

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 23rd March, 2017 at Maghull Town Hall

PRESENT:

Cllrs G.Lee (Chair, Melling), P.Wiencke (Formby), K.Brennan (Hightown), I.Cowell (Assistant Clerk, Ince Blundell), A.Ibbs (Little Altcar), M.Byrne (Maghull), J.Desmond (Maghull), R.Baker (Melling), C.Jones (Sefton), HH Judge Judith Daley (Currently co-opted onto Sefton Parish Council), D.Miles (Thornton), Ian Willman (Service Manager-Neighbourhood & Partnerships, SMBC), Chris White (Strategic Area Manager-Neighbourhood & Partnerships, SMBC)

APOLOGIES:

Cllrs J.Colbert (Aintree Village), S.Gent (Aintree Village), M.Coles (Formby), K.Sharpe (Ince Blundell), J.Duffy (Clerk, Sefton PC), M.Duffy (Sefton PC)

A minutes silence was held in memory of those who lost their lives and were injured during the recent atrocity in London.

1. GUEST SPEAKERS

The Parish Charter & Working Relationship between SMBC and the Parish/Town Councils

Ian Willman – Service Manager for Neighbourhood & Partnerships, SMBC
Chris White – Strategic Area Manager for Neighbourhood & Partnerships, SMBC

1.1 Update

Last year this group provided many comments about the breakdown in communication with SMBC, which have since been taken onboard. The departmental Management teams have subsequently been visited, and the Parish Charter has been promoted to them alongside the 'New Realities' document. It is hoped that communication with this group and member Councils has improved as a result. They now meet bi-monthly with our Chair and Vice Chair, Councillors Gerry Lee and Mike Coles. These meetings have clear Agenda items, open and frank discussions, and also operational and strategic discussions. The Chair added that both himself and Cllr Coles will also be meeting with Andrea Watts and Jill Coule soon.

The Formby Stewardship report has proved to be a simple document and a useful communication tool for managing requests. SMBC would like to incorporate this measure into all member Parish/Town Councils.

The Local Plan has now been to the Lead Planning Inspectorate who did make some amendments to it.

1.2 Parish Charter

SMBC are looking at different ways of working with the Parishes. A lot of work has been done by SMBC looking at their Vision and Outcomes, particularly in view of budget reductions, though not solely for this purpose. The Parish Charter also needs to reflect the 'Vision 20 30' document, which outlines 8 strategic objectives, a methodology to work to for the next 13 years, and new models for service delivery.

1.3 Budget Reduction

To-date SMBC has already had to make £115 million savings. Over the next 3 years SMBC will have to save a further £65 million. Over 50% of their budget will have been lost in total, with the workforce already significantly reduced, and the potential for a total loss of their revenue grant could shape how business retention will work.

1.4 Locality Based Working

Locality based working will be important for the Neighbourhoods team – with 1 x representative in the South, 1 x representative in the East, and 1 x representative in the North. There will be a whole concept change as to how SMBC deliver services in conjunction with key Partners, the Voluntary Sector, etc. Service delivery will be based more on demand, and might be more locally based, i.e. through shared facilities with other Partners where appropriate, incorporating 'hot desk working' where possible. Essentially there will be lots of different places offering non-statutory Council services, which in turn will make frontline services more accessible for the public. Statutory functions including planning and social services will continue to operate from Council offices.

The concept behind this is to reduce demand on Council services and tackle any issues that do arise at the earliest opportunity to reduce costs whilst operating in a clean, green, environmentally friendly manner to make Sefton a great place to live and work.

In future it might not be financial support that teams such as the Neighbourhoods team offer, but help, support and advice to Community groups on how to access funding streams.

This new way of working will come into place in April 2018. This will involve a great deal of reorganisation and staff training, so staff will be ready for locality based working and to enable them to identify roots causes of problems to identify possible solutions. Council procurement is also being looked at to ensure the best efficiencies.

1.5 Comments/Questions

- (a) How does a 4.9% increase in Council Tax affect the situation?
This has already been factored in to the £65k savings. The biggest pull on the Council budget is social care.
- (b) Have the population statistics been factored in?
Ian Willman agreed to get us a figure for this.
- (c) It appears that some Council services will no longer be delivered due to Budget cuts and the cost of Care. Is it the correct assumption that we will have to do more for ourselves?
It's more about collaborative working, i.e. working together to deliver things in a safe way. It may be the case that Communities are asked to do more, as such bureaucracy and red tape are being set aside to help with this, although local groups will still have their health and safety policies and working practises scrutinised. Such local groups will be expected to be self funded. It's about adopting a common sense approach to enable Communities to become more resilient.
- (d) Won't residents question why their Council Tax is increasing when Council Services are being reduced and more expected of them? Is the end in sight for this period of austerity?
Council Tax income generates £150 million, whereas SMBC's budget is £300 million. Therefore the proposed cut to their revenue budget is unhelpful. SMBC are trying to protect key frontline statutory services such as Social Care, Licensing and Planning. The growth of Food Banks is a good example of how local Communities and SMBC are working together.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (19/01/17)

Cllr Carol Jones proposed that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the Meeting and Cllr Karl Brennan seconded this. Those present were in agreement.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

(*) SEE APPENDIX 1

Switch Island

In response to Cllr Desmond's email dated 12/2/17 enquiring if any of our member Councils were aware of any dialogue with Highways England about the dangers presented by the current Switch Island layout, Cllr Jones confirmed that Highways England are definitely aware of the precarious situation this junction presents.

Highways England accept the situation is bad, and admit the signage is inappropriate, but feel the problem starts at Dunnings Bridge Road.

Bank Account

Following an email received from Treasurer Cllr Miles dated 13/2/17 on this matter, it was reported that Councillors Baker, Lee and Miles have since visited Barclays Bank with the necessary documentation which has since been sent off, so the signatories and mailing address for the bank account documentation should hopefully now be changed over.

Sefton Parish Council – Demography Review

In his email dated 18/3/17, Johnny Duffy the Clerk to Sefton Parish Council suggested that a demography review will need to be undertaken should the population of the Village increase due to the proposed new developments since the existing Parish Council budget would need to increase. The group was in agreement that the Parish Council budget should increase if they have more residents under their remit.

Dog Fouling

An email was received from Cllr Baker of Melling PC dated 6/3/17 requesting that the group send a letter to SMBC in support of the revamped letter Melling PC is sending on this matter; given SMBC are currently seeking views on this under the Public Space Protection Order. It was agreed the Secretary will send a letter to SMBC supporting Melling PC on this; but also suggested that a standard letter be prepared by Melling PC, which each member Council could then send to SMBC. Ian Cowell spoke of problems, which had arisen in Ince Blundell resulting from the removal of the dog foul bin. Volunteers collected numerous discarded bags of dog foul, and the dog foul bin has now been reinstated. It does seem that dog fouling signs are ineffective and enforcement action is a better approach. Cllr Ibbes commented on the success of 'Operation Collar'. Admittedly enforcement action by PCSOs could now be problematic due to where they are located. Some Local Authorities have a policy requiring dog walkers to display a poo bag on their dog's lead, and if they do not display one an Enforcement Officer or Police Officer has the power to stop and deal with them. It was queried whether SMBC has a similar policy? In some European countries they hold a dog DNA database. This can assist with locating irresponsible owners who let their dogs foul through identifying the dog responsible through their DNA; thus enabling the enforcement action to be taken against the owner and the cost of the DNA test to be recouped.

Raising the profile of the Partnership

Reference was made to Cllr Coles' email dated 17/3/17 in which he suggests that a small focus group be formed consisting of 1 Councillor from each Parish, to help raise the profile of the Partnership and to clarify ideas for the future. Those present were in agreement. The Chair asked those present to give this idea consideration and to let the Secretary or himself know of anyone who would like to be on this group. Comment was made that SMBC Officers are still ignoring the Parish Charter, and that increasing the size of the Sefton Central Area Committee was disastrous and has led to its' subsequent demise. Similarly the question was posed as to who was familiar with the content of SMBC's 'New Realities' document. Those present were seemingly unaware of this. It was suggested that the help of Ian Willman, Jill Coule and Margaret Carney is needed to drive the Parish Charter forward.

5. FUTURE SPEAKERS

* Sue Ashe, SMBC - 25/5/17
(Responsible for the east of our Neighbourhoods)

Graham Parry, SMBC
(Responsible for the Formby end of our Neighbourhoods)

* MP Bill Esterson
- Budgets & Finances / Managing the next few years

* Peel Holdings

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Community Payback Team

The Chair stated that Graham Parry of SMBC is asking for the support of this group to get the Community Payback Team to undertake projects in our areas. It was agreed that the Secretary should send him a letter supporting this initiative.

6.2 Annual Event

It is anticipated that this year's Annual Event will take place in September 2017 to allow sufficient time to organise the event. The Secretary will contact Ince Blundell Village Hall with some dates to enquire about availability of the Hall for the event.

7. AREA ROUND UP

7.1 Formby Parish Council

The Formby Local Plan has been out to Consultation with local residents. Slight changes have been made to it following this Consultation. It is expected the Local Plan will now go for Referendum with local residents by the end of the year. The Steering group have had help from an ex-Inspector writing their Plan, and much time and effort has been put into its' construction. Admittedly the Parish Council does not like some of the things in it, i.e. regarding flooding. It was also reported that a Developer has expressed an interest in developing on ANDREWS LANE, which notably is on a flood plain.

7.2 Hightown Parish Council

The telephone mast application submitted for the BT site has been rejected. This was successfully challenged on the timing of the application, and also on the protected heritage status of the Village.

Work is still ongoing to try and secure the future of the Village Surgery. A letter has been received from NHS England stating that this is still an ongoing matter.

7.3 Little Altcar Parish Council

Little Altcar Parish Council is currently trying to merge with Formby Parish Council as they are finding things difficult and also feel it would be a stronger way of fighting developers. However not all 3 Little Altcar Parish Councillors are in agreement this is the right thing to do. Sadly Cllr Ibbs reported that she has decided that she will be standing down as a Parish Councillor.

7.4 Maghull Town Council

A meeting took place with Countryside Properties and Persimmon Homes, the 2 developers of the land to the east of Maghull; namely the old Ashworth site which runs between Summerhill and Ashworth. This development will consist of apartments for rent, mixed housing and a light Industrial estate. This proposal has yet to go before the Planning Committee. The Poppy Fields Persimmon Homes development will consist of 320 homes and is currently under construction. The building work will be staggered over a 10 year period. There is no guarantee the developments will not be leasehold. There is mention of a Park next to a river! Residents could be charged a yearly fee for its' upkeep via a service charge, or it was suggested that Maghull Town Council might take over its' upkeep. The developers state that the 'run off rate' will not change as a result of the plans, so the flooding risk will not change. This is Grade 1 and 2 land. Construction of the new Maghull North Station will start at the end of 2018.

Mention was also made of the recent fire behind the new development in the Square as a result of anti-social behaviour.

The Council is also holding a Health Weekend on the weekend of 7th-9th April 2017 inclusive in celebration of World Health Day (Friday 7/4/17) in conjunction with local organisations who will offer a range of taster health sessions, focused on improving wellbeing and raising awareness of the services available within the community. Maghull Health Studios will be hosting a weekend promoting active lifestyles and the benefits of exercise, whilst the Town Hall and Maghull Leisure Centre will be offering various activities and opportunities including blood pressure and eye tests and opportunities for residents to speak with professionals about health services.

7.5 Melling Parish Council

The Melling Neighbourhood Plan is currently at the Consultation Stage and will soon go out for Referendum.

A meeting will be held to discuss future events; given preparations for the Christmas events were a little rushed. It's hoped the Clerk will get better control as a result of this meeting.

7.6 Sefton Parish Council

There has not been a proper meeting in view of the Chairman and Clerk's personal situation.

The Highways England proposal, roads and Planning Applications remain current issues, which the Parish Council is concerned with. The Parish Council will be meeting with MP Bill Esterson soon about the issue with the roads.

7.7 Thornton Parish Council

The Parish Council has been active with taking action against a Planning application for a new housing development in their Parish and attended a meeting on 6/3/17, which SMBC Chief Executive Margaret Carney was present at. To-date they are still waiting to hear back from Margaret Carney following this meeting.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of this group will be held on Thursday 25th May, 2017 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber at Maghull Town Hall.