
Sheppey Area Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in Leysdown Village Hall, James Court, Wing Road, Leysdown-on-Sea, Sheerness ME12 4RS on Thursday, 19 September 2024 from 7.00 pm - 10.07 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Angela Harrison, Elliott Jayes (Chair), Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy (Vice-Chair) and Dolley Wooster.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Mark Tucker and Mike Whiting.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Ben Pointing (Minster-on-Sea Parish Council (PC)) and Chris Reed (Sheerness Town Council (TC)).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (VIRTUALLY): Linda Brinklow (Sheerness TC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart and Emma Wiggins.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Martyn Cassell.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Chris Palmer and Richard Palmer. Police Constable Laura Day (Kent Police), and Jim Duncan (Seashells Family Hub).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Joseph Ratcliffe (Kent County Council).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth, Hayden Brawn and Ashley Shiel.

252 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

253 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Seashells Centre Steering Group.

254 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 20 February 2024 (Minute Nos 650 – 665) and 15 May 2024 (Minutes Nos. 31 – 32) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

255 **Minute's silence for Honorary Alderman Steve Worrall**

A minute's silence was held to mark the sad passing of Honorary Alderman Steve Worrall.

256 **Kent Local Transport Plan 5**

Joseph Ratcliffe from Kent County Council (KCC) advised that a briefing on the Local

Transport Plan 5 Consultation was being presented to all four Area Committee Meetings.

He said that this was a statutory plan for KCC which developed policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their area and carried out their functions which would implement those policies. The plan would cover the period up to 2037.

KCC wanted to improve the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of lives in Kent by delivering a safe, reliable, efficient and affordable transport network across the county and as an international gateway. KCC would plan for growth in Kent in a way that enabled them to combat climate change and preserve Kent's environment.

He said that KCC would do this by delivering emission-free travel by getting effective dedicated infrastructure for electric vehicles, increase public transport use and make walking and cycling attractive. This would be enabled by maintaining their highways network and delivering their 'Vision Zero' road safety strategy.

Joseph Ratcliffe said that KCC were consulting on the ambitions and outcomes set out in the document. He said the consultation closed on 8 October 2024 and responses would then be reviewed before going to a KCC Full Council meeting in December 2024. People could either respond by emailing comments to LTP5@kent.gov.uk or via their 'Let's Talk' online platform at www.kent.gov.uk/ltp5. He said there would be a drop-in session on 24 September 2024 at Sittingbourne Library.

The following comments were made:

- The proposed cycle route along Plough Road, Isle of Sheppey, was extremely dangerous. The Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Project was a better option;
- there was little in the proposals for the Isle of Sheppey;
- there needed to be an improved railway system starting from Sheerness;
- there was nothing in the proposals about infrastructure improvements;
- the bus system on the Isle of Sheppey was below par;
- there was a lack of aspiration and ambition for the Isle of Sheppey;
- proposals for a Swale Halt car park had been put forward;
- there wasn't enough public engagement when it came to notices of road closures;
- there was no communication about the closure of Sheerness High Street, which was on the same day as the LTP5 drop-in session at the Sheerness Gateway, which may account for the low attendance;
- there was a reoccurring large pot-hole in Minster;
- the steps at Sheerness Promenade needed sorting out; and
- there was only one route to Sheppey East, if there was an accident the area was cut off.

257 **Child Centred Policing**

Police Constable (PC) Laura Day gave a presentation on Child Centred Policing (CCP) in Swale. She explained that CCP was a holistic approach to ensure every interaction the Police had with a child or young person was an opportunity to engage, teach, listen and safeguard. The model was built upon early intervention, effective engagement and meaningful targeted activity. It enhanced meaningful visibility to deter crime, build

confidence and reduced the fear of crime. PC Day went through the proposed CCP projects and provided details of the CCP Swale District contacts.

The following comments were made:

- How was this different to the old school officer teams?;
- nine known children were causing 85% of the anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems in the area and they knew they could get away with it despite repeated reporting of incidents;
- how successful had this strategy been so far in identifying the right young people to engage with?;
- did the team work in colleges?;
- was there a Police contact for the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey?;
- as there was no Police Station on the Isle of Sheppey, were there buildings officers could base themselves in the area?;
- councillors had repeatedly asked for the Police & Crime Commissioner to visit the Isle of Sheppey to meet with them. When he did eventually visit, councillors were not made aware of it;
- there were problems with speeding and accidents, speed cameras were needed; and
- how often were the schools visited?

PC Day responded that the CCP Strategy covered the whole community, not just schools. Regarding the group of children causing most of the ASB problems, the first port of call should be to contact the local beat officer. If that did not resolve the problem, then get in touch with PC Day. The Chair added that if neither of those approaches worked then a Community Trigger could be initiated via the Swale Community Safety Partnership, details were on the Swale Borough Council (SBC) website. The scheme was launched in May 2024 and there were some great success stories although some young people would not engage, it would not change things in the community overnight. PC Day would need to check who the contact was for the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey. Officers could work from any building, the Scheme covered schools and colleges and at the moment they were visited once a month, once more officers were recruited to the team that frequency would increase.

258 **Shingle Bank Parking Issues**

Councillor Richard Palmer, the Chair of the Community & Leisure Committee, gave a presentation on campervan and caravan parking on the Isle of Sheppey. He said the issues were mainly centred at two locations: Shellness and Shingle Bank. He said that the decision about fees needed to be made by the Community & Leisure Committee after discussions and input with the local residents of the Isle of Sheppey. If the decision was to charge, they would be set by Full Council.

Councillor Palmer then went through the options and invited comments which are summarised below:

- There would be financial consequences to the Isle of Sheppey, businesses needed the extra footfall that came from campervans;
- if businesses were to close, that would result in a loss of income from business rates for SBC;
- no-one parks at the Ship on Shore Car Park, they park on the road instead;

- who was going to clean the beaches?;
- if charges were introduced at Shingle Bank, would they be reconsidered at Little Oyster Car Park?;
- was Shingle Bank a public right of way?;
- need to remember Shingle Bank was part of the sea defences, it was already getting compacted. The cost of flooding was huge;
- the car parks would need to be tarmacked and maintained;
- people emptied toilets on to the beach;
- there were responsible campervan owners who did not empty waste onto the beach they took it home with them;
- if a toilet block was built it would avoid this problem;
- some residents felt intimidated;
- some residents have told the press and councillors they felt it had turned into a squatters camp;
- at Barton's Point and Shingle Bank people in cars were littering;
- in other parts of the country in similar locations, campervans and caravans were charged;
- suggest just charging overnight;
- campervan owners on Shingle Bank were clearing rubbish and stopped cockle pickers;
- there needed to be alternative methods of payment;
- should a charge be applied, it should be invested back into the site;
- it was only a minority who spoiled it;
- inexperienced caravan users may go down the bank;
- intimidation was sometimes felt if other people's 'space' was encroached; and
- a Minster resident reported feeling safer swimming with the campervan owners at Shingle Bank.

Councillor Palmer responded by confirming that it was very unlikely the Administration would introduce charging at Little Oyster Car Park. He thanked everyone for their comments which would be fed into the consultation.

259 **Kent County Council Seashells Family Hub Consultation**

Jim Duncan, the Chief Executive Officer, Seashells Family Hub, Sheerness gave a presentation about the KCC Seashells Family Hub consultation. He provided background into the Family Hub and talked about the work they did.

He explained that KCC's proposal was to end the commissioned family hub contracts with Seashells, Sheerness and Millmead, Margate on 31 March 2025 and deliver these services by KCC from alternative KCC premises (the Sheppey Gateway for Sheerness). Their reason was to achieve a saving of £426,000 and to provide consistency of family hub delivery across the county.

Jim Duncan said that Sheppey Gateway was not a Family Hub as it was designed for adult services and there was no outside space for children or dedicated free parking for families. There was poor access for buggies beyond the ground floor and no buggy park. There were also safeguarding concerns with using that building.

He asked for everyone's support and urged as many people as possible to respond to the KCC public consultation by the deadline of 22 September 2024.

There was wide agreement at the meeting that the proposals should be rejected, and the following comments were made:

- Family Hubs were not about consistency, KCC should make sure that services across the County measured up to what Seashells did on the funding they received;
- Seashells Family Hub saved KCC in other areas by providing good role models and preventing later problems;
- The KCC Cabinet Member has agreed to meet with Jim Duncan before a decision was taken; and
- Seashells and Millmead were working together to put forward a joined-up approach for both centres.

260 **Scrutiny of Waste & Street Cleansing Contract**

Councillor Dolley Wooster, who sat on the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Member Panel, gave a presentation on the review being carried out.

She said that SBC were the collection authority, and this was a statutory duty. The previous contract with Biffa expired in March 2024 and Suez had been awarded an 8-year contract. SBC were part of a Mid-Kent Joint Waste Partnership (Swale, Ashford and Maidstone Borough Councils).

When the new contract started, a period of settling in was always anticipated. However, several months of disruption had been experienced by some residents.

On 16 July 2024 the Environment & Climate Change Committee agreed that a scrutiny review be carried out and a panel of five councillors was set up. They would look at a range of issues around the start of the new contract, including resources and staffing, data and rounds, contract and project management and communications.

The panel would spend the next couple of months carrying out detailed investigations into these topics, using a range of methods to get information and feedback, including workshops, consultation with Area Committees and the Local Councils' Liaison Forum. A public survey had already been launched which asked for residents' experiences with the new contract.

Councillor Wooster asked for comments to feed into the review:

- Why was there not a contingency plan in place?;
- how can the operatives empty some bins and leave others on the same road;
- food waste bins have been missed;
- regarding street cleansing, used sanitary towels were stuck to a lamp post, it was months before these were cleared away;
- roads that had been on a schedule for a deep clean before the contract change have still not been cleaned. Why was the schedule made if the contract was changing?;
- parking close to junctions was an issue, the Suez vehicles could not get past.

Councillor Wooster thanked everyone for their comments and said there were hard copies of the public consultation available to take away for anyone who did not have online access.

261 Sheerness Revival Project update

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods gave an update on the Sheerness Revival Project and the progress with Beachfields, Sheppey College and Masters House. She confirmed the Sheppey College Planning Application was approved at Planning Committee on 12 September 2024. She also advised that Inger Lorraine had now joined as the Capital Programme Manager for the project, replacing Dean Radmore, who had now left SBC. The Capital Programme Officer, Zoe Hentschel was expected back from maternity leave in November 2024.

262 Enhanced Bus Partnership - Swale Local Focus Group

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods advised that a meeting of the Swale Local Bus Focus Group had taken place today and that KCC were awaiting an announcement on Government funding. She said that there were a lot of unknowns, at this point, on what could be delivered.

263 Swale Traffic Forum

The Chair advised that due to the General Election, there hadn't been a meeting of the Swale Traffic Forum since February. The officer who coordinated this group had left SBC. He suggested that if anyone had any issues to email the Sheppey Area Committee's Swale Traffic Forum representative, Councillor Dolley Wooster.

264 Matters arising from previous meetings

The Members noted the progress on actions.

265 Public Forum

Niquie Trower, Sheppey Action Group, asked what SBC were doing about warm hubs now that the Winter Fuel Payment had been cut. She also said that the Sheppey Action Group would be coordinating donations of blankets and non-perishable food for elderly people. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods responded that SBC worked closely with the local Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector who provided a number of options throughout the winter. We do not currently have a list of where these will be located as many were still in planning, but we could update with these at the next meeting. We recently received the positive news that Household Support Fund had been extended again to support households through the winter months. We would work with our partners in the VCSE to support families through existing support packages and develop targeted support to those who were affected by the removal of the Winter Fuel Payment. In addition, we are running targeted campaigns by writing to households who we know are eligible for Pension Credit to advise them to claim. The Pension Credit application was relatively simple compared to things like PiP, however there would be support available to help people with the process at our One Swale Roadshows over the next three months:

- Thursday 26th September - Sheppey Gateway;
- Tuesday 22nd October - Faversham Salvation Army; and
- Thursday 21st November - Sittingbourne Heather House Community Hub.

Chris Reed, Sheerness Town Council, suggested that town and parish councils on the

Isle of Sheppey group together to employ a tourism officer to publicise the attractions on the Island and could liaise with SBC when events were put on. The Chair suggested that the clerks of the town and parish councils may wish to meet to discuss the suggestion further.

Nicola Scott spoke about incidents of anti-social behaviour that had taken place at Leysdown Coastal Park and wanted to make Councillors aware of this issue.

Nicola Scott asked why the petition that had been submitted for there to be a Leysdown Parish Council by-election had not been actioned by SBC. Councillor Tara Noe advised that the Democratic Services Manager had been in touch with the Parish Council and the original petition did not contain the signatures of those calling for the election. It had been requested that a valid petition with signatures be re-submitted so that the process could begin.

Nicola Scott raised concerns about correct procedures not being followed by Leysdown Parish Council. The Chair advised her once the by-election had taken place and the three new councillors appointed, they would be able to address the issues being experienced at Leysdown Parish Council.

Councillor Ben Pointing, Minster-on-Sea Parish Council, asked why litter bins had been removed and not replaced. The Chair responded that at the Budget Council meeting last year, it was agreed that as part of a savings programme, an audit of litter bins be carried out, which ward councillors were consulted about. As a result, some bins were removed. However, it was acknowledged that this would need monitoring to ensure that the decisions for removal made were correct as usage can vary at different times of the year.

266 Local issues to be raised

Councillor Tara Noe spoke about unsafe riding of bikes and requested that a Police representative be invited to the next Sheppey Area Committee meeting. The Chair responded that an invitation had already been extended.

267 Matters referred to Service Committee Chairs for consideration

No issues were raised.

268 Extension of Standing Orders

At 10 pm Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders in order that the Committee could complete its business.

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