

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present: Trevor Payne (Chair)
Brian Caffarey (Secretary)
Ann Ashton (Treasurer)
John Coulter
Anne Salmon
Robin Sayewell (Observer)

WELCOME/APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. The EC welcomed Robin Sayewell as an observer. Andrew Osborne and Cllr Julian Saunders had given their apologies for absence.

MINUTES OF EC MEETING ON 22 JULY 2020

2. The minutes were approved.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE AGENDA

3. The following matters were noted:

(i) Walks (para 3)

4. The walks programme had continued to be suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Linda Harrison's offer to arrange walks for a group of up to five people who would benefit from a local walk had led to an invitation to one member to join one of Linda's informal walks for people on her Health Walks register. It was clear that various Ramblers and other groups were operating differing arrangements, some involving booking systems and varying limits on numbers. The Government's announcement earlier in the day of new restrictions on social gatherings might require further changes. Linda would continue to monitor the situation with a view to re-starting the walks programme when possible.

(ii) Website (para 4)

5. The website was up to date. Because of the suspension of walks fewer emails had been sent to members, resulting in less use of the website in recent months. But, in the 90 days preceding 2 September, 159 users accessed the site for 204 sessions, viewing 468 pages.

(iii) Social media (para 5)

6. No social media postings had been added since the previous meeting.

(iv) Proposal for a path from Jubilee Way to the Rec/Faversham Rail Yard application – (para 6)

7. The steps from Jubilee Way had been opened. It might be helpful, however, if there was some signage in the car park at the top of the steps to indicate which way to go when walking from the Rec. Brian Caffarey would follow this up. Work did not appear to have started on the Faversham Rail Yard development.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

(v) Front Brents/Town Green (para 7)

8. The Environment Agency had told Andrew Osborne that they hoped to carry out remedial work by the end of October.

(vi) Lost Ways Initiative (para 8)

9. Following correspondence with Ramblers HQ, Trevor Payne had written to Helen Whately MP on 21 August asking her to raise with Defra the possibility of deferring to 2031 the deadline for making claims for 'lost paths'. She had confirmed that she had forwarded the Group's letter.

(vii) Walking and Cycling provision in Faversham (paras 9-10)

10. As agreed, Trevor Payne had written to the Town Council on 15 August to express the Group's support for the 20s Plenty initiative. Members' attention had also been drawn to the experimental scheme and were also informed about a webinar arranged on 3 September. One member had subsequently written to say that she did not support the initiative, believing that the speed limit would not be enforced and that it would be a waste of money. Trevor mentioned, however, that one of the arguments deployed during the webinar was that it would require only a relatively small proportion of drivers to comply with the limit to affect overall speeds in the town. Robin Sayewell expressed his concern about the dangers posed by some cyclists' disregard of the law.

11. As also agreed at the previous meeting, Trevor had written to Swale Borough Council on 6 September to express the Group's disagreement with the Town Council's recommendation that the hours during which pedestrianisation of the town centre applies should be reduced. The letter had urged the two councils to consider other ways of addressing the concerns expressed by some businesses in the town and to work together to make improvements for pedestrians in the town.

(viii) Standard House/New Creek Road planning application (19/501612/FULL) (paras 9 and 25 (i))

12. Brian Pain, the owner of the Oyster Bay Warehouse, had indicated, in discussion with Brian Caffarey, that he had no intention of improving the condition of the path running alongside the building even though it was frequently covered in puddles during wet weather.

(ix) Faversham Creek Bridge (para 13)

13. Andrew Osborne had asked KCC to comment specifically on the point he had raised about the need to ensure that the plans for the bridge did not preclude subsequently creating a Creekside path on the Shepherd Neame side of the Inner Basin. He was awaiting a further response.

(x) Vicarage Lane/Eastling Road (para 14)

14. The Chair had written to David Simmons on 30 May to seek his views in principle on the suggestion that a permissive path might be created to run inside the hedge line from the corner of Vicarage Lane/Eastling Road to the corner of Lorenden Park. Reminders had been sent on 29 June and 30 August but no reply had so far been received. It was noted again that walkers faced considerable dangers on the stretch of road between Vicarage Lane and the entrance to Lorenden Park.

(xi) Proposal for Faversham Neighbourhood Plan (para 28)

15. Trevor Payne had written to the Town Council on 31 July about the importance of ensuring that the proposed new Neighbourhood Plan should respect and build on the footpath and streetscape-related policies in the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan. He had also queried why the Steering Group's meetings were not being held in public, as required by the Council's own rules and national provisions. The Town Council's initial reply had not really addressed these points but the Group had now been assured that its views would be conveyed to the Chair of the Steering Group, Cllr Irwin, and that, beginning with the Steering Group's meeting on 21 September, meetings would be open to the public. Cllr Irwin had also written to Trevor offering a discussion. The Town Council had also informed the Group that the first exhibition relating to the Plan would be held on market days between 21 September and 3 October.

(xii) Planning application for Ordnance Wharf (20/502408/FULL) (para 30 (ii))

16. Brian Caffarey had submitted comments on behalf of the Group expressing support for the public access aspects of the application.

TREASURER'S REPORT

17. Ann Ashton reported that the Group had £1525.37 in the bank, plus a further £20 still to be paid in. The Group currently had 82 paid-up members.

18. It was agreed in discussion that the amount of work involved, and the difficulties in providing supporting documentation over several years, did not justify pursuing gift aid claims.

CREEKSIDE PATH AT FAVERSHAM REACH AND WATERSIDE CLOSE

19. The meeting was reminded that the Faversham Reach Residents' Association had until 17 September to seek any judicial review of the Planning Inspector's rejection of their appeal against KCC's refusal to make an Order deleting the obstructed footpath there from the Definitive Map. It was clear that, while KCC would seek to make progress once that deadline had passed – and assuming that no application was made or succeeded – there were still a number of time-consuming hurdles which would need to be surmounted before the Creekside path could be opened.

ENGLAND COAST PATH

20. The Chair had written to Helen Whately MP on 29 June to draw attention to the fact that it was now over three years since Natural England had produced its report recommending a route for the Whitstable to Iwade stretch of the ECP and to ask her to take the matter up with the S of S for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Mrs Whately had forwarded Defra's reply on 25 August but this had failed to respond to the key question of the likely timetable for approving the route. Trevor had written again to Mrs Whately on 2 September.

EAST KENT RECYCLING LTD PLANNING APPLICATION

21. As agreed at the previous meeting, Trevor Payne had written again to Bretts urging them to reconsider their intention to seek agreement to divert the original public footpath – which they had failed to restore following their quarrying work in the lagoon – onto the access road leading to the EKR site. Trevor had drawn attention to the fact that KCC's PROW team had said that they did not support Bretts' proposal and agreed with the Group's view that it would be feasible to construct a dedicated footpath on the lagoon side of the road. Bretts had not yet replied.

22. Robin Sayewell mentioned that there was a back access to the EKR site via the road leading to Bretts. He felt that Bretts ought from the outset to have used this route rather than using the access road used by pedestrians.

PROPOSALS FOR GARDEN VILLAGES/NEW HOUSING

23. Anne Salmon said that Swale BC's decision to favour Option C in drawing up proposals for its new Local Plan pointed to some 3,500 new houses being built in Faversham in a 5-year rolling period from 2022. This would include 2,500 houses on the Duchy of Cornwall site. It remained to be seen how the Government's aims to reform the planning system would affect future plans.

DESIGNATION OF LOCAL PATHS

24. Andrew Osborne had not been able to make further progress in finalising the maps showing the paths for which the Group envisaged making a claim for additions to the Definitive Map of Footpaths.

ACTION: ANDREW OSBORNE

SECRETARIAL DUTIES

25. The meeting discussed how the various Secretarial duties might be undertaken following Brian Caffarey's departure, which now seemed likely to occur by about the end of October. No firm decisions were reached but other discussions would take place outside the meeting.

2020 AGM

26. It was confirmed that a 'virtual' AGM would be held on Thursday 12 November at 7pm. The meeting discussed agenda items: details would be provided to members nearer the time and papers circulated in advance so that questions or comments could be aired ahead of the AGM.

ACTION: BRIAN CAFFAREY

LOG OF ISSUES RAISED

27. The Committee noted a revised version of the log of issues raised with, or pursued by, the Group. This would be updated as necessary following the meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

28. It was agreed that there appeared to be no pressing need to arrange another EC meeting before the AGM and that business would be conducted by email in the meantime.