
Community and Leisure Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 5 March 2025 from 7.00 pm - 8.48 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Carnell, Shelley Cheesman, Charles Gibson, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Mark Last, Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Hannah Perkin, Carrie Pollard, Terry Thompson, Tony Winckless and Dolley Wooster (Substitute for Councillor Ashley Shiel).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Steph Curtis, Jay Jenkins, Sarah-Jane Radley and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Richard Palmer and Mike Whiting.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Carole Jackson and Peter MacDonald.

APOLOGY: Councillor Ashley Shiel.

717 Vice-Chair in-the-Chair

Councillor Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair) took the chair for this meeting and would be referred to as 'Chair' for the remainder of these minutes.

718 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

719 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

720 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2025 (Minute Nos. 559 – 569) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

721 Empowering You in Swale - Community Development Strategy 2024-2027

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report which contained the Empowering You in Swale strategy. This had been developed as the Community Development Strategy to provide an outline with how the Council intended to support the community over the next three years in line with Swale's Corporate Plan.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Sought clarity on the numbers in the table on page 21 of the report, as the number of children eligible for free school meals across the borough overall was showing as 30.4%, but at the bottom of the table it suggested the number was 52.2%;
- what sort of partnership working was being carried out for Faversham residents with regard to access to alternative hospitals?;

- congratulated officers on a well written report which reflected the current situation in the borough;
- once published, the document should be shared with all committees so they could focus on what the Council wanted to achieve;
- the document could provide more emphasis on the support for those experiencing loneliness and breast feeding within the borough; and
- the number of free school meals was not necessarily an accurate representation as some areas in the borough had a higher number of children who required free school meals.

The Community & Partnerships Manager responded to the points raised and agreed to double check the figures in relation to free school meals, before the report was considered by the Policy and Resources Committee. She added that loneliness was currently being looked into and agreed to look at what breast feeding support could be given going forward.

Councillor Derek Carnell proposed the recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Dolley Wooster.

Recommended:

(1) That the Empowering You in Swale Strategy be approved and adopted by the Policy & Resources Committee.

722 Household Support Fund - prioritisation framework

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report and provided an update on the delivery outcomes to date for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and a prioritisation framework to allow members to prioritise funding for Round 7 (April 2025 – March 2026).

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Thanked officers for their hard work and conversations with Seashells around household support;
- currently, there was a massive issue with regard to the future of Seashells and the support that might be removed from Kent County Council (KCC);
- there were plenty of families who relied on the support from Seashells and the vouchers it offered, so the committee needed to consider how the HSF was being allocated; and
- the data showed there was a high demand at the one stop roadshows at the Seashells Centre; why was the proposal to reduce the service if the demand was increasing?

The Community & Partnerships Manager said that officers were working with families to understand how the Council could facilitate a similar role and educate families. She agreed that it was important to keep the service that the Seashells Centre provided to families for the fuel and water advisory role, which HSF only contributed to part of the funding. In response to the proposal to reduce the service at the Seashells Centre, the £100 MasterCard voucher was for billed fuel amounts and used to pay for bill accounts. This was an expensive service that the Council delivered and was spent by the

recipients every time. However, the Fuel and Water vouchers were pre-card meter payments and it would be the committee's choice on which service should receive the most funding from the HSF.

The Chair invited Members to make further comments, which included:

- What were officers doing with regards to partnership working with Faversham's businesses and organisations?;
- congratulated officers with their approach to partnership working so far but thought there was more the Council could do;
- supported the idea of moving towards preventative work;
- some families were already cutting down unnecessary costs but were still unable to afford food shopping every week;
- it was important to build resilience but this was difficult when the Council did not know if the HSF was going to be granted every year by the Government; and
- lots of organisations and businesses were town centre based and not located in remote villages, could more information be circulated about how to get to the different organisations from the more rural locations in the borough?

Councillor Hannah Perkin moved the following motion: *"That the Chair of the Community and Leisure Committee writes to the Government for a Funding Support assessment so the Council could look at the preventive strategies and that the Household Support Funding was not pulled away as part of the devolution process."* This is seconded by Councillor Charles Gibson and on being put to the vote, agreed.

The Community & Partnerships Manager explained that the report did not reflect all the partnership work that was being carried out in Faversham as the West Faversham Community Centre provided a lot of support for families in Faversham. She added that partnership working had only been improved because the Council kept receiving the HSF and she agreed to look at signposting the support networks available to families in the more remote locations across the borough.

Councillor Charles Gibson proposed that the Household Support Fund be allocated to the proposals set out in the table at 3.2 of the officer's report and this was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless.

The Community & Partnerships Manager informed the Committee that the funding allocation was dependent on guidance once officers had received the allocation but agreed to follow what was set out in the table as much as they could.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Household Support Fund (Round 7) be allocated to the proposals as set out in the table shown at 3.2 of the officer's report.**
- (2) That the Chair of the Community & Leisure Committee writes to the Government for a Funding Support assessment so the Council could look at the preventive strategies and ask for confirmation that the Household Support Funding was not going to be taken away as part of the devolution process.**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which set out the public consultation results from the survey around overnight parking at Shingle Bank, Minster and Shellness, Leysdown and identified some possible solutions based on the results of the consultation.

The Chair invited a visiting Ward Member to speak on the item.

The Ward Member referred to the number of complaints and issues the shingle bank had caused for the local residents on the Isle of Sheppey. He said that the restrictions had not always been enforced over the years but thanked officers for listening to the public opinion with regard to the next steps. He proposed that the committee agreed to a charge for overnight parking set at £15 per night, from 8 pm - 8 am and that all vehicles should be charged, with a ban on caravans. The Ward Member suggested an annual review of the charges and asked if the officers could carry out the works required before the summer holidays commenced.

A visiting Member spoke on the item and agreed with the outcome of the report and thought that £15 overnight charge was a reasonable amount based on other locations nearby and thought all vehicles should be charged.

The Chair invited Committee Members to make comments, which included:

- Thanked the officers for all their hard work at getting the consultation out to all the residents that would be affected by the parking restrictions;
- the general repairs of the shingle banks was estimated at £5,000, who would be responsible for the upkeep of those areas?;
- the concrete blocks needed to remain at the shingle banks as the banks were a sea defence and not to be used as a car park for large vehicles;
- hoped to get a green flag award for Barton's Point and did not think charging for parking was appropriate;
- there was no mention as to how the car parking areas were going to be maintained;
- Leysdown Parish Council had expressed some concerns about the possible issues with the enforcement of the parking areas;
- could the officers provide more detail on how the Shellness area would be maintained and enforced?;
- had the owners of Barton's point been consulted?;
- how far did the proposed parking restrictions go along Marine Parade?;
- the overnight charging should operate between the hours of 8 pm – 8 am and £15 was reasonable;
- were there any potential issues of having no yellow lines and vehicles parking in areas that would cause problems for emergency vehicles?;
- where was the funding for the £37,000 works going to come from?;
- good to see a high response rate from members of the public on an important local issue;
- concerned with those residents currently living at the shingle banks; and
- what was the sustainability of the car parking areas?

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded with points raised as follows:

- Paragraph 2.12 in the officer's report stated that the plan was to implement overnight charging in June 2025, but that depended on the number of objections

received. If officers received a large number of objections, a further report would need to be considered by the Committee;

- Barton's Point interim operators had not been consulted yet because more information was needed from the environmental surveys currently being conducted before officers finalised potential plans for the park's operation;
- the maintenance of the shingle along the beach was a responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA). However, they did not see the shingle bank as their asset to maintain;
- the length of the Marine Parade restrictions was a piece of work that would be carried out with the Swale Joint Transportation Board (JTB) and officers have had discussions with the Town Council about how far the restrictions should go down Marine Parade;
- the funding for the car parking areas was the responsibility for the Policy and Resources Committee to consider, but the civil parking enforcement reserve currently had sufficient funds to cover the costs. With regard to the sustainability of the sites it was hoped that the cost of enforcement would be balanced out by the amount of income collected at the sites;
- the Housing team had already worked with some of the people that were currently residing at the shingle bank and hoped that over time those individuals impacted would seek the right advice and help. He added that those impacted should contact the Councils Housing team about any concerns they had;
- acknowledged the comprehensive letter from Leysdown Parish Council and hoped that charging at Shellness would reduce the environmental impact. He was concerned with the enforcement at Shellness, but the public consultation results proved that this was something that the public thought was necessary. If the committee felt that additional costs should be allocated to provide better lighting and CCTV signage then they could recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee to allocate more funding, but they would need to consider whether spending those further costs would be balanced by the amount the Council would receive from charging people to park at the location;
- with regard to enforcement, officers would be sent to the various locations at different times overnight and sometimes more than one officer might be sent to the more remote locations. He advised that a full risk assessment would be carried out for those officers who would be responsible for enforcement; and
- acknowledged that the officers in the past had problems with signage being vandalised but hoped officers could effectively enforce in these areas.

The Chair invited Members to make further comments, which included:

- The shingle bank was often worn away and the cost of repairing the bank would be too much for the Council, would the EA carry on maintaining the banks if they were worn away?;
- Minster and Sheerness had their highways improvement plan up and running and thought that it would be useful for Leysdown to work with officers at getting something similar set up; and
- Shellness was a single carriage road with lots of people walking along there so careful consideration needed to be given to ensure vehicles parked in the correct areas.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded and said that the EA were responsible for the movement of shingle banks and they would carry out any works needed. With

regard to the single carriage way at Shellness, he said this scheme would not impact those speeding, but referred to barriers that had been placed along the road in the past to try and make the narrower areas safer.

Councillor Lee-Anne Moore moved the recommendations set out in the report and proposed that overnight charging at the Shingle Banks (including the areas of green opposite), and Shellness Road should take place between the hours of 8 pm and 8 am. That all vehicles should be charged at a rate of £15 per night, with a ban on caravans and an Annual Review of the overnight charging took place by the Community and Leisure Committee to ensure that the overnight charging could be sustained for the long term. She also proposed that the wording of recommendation (6) be changed to 'request' rather than require, so that officers could proceed with the necessary works required. This was seconded by Councillor Tara Noe and on being put to the vote, agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That overnight charging at Shingle Bank (including the areas of green opposite), and Shellness Road be approved.**
- (2) That an overnight charge be applied between the hours of 8 pm and 8 am every day.**
- (3) That all vehicles be charged for parking across all locations, with a ban on caravans.**
- (4) That the Petition opposing charges at the Shingle Bank be noted.**
- (5) That the Community and Leisure Committee had an Annual Review report of the overnight charging at the various locations.**

Recommended:

- (6) That the additional costs stated at paragraph 2.20 in the report be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval for the first year of operation.**
- (7) That the overnight charge amount, proposed at £15 per night, be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee to be included in the fees and charges.**
- (8) That the Swale Joint Transportation Board be requested to add traffic restrictions along Marine Parade and Shellness Road.**

724 Swale Leisure Contract - Faversham Pools

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

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Faversham pools should be included in the contract tender;
- it was important to secure the future of Faversham pools;
- swimming pools provided accessibility for people with disabilities;
- it was an important part of the Faversham community;
- page 67 of the agenda pack, referred to the parking charges at other leisure sites across the borough, and it would be encouraging to see something similar at Faversham Pools so that there was fairness across all the facilities in the borough;

- if Faversham pools was to close it would impact those individuals who relied on swimming as their only form of physical activity;
- Faversham pools was a fantastic opportunity for those who want to learn how to swim in the borough;
- thanked the Faversham Trustees for all the hard work they have done with officers;
- were the Trustees and local residents of Faversham going to be given the choice to view their opinions on the company that would take over the contract? and
- there should be a review of the governance model to be used in new tenders to ensure the operators consulted more.

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager responded to say that the Faversham Pool Trustees would have an opportunity to play a part in the tender process. He added that the Faversham Pools Trustees would be actively involved in putting the tender documents together to ensure that Faversham voices were heard. Once the contract had been awarded, it would have a requirement for the successful company to hold regular updates for local stakeholders.

The Head of Environment and Leisure commented that the last time the leisure contract had been reviewed was in 2004 and there was a clear need to review the governance model and update all the current procedures. This was happening with the support of leisure consultants to bring the required changes in.

Councillor Hannah Perkin moved the following motion: *That Faversham Pools be included in the upcoming Leisure contract tender (subject to agreement of final terms) and that delegated authority be given to officers to continue to work with the Members Working Group and Faversham Pools Trust in finalising the tender specification and documents, legal framework and to proceed with the tender.* This was seconded by Councillor Charles Gibson and on being put to the vote, agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) *That Faversham Pools be included in the upcoming Leisure contract tender (subject to agreement of final terms).***
- (2) *That delegated authority be given to officers to work with the Members Working Group and Faversham Pools Trust in finalising the tender specification and documentation, legal framework and to proceed with the tender.***

725 Forward Decisions Plan

Resolved:

- (1) *That the forward decisions plan be noted.***

726 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business of 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).*****727 Swale Leisure Contract - Faversham Pools - Exempt Appendix**

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager presented the exempt appendix to Members which included commercially sensitive figures.

Once Members had considered the exempt appendix, the meeting was brought back into public session so that Members could consider the officers report.

Chair

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