
Economy and Property Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 8 October 2025 from 7.00 pm - 8.09 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Chair), Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Alex Eyre, Chris Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Mishchuk), Richard Palmer, Carrie Pollard, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson, Mark Tucker and Ashley Wise (Vice-Chair).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Joanne Johnson, Inger Lorraine and Kieren Mansfield.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Martyn Cassell.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Peter Marchington, Kieran Mishchuk and Lee-Anne Moore.

383 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

384 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 153 – 163) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

385 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

386 **Forward Decisions Plan**

The Head of Place informed Members that a new national funding stream had been announced, which carried on from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) but was reduced in scope to three new objectives; Community Spaces, Public Spaces and Highstreet or Town Centre revitalisation. The Council had been awarded £1.5 million from this Pride in Place Impact Fund to be used in 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years for capital purposes only.

The Head of Place suggested that as the new focus of the fund spanned over multiple service committees, the Policy and Resources Committee might be the appropriate Committee to agree the projects to be funded.

Given the experience of the Member Working Group responsible for overseeing UKSPF, the Head of Place also suggested it could be an appropriate body to develop proposals for allocating the £1.5 million awarded to Swale, to feed into the Policy and Resources Committee (noting it was currently outside its Terms of Reference).

The Vice-Chair agreed that this was a sensible approach and proposed that a report be brought to a future meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, rather than the Economy and Property Committee, to enable the funding to be granted as quickly as possible. The Vice-Chair added that the Economy and Property Committee should

maintain a direct input through the existing Member Working Group and could keep abreast of how the funding programme progressed.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

387 Transfer of Council Car Parks - Response to Council Motion

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which provided a response to the motion at Full Council meeting on 2 April 2025 to transfer the free car parks in Sheppey to the relevant town and parish council, amended to cover all free car parks across the Borough.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said that the Council Parking Policy set out the Council's principles for the management of on and off-street parking across the borough and the Property Asset Strategy covered how the Council made best use of its assets. It was felt that applying a blanket approach to free proposed car parks was not the best way forward. He added that talks with Parishes and Town Councils were already underway and that under legislation the Council were required to show best consideration for each car park. Therefore, before the Economy and Property Committee could make any asset transfer decision, the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee were responsible for reviewing what tariffs were charged in car parks and needed to consider if any of the free ones could be used to support the budget process.

The Chair invited Members to make comments and points raised included:

- Recommendation one needed to define what the relevant committee was;
- had a strategic assessment for utilities been carried out on the car parks?;
- had officers thought about future opportunities to connect the car parks to the electrical grids so that they could be a useful asset in the future;
- concerned that the report did not give full details of the number of spaces and the type of usage at the car park sites, so it was difficult to make a decision without knowing all the dynamics of the sites; and
- it was important to specify which committee was responsible for making the decision to provide clarity.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to points raised and agreed that recommendation one could be amended so that both the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee as well as the Economy and Property Committee could make individual decisions on any asset transfer of the Council car parks. He added that any financial implications may need to be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said that all Council assets including car parks had utility plans in place and officers were aware of the importance to make car parks suitable for the future.

The Head of Place clarified that a decision to charge for parking at a current 'free car park' needed to be made by the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.

The Vice-Chair said that a key part of the transfer process was building a relationship with the parishes and town councils. He proposed that recommendation one be amended to: *'This committee resolves that individual decisions on asset transfers are made on each car park that is suitable for transfer, at Economy and Property Committee following the recommendations from Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee'*. This was seconded by the Chair and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) *That individual decisions on asset transfers be made on each car park that was suitable for transfer, at the Economy and Property Committee following the recommendations from the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.***
- (2) *That Officers continue to discuss possible transfers with Town and Parish Councils as part of the overall asset transfer process.***
- (3) *That the matter on charging at free car parks be referred to the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee, to ensure best value principles were followed.***

388 Barton's Point Coastal Park - Update

The Strategic Programmes & Assets Manager introduced the report which set out an update on the future use and leasing of Bartons Point Coastal Park, Minster.

The Chair invited members to make comments and points raised included:

- The future of Barton's Point Coastal Park was exciting but disappointing to see that the process had been delayed;
- the process had been delayed because of careful due diligence and issues that were unexpected as a result of the ecological survey;
- it was the Economy and Property Committee's responsibility to take the coastal park forward and get it back into use for the best interests of the community;
- did the boathouse café operate seasonally?;
- the Economy and Property Committee needed to retain an interest in the dealings of Bartons point as it was a significant area of interest for residents of the Isle of Sheppey;
- Barton's Point had massive potential;
- for a such a valued asset, why had it taken so long for a decision to be made as to the use of Barton's Point?; and
- was it more appropriate for the Economy and Property Committee to consider the future use of the coastal park?

The Strategic Programmes & Assets Manager said that the boathouse café was currently operating under a license that could be rolled forward. In the event that the current operator did not continue then it would be officers' intention to secure another whilst the future of the site was determined.

The Head of Environment and Leisure informed Members that a report would go to the 12 November 2025 Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee for a steer on how officers should progress with the Barton's Point Coastal Park.

The Head of Place said that the decision on Barton's Point had been delayed as it was

necessary to carry out the ecology survey over a period of 12 months. The survey had revealed specific conditions which created unique habits for the protected wildlife found on the site.

The Vice-Chair proposed that an update on the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee decision be reported back to the January 2026 Economy and Property Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Richard Palmer and on being put to the vote it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the future occupation and use of Bartons Point Coastal Park (as agreed on 19 January 2023) be rescinded until further consideration of its potential by the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee.***
- (2) That an update report on the proposals from the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee be scheduled for the January 2026 Economy and Property Committee.***

389 Voluntary and Community Sector Lettings policy - update

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager introduced the report which set out the updated Voluntary and Community Sector Lettings policy due to go out to an 8-week consultation. He added that once the consultation period had ended a further report would be presented to a future Economy and Property Committee to agree the final policy.

The Chair invited Members to make comments and points raised included:

- Wanted to see greater take-up of the spare office space at Swale House, Sittingbourne but the homeless persons living in the undercroft needed to be dealt with first;
- Swale House might no longer be around after the Local Government Review so was there much interest from tenants to take up a short-term lease?;
- it was a shame to be charging some of the groups at Swale House full rent when they carried out plenty of work for the community of Swale; and
- acknowledged the income generation potential of Swale House to meet wider budget requirements.

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager responded to points raised and said that the office rental market was currently very flat generally. He added that letting units within Swale House increased the cost of running Swale House, and this was part of the reason it was considered to be part of the Council's commercial portfolio, where the costs of maintaining standalone, specific premises were met by the tenants and contributed to reducing liabilities. He added that officers had an extensive list of potential tenants that they would contact and a press statement had been prepared.

Resolved:

- (1) That the draft Voluntary and Community Sector Lettings Policy, as set out in Appendix I, go out for public consultation for a period of 8-weeks, after which a further report be brought to the Economy and Property Committee to approve the final version.***

390 Levelling-Up Fund Programme Update

The Capital Programme Manager introduced the report which summarised the progress of the Levelling Up Fund Sheerness Revival programme and the milestones that had been completed to-date.

The Chair invited Members to make comments and points raised included:

- Residents in Sheerness were looking forward to the opening of the GP service;
- wanted the good work at Sheppey College to continue;
- the adventure golf proved to businesses that it was worth investing in Sheerness;
- officers needed to keep a close watch on the quality of the adventure golf as the more it was being used the more it could be damaged;
- great news to hear that the adventure golf was well used;
- great to hear feedback from local businesses to say that since the adventure golf had been installed there was an increase in footfall;
- looked forward to the Masters House workshops starting up;
- Beachfields needed some additional funding to improve the aesthetic look of the area so hoped that officers could find a way to secure the additional funding needed;
- the number of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents had decreased in the area since there was more footfall;
- could the Street Cleaning Team carry out regular checks around the Beachfields area as it was important to keep it looking nice and clean; and
- congratulated the officers and Chair of the Economy and Property for their to make sure the LUF Programme was carried out effectively and within the agreed budget.

The Capital Programme Manager responded to points raised and said that officers were creating a snagging list of works that needed to be carried out at the adventure golf. The contractor would be completing the list of works on 10 November 2025 after the October half-term.

Resolved:

(1) That the update be noted.

391 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The confidential appendix was not discussed so there was no need to go into closed session.

392 Exempt Appendix II - Levelling-Up Fund Update

The confidential appendix was not discussed so there was no need to go into closed session.

Chair

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