
Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 16 September 2025 from 7.00 pm - 7.33 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney, Ann Cavanagh, Charles Gibson (Chair), Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding), Julien Speed and Mike Whiting.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Natalie Earl, Kellie MacKenzie, Chris Mansfield and Anna Stonor.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Kieran Golding and James Hunt.

312 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

313 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 186 – 189) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

314 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

315 **Statement of Community Involvement: Results of Public Consultation and Adoption**

The Planning Officer (Policy) introduced the report which presented the proposed changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), following the six-week consultation, and recommended that the document proceeded to the Policy and Resources Committee and then Full Council for adoption.

The Planning Officer (Policy) referred to paragraph 2.6 on page 4 of the report, which set out some of the comments received. He drew attention to Appendix I which set out the consultation responses and summaries. The draft updated SCI was set out at Appendix II of the report.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

A Member referred to discussions at a recent meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee around having longer consultation periods for the local plan, and felt it should be included in the updated SCI. The Chair recalled the meeting and said that no specific motion had been agreed at that meeting, but Members had concluded that a six-week consultation would be sufficient for the local plan, as Members could agree a longer consultation under exceptional circumstances.

A Member asked that it be noted that Members had not seen the glossary to the draft SCI. In response, the Planning Manager (Policy) reported that this was due to timetabling and resource issues but it would be available for consideration at the Policy and Resources Committee. She added that it would be the standard glossary and would include details of all the acronyms used within the SCI document.

In response to a question from a Member, the Principal Planning Officer (Policy) confirmed that Southern Water had requested that Flood Risk Water Quality and Water Resources be in the list of material planning considerations for planning applications. They had also suggested including the issue of 'sustainable drainage' but officers considered that the more general Flood Risk, Water Quality and Water Resources criteria was appropriate.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by Councillor Ann Cavanagh.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- It was important to include sustainable drainage as a material planning consideration;
- appendix II should include a comprehensive list of the statutory authorities;
- important to highlight how the Council engaged with neighbouring local authorities as well as hard to reach groups and residents;
- needed to be more explicit about how the Council was transparent in its reporting, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- appendix II should include some wording on the Council's commitment to review the document within the next five years;
- explanation of how representations to local residents were used and what feedback was given;
- referred to paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 of appendix II and stated that not all applicants engaged with the local community including Ward Councillors;
- referred to paragraph 7.17 of appendix II and asked that the word 'must' replaced the word 'should' in the second sentence;
- there should be an obligation on officers to inform Ward Members and Parish Councils when a major application was coming forward;
- referred to paragraph 7.22 of appendix II and requested that the wording "Notify **ward councillors....**" be added to point (iii);
- referred to paragraph 7.25 of appendix II and said it should be made clear that for public speaking at Planning Committee there was only one slot for each category. The current wording gave the impression that anyone could register;
- paragraph 7.32 of Appendix II, Appealing a Planning Decision, should also include details of procedures for legal challenges to applications which had been granted permission by the Council;
- concerned that not all the relevant planning documents for Kent County Council (KCC) planning applications were published on the Council's planning portal, this needed to be addressed;
- should be made clear that Regulations 18 and 19 were for a 'minimum' six-week consultation period, but the relevant committee had discretion to extend;
- the SCI should note that it was a legal requirement to publish S106 Agreements ahead of Planning Committee meetings;
- planning reports should include whether or not applicants had engaged with the local community prior to submitting their application; and
- three minutes to speak at planning committee was not sufficient if you were speaking on a major application.

In response, the Principal Planning Officer (Policy) reported that officers from the Planning Development Team said it would be unreasonable for the Council to add the

word 'must' to paragraph 7.17, as it would not be a valid reason for refusing a planning application. She said wording could be added to clarify appealing a planning decision and public speaking at Planning Committee.

The Planning Manager (Policy) said that they would discuss the inclusion of ward members to paragraph 7.22, and also planning officers including a paragraph confirming engagement with the local community with the Head of Place and the Planning Manager (Planning Applications). Her response would be included in the report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Chair agreed to write to the Chair of the Constitution Working Group about increasing the time limit for public speaking on major planning applications.

Recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee:

- (1) That the proposed changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement found in Appendix I and II be noted.***
- (2) That the proposed changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) be agreed and proceeded to Full Council for adoption.***

Chair

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