
SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Criterion Blue Town, 69 High Street, Blue Town, Sheerness ME12 1RW on Tuesday, 4 February 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.04 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Andy Booth, Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Elliott Jayes (Chair), Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Lee-Anne Moore, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy (Vice-Chair), Ashley Shiel, Mike Whiting and Dolley Wooster.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Mike Brown (Eastchurch Parish Council (PC)), Sue Simpson and Paula Telford (Queenborough Town Council (TC)) and Chris Reed (Sheerness TC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (VIRTUALLY): Parish/Town Councillors Sarah Poole (Eastchurch PC), Ben Pointing (Minster-on-Sea PC) and Lisa Gransden (Queenborough TC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martyn Cassell, Janet Dart, Zoe Hentschel and Inger Lorraine.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Mark Tucker.

APOLOGY: Councillors Pete Neal.

603 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

604 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Elliott Jayes and Lee-Anne Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest as Members of the Sheerness Revival Levelling-Up Fund Working Group.

Councillor Andy Booth declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chair of Swale Community Leisure Limited.

605 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2024 (Minute Nos. 441 – 450) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

606 DEVOLUTION UPDATE

The Chief Executive was in attendance and gave a presentation on Devolution. She summarised the Government's Devolution White Paper and its proposals for Local Government reorganisation in the form of Strategic Mayoral Authorities.

In December 2024 Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council formally applied to be included in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, this was in agreement with the 12 district and borough councils in Kent. At the time of the Sheppey Area Committee meeting, Kent and Medway were waiting to hear if they had been successful.

The following questions and comments were raised

- Keeping residents informed on this matter was important;
- how would the role of parish and town councillors be affected under a unitary council? and
- it was important that the Isle of Sheppey maintained its voice in any new unitary structure and the most effective way to do this was through parish and town councils. As not all of the Isle of Sheppey was parished, Councillor Mike Whiting proposed that the Chair of the Sheppey Area Committee wrote to the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee requesting that consideration be given to carrying out a Community Governance Review (CGR) on the Isle of Sheppey. This was seconded by Councillor Tom Nundy and on being put to the vote was agreed.

The Chief Executive responded that the usual methods of communication would be used to keep residents informed, such as the Swale Borough Council (SBC) website and social media. As there was a long lead in time to produce the Inside Swale publication, it would be better to wait until there was more certainty before publishing information in the magazine. The role of parish and town councillors would not diminish under a unitary council, if anything it could increase due to the possibility of taking on services from the unitary. A CGR could not be carried out at the same time as the Local Government Boundary Review was taking place, however, areas could petition SBC with a request to carry out a CGR.

Post meeting note – on 5 February 2025 KCC were told that the Government had decided Kent and Medway would not be part of the Devolution Priority Programme, and that the KCC elections would go ahead as planned in May 2025. KCC and SBC were waiting to hear what this meant for local government reorganisation.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Chair of the Sheppey Area Committee write to the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee requesting that consideration be given to carrying out a Community Governance Review on the Isle of Sheppey.**

607 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

The Capital Programme Manager and the Capital Programme Officer were in attendance to give an update on the Sheerness Revival Project.

The projects were progressing in the construction phase and were on track with outputs and outcomes. The Quarter 3 2024-2025 report was being prepared for submission.

Beachfields Regeneration – the contractor had been appointed and planning permission granted. Partners had temporarily relocated now that pre-construction work had begun. The adventure golf facility was expected to be completed summer 2025 and the Beachfields project would be completed late spring 2026.

Sheppey College – East Kent College had appointed their contractor to deliver construction and the enablement works had commenced on site. Full works were expected to start in February 2025 with a completion expected in October 2025.

Masters House – the contractor was appointed in December 2024 with works due to start in February 2025. Completion was expected in late spring 2025.

Communications – a series of media communications had been planned to mark key milestones in the projects and various consultations events had been planned. Engagement was planned with schools and residents around the adventure golf facility to provide the opportunity to contribute to the design of the course.

The following comments were made:

- Were the adventure golf costings included within the overall budget?
- would it be more appropriate to include the new Sheppey Crossing instead of the Kingsferry Bridge in the adventure golf design?
- how many holes would the golf course have?
- would the 'Welcome to Sheerness' sign be moved?
- if the café was located upstairs, it would allow lovely views of the sea;
- could a large solid outdoor table tennis table be included?
- could options suggested at the initial consultation be reconsidered if there was any spare funding in the budget?
- Neptune Steps were the responsibility of the Environment Agency to improve/maintain;
- the Sheppey Leisure Centre Pool was not fit for purpose and needed renovating;
- were tennis courts included in the scheme? and
- would the existing facility to provide refund vouchers for car parking continue?

Officers responded that adventure golf costings were included in the budget. The suggestion to include The Sheppey Crossing could be passed onto the course designer. The golf course had 15 holes. The entrance to Beachfields would be widened and the 'Welcome to Sheerness' sign would be moved slightly to make it fit centrally in the new opening. The feasibility to locate the café upstairs had been looked at during the design stage but unfortunately could not be accommodated. There was an area suitable to install a table tennis table so this could be looked at with the design team subject to available budget as the project progressed. Future phases of the project would look at improving and relocating the Sheppey Leisure Centre Pool. Existing tennis courts would be retained (one tennis court and one multi-use court) and the existing car park would remain where all payment machines had the facility to provide refund vouchers, however, it was for SBC Members to decide if refunds were to continue under the new leisure contract.

The Policy & Engagement Officer gave an update on the Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review.

The Environment & Climate Change Committee agreed that a scrutiny review should be carried out so that the root causes of the problems at the start of the new waste contract could be identified as well as any learning that should be carried forward.

A cross-party Member Panel was set up and they carried out their investigations between August and November 2024. In January 2025 the panel took a report of their findings to the Environment & Climate Change Committee where their conclusions and recommendations were agreed.

The report was available to read on the SBC website via this link: <https://news.swale.gov.uk/campaigns/new-waste-contract-campaign/waste-scrutiny>

There was also a summarised version of the recommendations available on the website.

The following comments were made:

- It was good to see the contractor carrying out street cleansing;
- would SBC take any action for breach of contract?
- the search facility on Google and the SBC website did not seem to be working;
- the removal of some litter bins had resulted in more littering, would SBC review these areas to see if some bins should be reinstated?
- some of the litter bins were not fit for purpose, for example seagulls could access open-topped bins. Could they be assessed for suitability?
- could QR codes (quick response codes) be attached to bins so people could easily report problems?
- behaviour change was vital to stop fly-tipping and dumping of rubbish on roads, what was being done to tackle this?
- inconsiderate parking was still causing access problems for waste vehicles, what was being done to deal with this?
- Sheerness Town Council had taken out a contract with SBC for Hawkeye closed circuit television cameras to be deployed on a short-term basis. Why was there a delay with installing the cameras?
- a Member wished to recognise the hard work of the Head of Environment & Leisure and his team for their hard work during the period of disruption and asked that the Sheppey Area Committee's thanks be passed on.

The Head of Environment & Leisure responded that the contract allowed for financial penalties for poor performance. The Policy & Engagement Officer would ask the Communications Team to look at the search facility not working properly. The Head of Environment & Leisure advised there would be litter bin reviews but the Council had reduced the funding last year to balance the budget. Some bins had been installed many years ago so there was inconsistency with suitability, he asked if his team could be made aware of the location of any that were unsuitable for the area. QR codes would be attached to litter bins. It was hoped that as the

contract was moving to a more stable phase, officers would have time to focus on behaviour change and improved performance would bring in external funding. A phased approach was used to deal with inconsiderate parking starting with letters to households in affected areas requesting access was maintained. If that approach did not work, traffic restrictions could be put in place, however, this was a lengthy process. The query about the delay in installing the CCTV camera would be taken up with the relevant team. The Head of Environment & Leisure said he would pass on Members thanks to the team.

609 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

Councillor Tara Noe advised that Leysdown Parish Council was now operating with three new parish councillors and a clerk, they were currently advertising for another vacancy. An extraordinary Parish Council meeting would be taking place on Friday 7 February 2025 to approve the budget.

610 PUBLIC FORUM

Question 1 - a member of the public referred to the person that went missing on the Isle of Sheppey on 24 December 2024. She said it had been brought to her attention that a gap in the CCTV camera coverage and lack of lighting had made it impossible to see what direction the person took, making the search difficult.

The Head of Environment & Leisure advised that SBC were reviewing the need for CCTV/additional lighting in those areas, but at this stage did not have any identified budget that could be used for permanent solutions. In the first instance SBC were looking to see if they could evidence the need for CCTV and if so, if there were suitable columns that could be used and also look to deploy temporary mobile CCTV cameras. Officers would look into more permanent CCTV if the evidence of need was there and would explore lighting options and possible funding solutions for that. This was something that could also be fed into the Seafront Parking Consultation which was in progress.

Members asked that this issue be added to the Matters Arising report so progress could be monitored at future Sheppey Area Committee meetings.

Councillor Lee-Anne Moore said the response from residents of the Isle of Sheppey and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution were tremendous and asked that the Area Committee noted how amazing they were.

Question 2 – a member of the public said it was difficult to organise events on the Isle of Sheppey now that Swale were no longer part of Visit Kent. KCC Councillor Mike Whiting said that he would take this up with the Chief Executive of Visit Kent and asked that this issue be added to the Matters Arising report.

611 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Lee-Anne Moore asked for an update on Nore Academy. KCC Councillor Mike Whiting said he would try to get an update and would report back.

Post meeting note – KCC Councillor Whiting advised that there were two schools at the Halfway School site in Danley Road, Minster both part of the Alternative Learning Trust (ALT).

Nore Academy

<https://www.kent-teach.com/School/Directory/Details.aspx?SchoolId=3031>
and

<https://www.alternativelearningtrust.org.uk/nore-academy/>
- SEND school

Estuary Academy

<https://www.kent-teach.com/School/Directory/Details.aspx?SchoolID=3054> -
Alternative Provision and a satellite of a school in Gravesend.

The buildings were open for staff, and more staff vacancies were being advertised. They expected to take their first children from the end of this month. Parents whose children would be starting would have been informed, or should have been, though if in doubt they should contact the school. Parents who wanted their children to attend but had not yet applied, should do so via the Kent.gov.uk website.

An Eastchurch Parish Councillor raised the issue of lack of enforcement at 10 month occupancy caravan parks. Following a discussion Councillor Elliott Jayes proposed that lack of enforcement at 10-month occupancy caravan parks due to the lengthy enforcement process, be referred to the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee to see what action could be taken. Councillor Mike Whiting seconded the proposal and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Resolved

- 1) That lack of enforcement at 10-month occupancy caravan parks due to the lengthy enforcement process, be referred to the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee to see what action could be taken.**

Councillor Dolley Wooster requested that the Bus Partnership Meeting be included as a standing item on future Sheppey Area Committee agendas to ensure that residents on the Isle of Sheppey had a voice on any issues that may affect them in Swale. This suggestion was agreed by the Chair.

612 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following issues were to be referred to Service Committee Chairs for consideration:

- 1) That the Chair of the Sheppey Area Committee write to the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee requesting that consideration be given to carrying out a Community Governance Review on the Isle of Sheppey.

- 2) That lack of enforcement at 10-month occupancy caravan parks due to the lengthy enforcement process, be referred to the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee to see what action could be taken.

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