
Community Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 31 October 2023 from 7.00 pm - 8.34 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Mark Last, Peter Macdonald, Claire Martin, Lee-Anne Moore, Tom Nundy, Richard Palmer (Chair), Hannah Perkin, Ashley Shiel and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martyn Cassell, Janet Dart, Jay Jenkins and Kellie MacKenzie.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Ann Cavanagh and Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Pete Neal and Tara Noe.

384 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

385 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 September 2023 (Minute Nos. 262 – 269) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

386 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Tony Winckless declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest as he was a member of the Milton Country Park Committee.

Councillor Claire Martin declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest as she was the Council's representative on Faversham Pools.

387 **Change to membership**

The Chair reported that following the recent by-election, membership of the committee had changed. Councillors Peter MacDonald and Karen Watson had joined the Committee, and Councillor Mark Tucker was no longer on the committee.

The Chair thanked Councillor Tucker for his input on the Committee.

Part B Minutes for Information

388 **Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)**

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report as set-out in the agenda. He advised that they had now just received the football report, plus tennis, indoor bowls and netball would be included in the next stage but in a slightly different format.

The Chair invited questions from Members, and points raised included:

- Sought reassurance that residents of all levels of ability would be considered

- within the Strategy?;
- did the process with Sport England (SE) look proactively at encouraging people with disabilities into sport?;
 - the Council needed to be ambitious and forward looking in respect of provision of disabled sports facilities;
 - pleased that netball would be considered;
 - concerned that there were no proposed recommendations on the Isle of Sheppey;
 - there was a lack of sports facilities on the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey and transport to the western end was limited;
 - female sports needed to be included; and
 - hoped that the football report would reflect the changes to access to the sporting facilities at the Sheppey Academy and highlight that the New Road playing field changing rooms were not disabled friendly.

In response the Leisure and Technical Services Manager said the SE recommendations and template used ensured that accessibility for sports was a consideration. He explained that the survey identified the current provision and future demand and would identify areas of need in respect of disability. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that through the Strategy the Council needed to encourage facilities that enabled clubs to undertake their activities for all abilities.

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager said there were specific recommendations regarding the Isle of Sheppey within the wider report, and the review would identify any areas overlooked. Issues with travel to the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey was identified in the report, and women's rugby was also referenced. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that the relevant national governing bodies had provided the information and knew what their participation levels were. He was aware that there was a good supply of cricket pitches on the Isle of Sheppey, but they were not owned by the Council.

In response to concerns about the timings for consideration of the football report and recommendations, the Head of Environment and Leisure assured Members that they would be considered by the Community Committee. He said that officers would work with SE on a timeline before bringing the document back to committee for final adoption/consultation. The changes recently announced in respect of access to school sports at the Sheppey Academy would be picked-up as the Strategy progressed.

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report be agreed.

389 Built Facility Strategy (BFS)

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report as set-out in the agenda.

The Head of Environment and Leisure outlined the aims of the Strategy which would set the strategic direction and allow officers to secure any available external funding. Agreeing the recommendations meant officers could move onto the final stages of working with SE before bringing back a final strategy in the future.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions, and points raised included:

- Sheerness swimming pool needed to be demolished and was the ideal site for a full-size competition standard pool which would attract tourism and competition use and there must be SE funding available to support this;
- the Council needed to be ambitious about provision of facilities for people with disabilities, and include the work currently being undertaken by the Council in that respect;
- supported the recommendations in the report and welcomed any SE funding that could be secured for the Swallows leisure centre; and
- poor access links on the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey made it difficult for residents to access sports facilities in Sheerness.

In response, the Head of Environment and Leisure said he thought that Sheerness swimming pool was coming towards 'end of life' stage, and officers were having the relevant conversations to ensure potential funding could be secured. If the Council agreed to have a future leisure provision (tied in with the next agenda item) then officers could design the provision to include outreach areas, particularly on the Isle of Sheppey.

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager reported that officers had secured funding earlier in the year for two Changing Places facilities, which provided accessible changing facilities for people with disabilities at The Swallows leisure centre, Sittingbourne, and Sheerness swimming pool.

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations in Appendix 1 of the report be agreed.

390 Leisure Options Working Group

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager introduced the report as set-out in the agenda.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions, and points raised included:

- If the Council was going to fundamentally change the way the leisure service was provided, it was important that the Working Group (WG) worked closely with sports providers;
- welcomed that the WG would be cross-party;
- there was an increase in cost to Swale, was this because of increased energy costs, and were the Council responsible for paying those costs?.

In response the Head of Environment and Leisure said that it would be a Member only WG but with input from key leisure stakeholders and regular opportunities for engagement between Members and stakeholders. There was some flexibility with the 31 March 2025 deadline and a robust set of workshop dates had been set to achieve the deadline, but it was important that the Leisure Contract was correct, so flexibility was important.

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager explained that there were a number of cost pressures on leisure facilities which he outlined for Members. The current contractual

arrangements with Swale Community Leisure (SCL) and Serco Leisure worked under a “cap and collar” arrangement on utilities, meaning the operator was responsible for consumption, with the Council responsible for tariff increases above a certain point. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that he was predicting a £100,000 overspend on utilities at leisure centres for this financial year.

Councillor Mark Last asked if it would be possible for him to be co-opted onto the WG as he represented the Council on SCL. The Head of Environment and Leisure said he would confirm this with the Council’s Monitoring Officer and let Members know.

Resolved:

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.**
- (2) That the ‘Leisure Options Working Group’ Terms of Reference, Appendix 1 be agreed.**

391 Parking Policy Consultation Report

The Policy & Engagement Officer introduced the report as set-out in the agenda.

The Chair invited members to ask questions, and points raised included:

- Sought clarification on the proposed hourly car parking charges up to 7 pm and the set fee of £3 until the following morning at 7 am. If only two hours were required for parking would the ticket machine allow them to only pay for two hours?;
- residents could be disadvantaged by the £3 set fee proposal from 7 pm;
- concerned about the introduction of charges at Council car parks that currently offered free parking such as the Milton Country Park, and were the likely charges known?;
- how much revenue would the proposed £3 charge make the Council, how much would the Council lose if it was not introduced, and what would the impact of the charge be on the night-time economy?;
- the Council should explore provision of coach parking;
- considered that the cost-of-living crisis was affecting the night-time economy;
- could passes be provided for residents that were volunteers on local community groups?;
- the report stated that the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) body worn camera footage could not be used as supporting evidence when appealing a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), was that correct? The Head of Environment and Leisure agreed to find out if this was correct.
- if the CEOs wore body cameras for the whole shift would that compromise the privacy of the public?;
- sought confirmation that existing properties within residents parking zones that were changed to a house in multiple occupation (HMO) were not allowed to have permits?;
- thanked the officers and the Parking Policy Member Working Group (PPMWG) for their hard work in producing the policy; and
- Members had a responsibility to ensure that their residents were aware of, and encouraged to respond to the consultation.

In response the Head of Environment and Leisure said that car parking costs proposed by the PPMWG would be “teased-out” during the consultation and the formal Fees and Charges process. He reminded Members that they were being asked to consider the Parking Policy itself not fees and charges. He explained that the Parking Policy wording did not refer to the fixed £3 fee, but gave the Council the ability to look at different ways of charging. Discussion ensued and the Head of Environment and Leisure, agreed to refer back to the PPMWG on the Committee’s comments relating to their proposal for a set fee of £3 from 7 pm. He explained that the PPMWG had received the relevant data before agreeing to put the £3 evening fee forward as a proposal.

The Head of Environment and Leisure reported that the Council were hoping to provide coach parking at Barton’s Point, Minster, as previously discussed at the Community Committee. He explained that he thought the CEOs wore body cameras for the whole shift as incidents happened unexpectedly and they may not have the opportunity to turn them on. However, if there were no incidents during a shift the recording would be deleted. The body worn cameras were needed to protect officers and were clearly and openly worn so would not be a breach of privacy. The Head of Environment and Leisure confirmed that Policy Part K, generally prevented new HMOs in residents parking zones being given parking permits, as most of those areas were already at capacity.

With regard to the issuing of passes for volunteers, the Chair said that it was difficult to define a volunteer and Members had looked at this within the PPMWG. The cost of administering and producing the passes could be higher than any revenue made.

In response to a query from a member, the Policy & Engagement Officer said that officers would be keeping a record of the consultation responses as received and this could be shared with Members.

Resolved:

(1) That the Draft Parking Policy for public consultation be approved.

392 **Forward Decisions Plan**

A Member reminded Members to view the Kent County Council (KCC) Youth and Family Hub consultation on the KCC website. She suggested it could be included as a future agenda item for the Community Committee.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel