
Environment and Climate Change Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room - Swale House on Tuesday, 18 March 2025 from 7.00 pm - 7.47 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Alex Eyre, Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann (Chair), Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Claire Martin, Charlie Miller, Ashley Shiel, Julien Speed, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen and Ashley Wise.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alister Andrews, Billy Attaway, Samuel Brookfield, Martyn Cassell, Janet Hill, Jay Jenkins and Mike Knowles.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Pete Neal and Carrie Pollard.

749 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

750 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 January 2025 (Minute Nos. 543 – 549) were taken as read, agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

751 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

752 **Contract extension for the minor maintenance and cleansing of public conveniences**

The Environment Services Manager introduced the report to consider the extension of the public conveniences contract, and allow time for a full review of public conveniences to be completed. He added that a full review was underway and a report would be submitted to a future Environment and Climate Change Committee meeting.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Pleased to see an up-to-date list of public conveniences available to members of the public;
- wanted officers' reassurances that whilst the contract was being extended, town and parish councils were kept updated with regard to devolution and the impact it could have if those town or parish councils decided to take on an Swale Borough Council (SBC) asset;
- welcomed the appointment of a project manager to undertake a full review, as shown in paragraph 2.8;
- looked forward to the full review of the public conveniences within the borough;
- asked that the project manager be mindful of the seasonal pressures that areas of the borough had; and
- if any public conveniences were transferred to parish or town councils, could officers give assurances that those public conveniences that were currently attended to,

would continue to be attended?

The Environment Services Manager said that he would share Members comments in terms of keeping town and parish councils informed of the review and any devolution changes that could impact the public conveniences contract, with the project manager.

The Head of Environment and Leisure hoped the public conveniences review would be reported to the July 2025 Environment and Climate Change Committee meeting. He added that a letter was due to be sent to local businesses to see if there was any interest in joining a community toilet scheme.

In response to the public conveniences being attended to, if the town or parish councils took ownership of them, the Head of Environment and Leisure could not give any assurances beyond the transfer. However, once officers had received information on the different assets potential transferees would want to take ownership of, then full discussions and considerations would be made with Members kept up-to-date.

Councillor Ashley Wise proposed the recommendation as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Dolley Wooster, on being put to the vote it was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the existing public convenience cleansing and minor maintenance contract be extended into the final year, ending on 31/03/2026.

753 **Update on Motion to Change Shoreline Management Plan Policy - Eastchurch Cliffs**

The Seafront & Engineering Manager introduced the report which provided an update to the work carried out on pursuing a change to the Shoreline Management Plan along the unprotected North Sheppey Coastline, following the motion that was agreed by Members at Full Council in November 2020.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- What support and welfare options were available for residents who would be affected by the management plan?
- the North Sheppey Coastline affected many vulnerable residents;
- officers needed to ensure that they communicate with residents;
- town and parish councils needed to be engaged whilst work was being undertaken as they were often the first responders to sudden coastal erosions; and
- the council needed to review errors made with previous incidents around communication and learn from those mistakes.

The Seafront & Engineering Manager responded explaining that the purpose of the report was to give officers a focus on engagement work with residents. Some initial engagement planning had taken place with officers working with a consultant and the Environment Agency. He added that the Shoreline Management Plan Website (SMP Explorer) provided residents with the most up-to-date information on predicted coastal erosion and if residents had any concerns they could review the information on that website. Supporting residents on understanding the data on the SMP Explorer was part of the engagement plan.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said that the cliff collapse at Eastchurch in 2020 was a key learning incident and since then, better links had been made with parish councils as part of the emergency plan.

Councillor Dolley Wooster proposed the recommendation as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Carole Jackson, on being put to the vote it was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the contents of the report following the previous motion to change the Shoreline Management Plan Policy for Eastchurch be noted and the work that had been done be acknowledged and that officers focussed on engaging and supporting the affected residents.

754 **Revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan**

The Climate Change officer introduced the report which set out the proposed change to the targets in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- It was good to see a cross-council driven initiative;
- welcomed the work with engaging more communities and businesses to support their carbon saving activities;
- waste and resource consumption was something that had been raised at previous meetings;
- considered the Council needed to do more to drive the recycling rates up in the borough;
- it was important for Councillors to encourage behavioral change in their wards;
- Kent County Council (KCC) had recently agreed to increase the budget in promoting recycling rates across the County;
- the business community was still a community that the Council needed to focus on in terms of improving the carbon footprint;
- could officers ensure work was carried out with schools, prisons and railway services; and
- why was there not a requirement for new build developments in the borough to be built with solar panels?

The Head of Environment and Leisure agreed that the recycling rates needed to improve in the borough and that in April 2026 every household would be offered a food waste recycling bin and he hoped this would improve the rates. He added that Swale suffered from some of the highest contamination rates and the government were proposing changes to how collections were made.

The Climate Change officer added that officers had a strong network of communication between the different councils in the County and there was another layer of communication through Managers called the Kent and Medway Environment Group (KMEG).

With regard to solar panels being installed on new build developments, the Climate

Change officer said that it was not currently within building regulations as a requirement for all new builds. However, the Council were lobbying government for building regulations to include solar panel installation in future developments.

The Chair proposed the recommendations as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Dolley Wooster on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action plan be adopted.

755 **Forward Decisions Plan**

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