
Community and Leisure Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room - Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 3HT on Wednesday, 4 September 2024 from 7.00 pm - 8.42 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Mark Last, Peter Macdonald, Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Chris Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Elliott Jayes), Richard Palmer (Chair), Hannah Perkin, Terry Thompson, Karen Watson and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steph Curtis, Jay Jenkins, Kellie MacKenzie, Sarah-Jane Radley, Graeme Tuff and Emma Wiggins.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Martyn Cassell and Jo Millard.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Elliott Jayes.

195 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

196 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

197 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2024 (Minute Nos. 735 – 745) and the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 May 2024 (Minute Nos. 17 – 18) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

198 **Member Appointments to Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP)**

The Community Services Manager introduced the report which sought the Committee's agreement to agree the Council's member representation for the municipal year 2024/25 on the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Members considered recommendation (1) of the report and felt it made sense to appoint Members to the Swale CSP for their term of office for consistency. The Chair moved the following amendment: That Members be appointed to the CSP for their term of office. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless. On being put to the vote the amendment was agreed by Members.

Councillor Richard Palmer proposed, and Councillor Tony Winckless seconded Councillor Tom Nundy to sit on the Swale CSP.

Councillor Tom Nundy proposed, and Councillor Karen Watson seconded Councillor Hannah Perkin to sit on the Swale CSP.

On being put to the vote both nominations were agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Members be appointed to the Swale Community Safety Partnership for their term of office.**
- (2) That Councillors Tom Nundy and Hannah Perkin be appointed to sit on the Swale Community Safety Partnership.**

199 Playground Improvement Programme 2024 - 2027

The Greenspaces Manager introduced the report which sought Members agreement with the proposed play Area Improvement Plan for 2024 to 2027 detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The Plan identified the use of externally sourced funds from Section 106 Agreements and did not impact on the Council's capital reserves.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Referred to paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of the report and asked whether there was a priority list for the projects?;
- how likely was it that the projects would go ahead, given that they were reliant on Section 106 funding?;
- to assist with accessibility, could mapping be included?;
- important that the Council ensured that external funding was picked-up;
- the Council should liaise with Faversham Town Council on what specific equipment was needed within the town;
- stressed the importance of ensuring that environmentally friendly materials were used;
- when was work on the projects like to commence?;
- concerned that areas which had not secured Section 106 funding would lose out;
- no development was proposed on the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey so would it be able to use Section 106 funding for developments elsewhere on the Isle of Sheppey?;
- funding for play areas via Section 106 funding was not sustainable;
- the Council should provide a social audit on the communal areas for children in areas of deprivation;
- considered it was unfair that Section 106 funding for a development in a particular village did not necessarily benefit that area;
- local communities could form 'friends groups' and secure funding for play equipment in that way;
- the replacement play equipment at Barton's Point, Minster was poor quality;
- understood the £20,000 earmarked for Barton's Point was unsuitable replacement equipment; and
- the Council should be tough on developers when securing Section 106 funding given the increase in the value of land.

In response, the Greenspaces Manager explained that dependent on their value in any single financial year, the Council would look to 'package' all of the proposed improvements under one tender to ensure good value. Delivery of the projects was dependent on each contractor. The Section 106 funding to be used had already been secured. The Greenspaces Manager explained that accessibility was measured via the Open Spaces and Play Strategy (OSPS) and mapping could be incorporated. Members had agreed the OSPS at a previous committee meeting. The priorities were

RAG (Red-Amber-Green) assessed and fed into the Planning System. He agreed to forward the current RAG list to members of the Committee. He reassured Members that the Council would always seek to secure external funding if available, and officers worked closely with Parish and Town Councils on what specific play equipment was needed within their areas.

The Green Spaces Manager advised that sustainable materials were used where possible and if they were of a high quality. The Council aimed to carry out the works during the spring/early summer months, when ground conditions were most appropriate and before summer school holidays. The Green Spaces Manager explained that if additional funding was secured the Council would seek to use that in areas where no Section 106 funding was available and explained how Section 106 contributions were justified and secured. He said the Council always sought to put play areas within a development where possible.

With regard to concerns regarding funding for equipment on the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey, the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods explained there was data available via the OSPS which picked up areas where play equipment improvements were required. Parish Councils could also seek to secure funding for improvements.

The Greenspaces Manager advised that that the proposed equipment for Barton's Point Coastal Park was for additional equipment rather than replacement.

The Chair moved the recommendation in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless.

Resolved:

(1) That the proposed Play Area Improvement Plan for 2024 to 2027, detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

200 **Draft Community Development Strategy Consultation**

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report which set out, 'The Empowering You in Swale' strategy overview document for approval for a public eight-week consultation. The document would provide Swale with a Community Development Strategy to outline how the Council intended to support the community over the next three years in line with the Corporate Plan.

The Community & Partnerships Manager referred to Appendix I (Empowering You in Swale Draft) and sought comments from Members.

The Chair invited comments from Members, which included:

- Could online meetings be included as part of the consultation;
- the priorities were sensible, but sad that they were needed at all; and
- domestic abuse should be included.

In response the Community & Partnerships Manager said that roadshows and also the Council's Area Committees would be used as part of the consultation.

The Chair proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by

Councillor Karen Watson.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Empowering You in Swale overview document be approved for an eight-week public consultation.**

201 Household Support Fund Next Steps

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the outcomes of the Household Support Fund delivery to-date, the implications of the fund ending on 30 September 2024 and an overview of the current funding situation across Swale. She outlined some of the organisations that would see funding end in 2025 and said the Council were exploring ways to support them.

The Community & Partnerships Manager reported that since publishing the report the Government had announced that they would be extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) until the end of March 2025. This was to assist with households during the winter period, particularly following the loss of the winter fuel payment.

The Chair invited comments from Members which included:

- Thanked the Community & Partnerships Manager for the report;
- welcomed the inclusion of the powerful personal stories within the report;
- it was not acceptable that local authorities had to wait six months each time to know whether funding would be provided;
- suggested the Chair of the Community & Leisure Committee wrote to the Government outlining why funding should be longer than six months and the impact it had on local services; and
- the letter should also ask what the Government was doing about enforcing energy licensing caps.

Councillor Hannah Perkin moved the following motion: That a strongly worded letter be sent to Government from the Chair of the Community & Leisure Committee setting out the negative impact grants on a six-monthly basis had on local services to include what the Government was doing about enforcing licensing caps. This was seconded by Councillor Tom Nundy. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted.**
(2) That the Chair of the Community & Leisure Committee write a strongly worded letter to Government setting out the negative impact grants on a six-monthly basis had on local services, to include what the Government was doing about enforcing energy licensing caps.

202 Swale Leisure Contract Options

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the future Swale Leisure Contract Options, and he drew attention to the recommendations set out in the report for finalising the long-term leisure service provision.

The Chair invited comments and points raised included:

- Preferred Option three over Option four;
- concerned that a consultant would not understand the needs of the community in the same way that Council officers did;
- there should be a 'cut-off' point with Faversham Pools Committee;
- there was no evidence to suggest a consultant would not be as knowledgeable as a Council officer;
- it would not be helpful to add a cut-off point for a response from Faversham Pools Committee and considered they would come to a conclusion in due course; and
- should not overburden Council officers and Option four was the most efficient option.

In response the Leisure & Technical Services Manager said the timescale for completion was 'tight' but there would be regular 'checkpoints' with Members, and the working group, if agreed, would enable regular Member engagement. He explained that for all options it was recommended to continue with a Member Working Group and Council officers would still be involved but on a lighter basis. Employing consultants would also enable officers to ensure the project met the deadlines.

The Head of Environment and Leisure assured Members that consultants would only put forward what members wanted. Option four also allowed the Leisure & Technical Services Manager to focus on the day-to-day operation of the team. He said that Faversham Pools Committee were supportive of the process and this work would help them and the Council decide whether it would be a good working relationship moving forward.

The Chair proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Lee-Anne Moore.

Resolved:

(1) That a Leisure Consultant be appointed via the approved Framework agreement.

(2) That the Council proceeded with Option four.

(3) That the Members Leisure Working Group continued.

203 Member appointment - Council Leisure Services

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report, which sought agreement from the Community and Leisure Committee to agree Member representation for the municipal year 2024/25 at the Swale Community Leisure Board and the Faversham Swimming Pools Management Committee.

Councillor Richard Palmer proposed, and Councillor Tony Winckless seconded Councillor Mark Last to be appointed to attend the Swale Community Leisure Board meetings.

Councillor Chris Palmer proposed, and Councillor Peter MacDonald seconded Councillor Tom Nundy to be appointed to attend the Swale Community Leisure Board meetings.

On being put to the vote, both appointments were agreed.

There were no nominations to appoint a Member to attend the Faversham Swimming Pools Management Committee meetings and Councillor Lee-Anne Moore moved the following motion: That recommendation (2) of the report be deferred to the Community & Leisure Committee meeting on 21 January 2025. This was seconded by the Chair. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillors Mark Last and Tom Nundy be appointed to attend the Swale Community Leisure Board meetings.**
- (2) That recommendation (2) of the report “Determine which one Member should be appointed to attend Faversham Swimming Pools Management Committee meetings” be deferred to the Community & Leisure Committee meeting on 21 January 2025.**

204 **Forward Decisions Plan**

The Chair asked that ‘Camper Van Parking’ be added to the Forward Decisions Plan.

In response to queries from Members, the Chair explained that the Parking Annual Delivery Plan was a look back at the past year with no budget implications, so consideration of it at the January 2025 meeting would not be an issue. Proposals for unparished areas to be parished, came under the remit of the Constitutional Working Group.

A Member asked that the impact of the late-night car parking charges be considered. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbours said officers could check the relevant data and agreed to liaise with the Head of Environment and Leisure regarding this.

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