

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT IWADE VILLAGE HALL

ON WEDNESDAY 17th AUGUST, 2011

TO DISCUSS SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S
'PICK YOUR OWN' CORE STRATEGY

PRESENT:

Cllr. S. Plum – Chairman Iwade P.C.	County Councillor M. Whiting
Cllr. J. White – Iwade P.C.	Borough Councillor B. Stokes
Cllr. J. Gregory – Iwade P.C.	Richard Knox-Johnson - CPRE
Cllr. R. Phillips – Iwade P.C.	Brian Lloyd - CPRE
Cllr. J. Hunt – Iwade P.C.	3 Residents
Cllr. R. Jones – Iwade P.C.	Chris McIlroy – Clerk Teynham P.C
Cllr. P. Paige – Borden P.C./KALC	Lynda Fisher – Clerk Iwade P.C.
Cllr. M. Baldock – Borden P.C.	
Cllr. P. Blandon – Hartlip P.C./CPRE	
Cllr. T. Mould – Newington P.C.	
Cllr. R. Palmer – Newington P.C.	
Cllr. S. Wood – Teynham & Tonge P.C.	
Cllr. L. Burgess – Tunstall P.C.	

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Brown of Eastchurch Parish Council.

Iwade Parish Council again hosted the meeting. The Chairman, Cllr. Stephen Plumb, welcomed the attendees and invited County Councillor Mike Whiting, the representative for the area, to address those present.

Cllr. Whiting attended a meeting at Swale Borough Council regarding the Core Strategy. Swale has instructed officers to go down the route of 13,000 to 15,000 houses (the lower end); originally the figure was 18500 to 30500 plus. This is the lower of the four Options.

In December the determined document will be presented to Councillors for a decision and it will then be published at the end of January to the public, when members of the public and consultees can comment on the Council's proposals.

At this meeting there was a presentation on traffic implications by George Chandler, K.C.C; £300,000 has been spent on this. The presentation showed the possible approved route, mentioned increased traffic and identified where it would hit. Unsure about Northern Relief Road because it is not open yet; this traffic will come out via Kemsley/Grovehurst and there will be an increase on junction 5, on the A249 and town centre. Traffic flow on the A2 will come below what we might call acceptable; could cause long term traffic jams in the town centre and the traffic modelling showed that levels will grow between now and 2031. One idea is to move more people off the roads on to trains.

Cllr. Plum thanked Cllr. Whiting for bringing those present up to date on matters. He then stated it would be an open forum on this matter and invited comments from individual Parishes.

Cllr. Mike Baldock (Borden P.C.) commented that he believes Swale Borough Council has made its choice. The fact that the report stated that the public rejected all four Options and a hybrid option was put forward confirms that there is no support for all of them. 13500 houses is more than we need and more than is viable for this area. Swale Borough Council needs to be made aware that they are not acting on behalf of the people. He suggested forming a new group focused on housing; this group could then concentrate on distributing information on the Core Strategy to all the people in the Borough. Faversham is to be allowed to grow 'organically', the decision being taken by the people. We need to go away from it being a 'Parish' issue to being a 'whole Borough' issue. For every three houses means an additional one house; 30% increase in traffic and an impact on care.

Cllr. Mike Whiting responded that it was very important that if we oppose what the Borough Council is proposing to do we need to put forward a very realistic alternative. Regarding schools, K.C.C. is currently carrying out a review of all school placements and it is hoped that this will come up with a plan for new schools. Most of the jobs seem to be created in Faversham and it is common sense that more people move to wherever the jobs are. If there is chaos on the Sittingbourne roads it is because people are going down to Faversham!

Cllr. John White (Iwade P.C.) referred to Swale's published proposal for creating jobs and commented that there is already traffic chaos on the roundabout at Iwade.

Cllr. Robert Phillips (Iwade P.C.) commented on employment and the numerous boarded up shops and empty units in Sittingbourne. Sittingbourne is gridlocked with traffic at the present time, this will only get worse.

Richard Knox-Johnson (Chairman CPRE) agreed that an alternative needs to be put forward, but clearly too we need to be very careful about allowing green land to be put forward for housing. It is important to get involved now, not later. The District Council was told that the S.E. Plan no longer has any influence, but this is a District Council where housing is increasing. The District Council needs to make it clear where the infrastructure is coming from.

Cllr. Stephen Plumb (Iwade PC) suggested a cohesive approach across the Borough.

Cllr. Mould (Newington P.C.) believes people are in the dark and that information on the Core Strategy has not been made widely advertised. He agrees that there is a need to let people know what is happening and that opposition needs to be via a Borough wide initiative.

Cllr. Stewart Wood (Teynham P.C.) felt that until CPRE got involved Parish Councils did not fully understand the strategy; Parishes are now looking to this organisation for assistance and he felt it was quite wrong that the only reason they had to step in was because Swale Borough Council did not produce clear information.

CPRE commented that the Government made the last guidelines, which will disappear with the Localism Bill; the latest document is the National Planning Framework.

Cllr. Roy Jones (Iwade C.P.) commented clearly where the Core Strategy is based on the previous Government, the new Government's policy will mean change and possibly where 13500 houses are stated this could mean an additional 20% on top. We need to come up with a figure that we can justify; perhaps we can go back to the original figure before the South East Plan of 9600, which was agreed by Swale Borough Council.

Cllr. Baldock suggested going ahead with the working party and determining a favourable alternative. There is a very real need to get information out to the members of the public.

Peter Bladon (Chairman of the Swale Committee, CPRE) referred to the South East Plan figures and one of the evidence documents. According to these figures the increase in population was just over 12000 people, with migration comes to 14500 people – this equates to 7000 houses.

CPRE advised that Pfizer has been made an Enterprise Zone, this will affect the Science Park and alter the whole situation. CPRE are happy to help (they are also Assisting Ashford, whom we are slightly behind at the moment). It is important that the Core Strategy is worked on as a whole and not individual sections; if this happened it could have an impact on the parties and cause splits.

Cllr. Peter Paige (Borden P.C.) suggested talking to Kent Association of Local Councils.

County Cllr. Mike Whiting referred to jobs and the present people out of work. He stated that we need to create jobs to help the people of Swale and that jobs are needed now. We need to establish how Swale Borough Council can create jobs, without swamping roads and schools.

Conclusion

Following a proposal by Cllr. Mike Baldwin, it was agreed to form a Steering Group to oppose the existing Core Strategy Options; to form an alternative proposal and engage the public on this matter. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Richard Palmer – proposal agreed.

The Steering Group will start with the Parish Councils present and include Peter Blandon, from CPRE, who volunteered to assist.

To summarise, it was agreed to:

1. Put forward some constructive comments and suggestions on alternative options.
2. Inform the general public
3. Form a Steering Group, the first meeting to take place on Monday 22nd August; which will comprise of the following members:

Cllr. Mike Baldock, Borden P.C.
Cllr. Tony Mould, Newington P.C.
Cllr. Leed Burgess, Tunstall P.C.
Peter Blandon, CPRE, Swale Committee
Cllr. Peter Paige, Borden P.C.
Cllr. Stewart Wood, Teynham P.C.
Cllr. Janet Gregory, Iwade P.C.

The CPRE thanked Iwade P.C. for instigating this meeting

Meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.