnings and monitor local water levels.
- Prepare a flood kit of essential items (i.e. medications)
- Move pets/belongings to safe place
- Wait for instructions from Emergency Services
- Call 999 if stranded

1.2.5 How to become a more resilient Community

- Form a Community Engagement group
- Develop a (10 Step) Community Emergency Plan

1.2.6 What next?

- Environment Agency to explore options with professional Partners to agree how best to deliver Community Engagement
- Environment Agency to establish a list of Community Leads to enable effective communications with Communities to occur

1.2.7 Comments / Questions

- (a) There is a definite need for better circulation of the emergency flooding number.
- (b) Some residents do not accept they have a part to play.
⇒ *This is a very good point. Communities need to be as prepared as they can be. It's about Communities helping each other.*
- (c) Lydiate is quite low lying and during the recent floods several houses flooded. It's thought the lack of clearance of local ditches may have been a key factor.
⇒ *The Environment Agency are trying to promote good land management, i.e. turning over of fields, clearance of ditches, and instruction on the best way to plant flowers/crops.*
- (d) What responsibilities do landowners have with regards Flood Plain management? Are we moving towards the use of drainage boards in this country, as they are currently being successfully utilised in Lincolnshire?
⇒ *Paul agreed to find out about any future proposals for drainage boards to be used.*
- (e) Comment was made about old drainage pumps in the Altcar area, which need replacing.
⇒ *Reference was made to a document entitled, "Living on the edge", which explains where maintenance works are targeted and how such works are decided. Some watercourses are the responsibility of SMBC, the Lead Local Flood Authority. The difficulty is that there are so many Regulatory Bodies. Paul agreed to send the link for this document to the Secretary.*
- (f) It is understood that there is a conflict of interest with English Nature regarding the conservation of particular habitats, which is partially responsible for some drains not being cleared.
- (g) Comment was made that the Canal in Melling that falls under the responsibility of the Canal Rivers Trust has not been dredged for the last 10-15 years.

- (h) Do the Environment Agency have any influence when it comes to objecting to Planning Applications?
 ⇒ *The Environment Agency is a statutory Consultee for sites in Flood zones 2+3. They are listened to and flood risk is taken seriously when considering new Planning Applications. They can make stipulations with regards the following,*
1. *Controlling rate of flow, i.e. utilisation of run off and underground tanks*
 2. *Requirements for maintenance and management*

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (28/01/16)

Cllr Warren proposed that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the Meeting and Cllr Coles seconded this. Those present were in agreement.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Local Plan

The Local Plan has gone through and the Inspector produced an Interim report favouring the Local Plan and its' contents before the end of February 2016. It will however not be approved until September 2016.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

- * Planning Department, SMBC - 30/3/16, 22/3/16, 16/3/16
 - Weekly List 9/3/16, 4/3/16, 23/2/16, 17/2/16, 9/2/16 + 4/2/16
- * Annette McGarrigle (PA to Jill Coule, SMBC) - 30/3/16 + 22/3/16
 - Link to Consultation & Cabinet Report
 ⇒ *The Chair queried who had replied to Jill Coule about this. Ian Cowell stated he'd sent a personal letter and had also completed the online survey. Those present were asked to send responses to the Secretary for collation, in addition to member Councils also responding directly to Jill Coule.*
- * Ian Loughlin – Senior Planner, SMBC - 30/3/16 + 23/3/16
 - Offering to do presentation on Community Infrastructure at 1 of our meetings
- * Katie Staunton, Maghull Town Council - 23/3/16
 - Please direct invoice/account enquiries from 1/4/15 to accounts@maghull-tc.gov.uk
- * Paul Wiencke, Formby Parish Council - 22/3/16
 - Apology
- * John Duffy, Clerk to Sefton Parish Council - 22/3/16 + 11/3/16
 - Apology for 31/3/16. Advising that date for meeting re: Parking problem in Village is still awaited from Cllr Sayers.
- * Barbara Weightman, Clerk to Lydiate Parish Council - 11/3/16
 - Attached a copy of their Objection letter against the Wind Turbines proposed for the neighbouring West Lancashire Council boundary. They have also invited Coriolis to attend their next full Council meeting on 22/3/16.
 ⇒ *It was queried if Coriolis will attend the next LPC meeting since they did not attend their full Council meeting on 22/3/16 as originally planned?*
- * Noel James, Historic Towns Forum - 10/3/16 + 11/2/16
 - Newsletter + Annual report
- * Annette McGarrigle (PA to Jill Coule, SMBC) - 10/3/16
 - Confirmation of Jill Coule's attendance on 31/3/16
- * Cllr G.Lee, Melling Parish Council - 6/3/16
 - Approval of Minutes

- * John Duffy, Clerk to Sefton Parish Council - 4/2/16
- Newspaper article produced by Day One Christian Ministries entitled, "Government continues to press for extension to Sunday Trading hours".
- * Cllr R.Baker, Melling Parish Council - 6/3/16
- Enquiring if there's been a reply from SMBC & Liverpool Region Combined Authority about the suggested Dog DNA database.
- * John Duffy, Clerk to Sefton Parish Council - 22/2/16
- Annual Event enquiries
- * Kevin Sharpe - 22/2/16
- Advising his Council had decided against meeting Coriolis, and stating the decision to do so or not must be made by each individual member Council.
- * Cllr M.Coles, Formby Parish Council - 22/2/16
- Document about Consultation on the future of the 3 Area Committees in Bootle, Sefton Central and Southport taking place between 11/2/16-21/3/16. Events to take place 7th, 15th + 16th March, 2016 at Southport, Maghull and Bootle Town Halls, Formby Guild Hall, and at St Lukes Church, Crosby. There is an online response form, which can be emailed to yourseftonyoursay@sefton.gov.uk
Further information is available from, <http://www.engagespace.co.uk/sefton/default.aspx>
- * John Duffy, Clerk to Sefton Parish Council - 12/2/16
- Copy of email sent to Kevin Sharpe stating that the voice of St Helen's Church in Sefton Village must be heard in relation to the Wind Farm proposal. He is dismayed that not 1 photograph from the recent presentation conducted at Ince Blundell Village Hall depicted the proposed landscape from Lunt/Sefton Village. He also questioned whether the Wildfowl Trust at Lunt Meadows had been approached about this?
- * Cllr K.Hounsell, Thornton Parish Council - 11/2/16
- Thornton PC has been invited to a meeting to be held in March by PR company Quatro on behalf of Coriolis. It was queried whether any other member Councils were aware of this meeting?
- * Cllr S.Gent, Aintree Village Parish Council - 30/1/16
- Copy of their Wind Farm Objection letter

5. FUTURE SPEAKERS

- * Ian Loughlin - Senior Planner, SMBC
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- * Ian Maher – Leader of SMBC

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Godfrey Downey

Concern was expressed about Councillor Downey, as the group has not seen him at meetings for some time. It was reported that unfortunately Godfrey is a lot weaker than he was, and his memory is now sadly fading. Councillor Gill reported both himself and other members of the community are keeping a close eye on Godfrey and offering friendship and assistance where they can.

6.2 Annual General Meeting

The Secretary confirmed that records show that the Annual General Meeting should in fact have taken place this evening. This will therefore take place at the next meeting. The need to approach a new Treasurer was raised in view of Councillor Downey's current condition.

6.3 SSP GP Surgeries

Over the next 15 months there will be a series of meetings for each of the 7 Practices involved. The Melling Practice is now operating on a part time basis, and lacks adequate representation at PCT group meetings. The Chapel Lane Surgery in Formby will know by September 2016 if the interim measure will continue. Notable improvements have already been noted at the Hightown Surgery, which has already appointed full time cover.

6.4 Annual Donations

A cheque for the Annual donation is still awaited from Hightown Parish Council. Cllr Warren agreed to chase this up.

6.5 Annual Event

Formby, Ince Blundell, Sefton and Thornton Parish Councils are all yet to host the Annual Event with Sefton MBC. Although the Clerk of Sefton Parish Council is very keen to host the event, the facilities they have suggested to host this event are not considered practical due to lack of privacy, size of room, lack of equipment and inappropriate seating. The Secretary asked the other aforementioned Councils to consider suitable venues in their Parish, which have a projector, and can provide refreshments. It was suggested the event take place in September.

6.6 Canal Fest

Celebrations will be taking place in Aintree, Lydiate, Maghull and Melling and will include a flotilla and an event on Maghull Cricket field on 19/6/16.

6.7 Parish Charter

John Duffy the Clerk of Sefton PC recently presented a bound copy of the Parish Charter to Gary Beswick.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of this group will be held on Thursday 19th May, 2016 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber at Maghull Town Hall.