
Regeneration and Property Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 12 March 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.37 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Chair), Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Roger Clark, James Hall, Mark Last (Substitute for Councillor Ashley Wise), Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Charles Gibson), Ashley Shiel (Substitute for Councillor Simon Clark), Sarah Stephen (Vice-Chair), Terry Thompson, Mark Tucker, Mike Whiting and Dolley Wooster (Substitute for Councillor Shelley Cheesman).

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Lloyd Chapman.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Jay Jenkins, Joanne Johnson and Kieren Mansfield.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): David Johnson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Shelley Cheesman and Simon Clark.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Charles Gibson, Peter Marchington and Ashley Wise.

753 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

754 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 November 2023 (Minute Nos. 406 - 413) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

755 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mark Last declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 9, Central Stadium, Sittingbourne, as he was the ward councillor.

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 6, Beach Hut Policy – Consultation Report, as the Vice-Chair of Minster Parish Council.

756 **Memorial Bench Scheme**

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager introduced the report which was requested at a previous Full Council meeting. The proposal was to not re-introduce the Memorial Bench Scheme at Minster Leas as the location was already full to capacity. He added that officers were considering alternatives such as plaques and memorial trees.

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

- The scheme was very popular with the local residents but could understand the reasons for not re-introducing the scheme;

- could officers make sure that parish councils were kept informed about any future options;
- did owners of the benches not pay for the maintenance cost of the bench?;
- could a premium service charge be added onto the purchase price of a bench to cover the council's maintenance costs?;
- were the benches made of recyclable materials?;
- did officers have an idea of where the tree planting zones would be?;
- had officers considered adding plaques to the sea defence wall?; and
- thought that a review of the whole scheme could be beneficial rather than looking at specific areas in the borough.

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager responded to points raised about the materials of the benches and the cost of maintenance explaining that, the benches were mainly made from recycled materials and officers purchased the most robust ones that were most suitable for the area. He added that some locations experienced more vandalism than others, whilst some had more damage caused by weather conditions. The ongoing cost of maintaining the benches was included in the purchase price but officers could look at charging a premium for maintenance of a bench but that would have to be considered in the annual fees and charges report.

In response to the alternative options, the Leisure and Technical Services Manager said that officers had an idea of small pieces of land to the east of Minster beach huts that could be used to plant trees, however, officers were not considering use of sea defences as this would require permission from the Environment Agency.

The Head of Environment and Leisure added that officers would engage with the local community and parish councils to understand all options available to them before launching anything new. He agreed that officers can work at getting a review of the Swale Memorial Scheme as a whole borough scheme to a future committee meeting once the dates for the 2024/25 civic year had been confirmed.

Recommended:

- (1) That the Swale Memorial Bench Scheme not be re-introduced along Minster Leas Promenade.***

757 Beach Hut Policy - Consultation Report

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager introduced the report which provided the summary of comments from the Beach Hut Policy 2023 consultation and the final draft policy for adoption.

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

- Could the policy be clearer as to what the proceeds of the beach huts were spent on?;
- how often was the community beach hut used at Leysdown, Isle of Sheppey?;
- Minster-on-Sea residents were concerned about the impact new beach huts would have on the wildlife; and
- understood why we had a community beach hut, but thought that we should not

be giving away something that could generate a lot of income for the Council and its services.

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager commented on the wildlife in Minster and said that no beach hut construction would take place without a biodiversity survey being conducted and officers would work with the appointed construction companies to ensure the correct processes were being followed.

The Head of Environment and Leisure reiterated that the income from beach huts was not directly ringfenced for any one service, but contributed to the Council's overall income allowing services such as public toilets, street cleansing etc to continue. This had been added to the policy to make it clearer.

The Strategic Programmes and Asset Manager commented on the use of community beach huts and made members aware that there could be the possibility of using some grant funding from Government to assist with the cost of building the beach hut. However, the beach hut had to specifically be used for community use and not for commercial purposes.

The Head of Environment and Leisure also made a comment about the community beach huts and said that a reduced annual rental would still cover the costs involved with a community beach hut.

The Chair proposed to Members that the following wording be added to the policy:

"We will allocate a maximum of one beach hut per location for the subsidised use of voluntary and community sector organisations. This will be delivered through an anchor organisation who take responsibility for the hut and usage and in return they will receive a 50% reduction in the annual rental figure."

This was seconded by the Vice-Chair and agreed by Members.

Resolved:

- (1) That a maximum of one beach hut per location for the subsidised use of voluntary and community sectors, be allocated.**
- (2) That an anchor organisation take responsibility for the hut and usage and in return receive a 50% reduction in the annual rental figure.**
- (3) That the final draft Beach Hut Policy shown at Appendix II be adopted.**

758 Forward Decisions Plan

The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning advised that the service department was reviewing the service plan against the new corporate plan and that more items would be added to the forward plan for next year.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.**

759 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A of the act:

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

760 Central Stadium, Sittingbourne

Resolved:

- (1) That part of the retained site would no longer be held for future potential use as a depot for the Council's Household Waste and Grounds Maintenance Contract.***
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning to undertake the necessary steps to complete the preparatory actions required.***
- (3) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning to negotiate, agree and complete a disposal of the land, subject to completion of the preparatory actions required, the protection of existing football provision (3 pitches), appropriate due diligence and in consultation with the Chair of Regeneration and Property Committee and one representative from each group.***

Chair

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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