
Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 12 November 2025 from 7.00 pm - 10.44 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen (Substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Shelley Cheesman, Charles Gibson (Substitute for Councillor Alex Eyre), Angela Harrison (Substitute for Councillor Ashley Shiel), James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Peter Marchington, Charlie Miller, Kieran Mishchuk, Hannah Perkin (Substitute for Councillor Claire Martin), Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson and Dolley Wooster (Chair).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alister Andrews, Andre Bowen, Martyn Cassell, Annmarie Goodwin, Duncan Haynes, Clare Lydon, Kelly Mehmet, Philippa Richardson and Graeme Tuff.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Tom Nundy, Mike Whiting and Tony Winckless.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Simon Clark, Lee-Anne Moore and Ashley Wise.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Alex Eyre, Claire Martin, Pete Neal and Ashley Shiel.

448 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

449 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 164 – 179) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

450 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 A review of Council free car parks as she was a member of Minster Parish Council.

Councillor Elliott Jayes declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 A review of Council free car parks as he was a member of Minster Parish Council.

Councillor Elliott Jayes declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 12 Barton's Point – considering future options for management of biodiversity as he was a Trustee of the Sea Cadets.

Councillor Peter Marchington declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 A review of Council free car parks as he was a member of Queenborough Town Council.

Councillor Charles Gibson declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 11 Public Conveniences Review – Consultation Outcome as he was a Trustee of

Oare Gunpowder Works.

451 **Matters Arising**

There were no items raised for discussion.

452 **Chairs Briefing**

The Chair provided an update on her work as Chair of the Committee. She referred to the waste contract and spoke on the partnership work Suez were doing with a training provider. The Chair had attended an awards evening for young people who had attended training which had been very rewarding and also involved work with the training provider to give them some input for a commercial video. The scheme would also be rolled out for Maidstone and Ashford councils. The Chair also attended a Kent Environment Member Board meeting where various councils met together and she looked forward to tangible results from that meeting.

453 **Forward Decisions Plan**

The Head of Environment and Leisure gave a couple of updates. He said the Draft Kent Joint Municipal Waste Strategy needed to be added to the Forward Decisions Plan, to be considered at the 14 January 2026 meeting. The Procurement of minor maintenance and cleansing of public conveniences service – contract award for April 2026 onwards, would be deferred to the March 2026 meeting, or possibly an extraordinary meeting.

A Member suggested that early input from Members on the Litter Enforcement Service Review item was important and suggested a Task and Finish Group be set up so that Members' views could be fed into the report.

Councillor Elliott Jayes moved the following motion: That a Task and Finish Group be set up for the Litter Enforcement Service Review item, to include one Member from each group. This was seconded by Councillor Dolley Wooster and on being put to the vote was agreed.

A Member drew attention to the 'TBC's' on the document and the items going to the January 2026 meeting and suggested more planning was needed so as not to overload meetings. The Head of Environment and Leisure confirmed that none were likely for the January 2026 meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a Task and Finish Group be set up for the Litter Enforcement Service Review item, to include one Member from each group.

454 **Mid Kent Environmental Health Enforcement Policy**

The Food & Safety Team Leader introduced the report which set out the refreshed Environmental Health Enforcement Policy.

The Chair proposed the recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Lloyd Bowen.

Resolved:**(1) That the refreshed Environmental Health Enforcement Policy be approved.****455 A review of Council free car parks**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which followed up a discussion at the Economy and Property Committee on the motion submitted at Full Council on 2 April 2025, about transferring free car parks in Sheppey to the relevant town and parish councils.

Councillor Lloyd Bowen moved the following amendment to Recommendation 3 if it was agreed: That as the Committee could not enforce Recommendation 3 it be amended to state that this would be agreed, subject to the budget and fees and charges being agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council in due course. This was seconded by Councillor James Hunt and on being put to the vote was agreed.

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

- This should not go out to formal parking order consultation, residents should be consulted informally first;
- Minster Parish Council had offered to take on a car park, not sure what was happening with progression of this;
- there was a motion to transfer car parks to parish/town councils, this report was circumnavigating the issue;
- charging for car parks would result in people avoiding car parks and parking on the roads instead, and could lead to poor parking;
- parents were being targeted as this would mean they would have to pay when they parked to pick their children up from school;
- considered the third recommendation in terms of the removal of the 30-minute tariff had 'crept into' the report and some people might not have seen it;
- sought clarification as to whether the parking order consultation included town and parish councils;
- acknowledged that a lot of people would be against charging for car parking, but a decision needed to be made on what was best for the borough, not just for particular areas;
- it was unfair that some areas paid, and others did not;
- this approach would help balance the Council's budget;
- considered this to be a bad idea and that the car parks with tariffs would not be used;
- confirmation sought on how much income would be generated;
- suggested data was needed in about a year's time prior to the budget to show what income had been generated;
- clarification sought as to if the charges went ahead, would the transfer of the car parks halt;
- in terms of best value, it was important to know what the Council's assets were worth prior to their disposal;
- money needed to be generated to help fund other vital services for residents; and
- the car park charges should be equitable across the borough to help fund Council services.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to some of the comments: The offer of transfer from Minster Parish Council would be dealt with as part of the overall asset transfer process; parking order consultation was not normally sent direct to town and parish councils, but their comments would be accepted, and a note could be sent to all parish and town councils when it went live; and a conservative estimate of £35,000 per year would be generated by charging at these car parks, based on other similar car park usage.

Councillor Hunt moved the following motion: That a report be written reviewing the income generated from levying the charges at the proposed car parks, at a time that was right so it fitted in with the 2027 Council budget. This was seconded by Councillor Bowen and on being put to the vote was agreed.

A member of the public was invited to speak. He raised the following points: residents were against the proposals; a petition from people in Queenborough had been submitted; car park charges were lower elsewhere in the Borough; tourists would stop visiting because of the charges; there would be a social and economic impact; volunteers would be put off volunteering because of the charges; and councillors were here for the residents.

A visiting Ward Member spoke against the proposals and presented a petition to the Chair. He raised the following points: astonished to see this issue return, it was a bad idea before and was a bad idea now; this would result in a decrease in shoppers; the car parks would have recurring costs, e.g. maintaining the ticket machines; this would not fill the Council's budget gap; nearby streets would become congested with on-street parking; and questioned the process order as councillors were making the decision now, and then a consultation would take place.

Another Ward Member spoke against the proposals and raised the following points: this was the third time this issue was being discussed and could not understand the logic of it being considered again; the proposals would have a massive impact on residents; and it was trying to 'squeeze' money out of people; there did not seem to be any figures on how much money would be generated; this would cause displacement of vehicles; congestion would increase; detrimental impact on businesses; and better ways of generating money/reducing spend needed to be sought.

Another visiting Ward Member spoke against the proposals and raised the following points: Halfway car park was busy only when children were being picked up from the nearby school; and parking on the road was already bad and this would get worse.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to some of the points raised. He stated that there were standard car park tariffs across the borough; free car parks already had maintenance costs that were difficult to meet, and there would not be additional costs; acknowledged that there could be displacement of vehicles, but this was time limited as behaviours changed and on-street orders could be placed to counter this if there were safety issues; projected income generated was based on similar sized car parks; parking order consultation would ensure views of local people were taken into account and a final decision would then be made by councillors; subject to the comments received, there could be amendments such as variables of times that charges could be levied.

Members made further comments:

- Suggested more school children used public transport or active travel if possible to help alleviate parking issues;
- there should be secure units for bikes in the car parks;
- an Active Travel Plan should be encouraged;
- it was important that residents completed consultations; and
- transferred car parks should not be subsidised by the Council

In response, the Head of Environment and Leisure said that existing revenue had ensured delivery of different services, such as an Active Travel Co-ordinator, but more was needed to continue to be able to fund council services.

Councillor Harrison proposed the recommendations (as amended) and these were seconded by Councillor Hunt.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2) a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Bowen, Cheesman, C Gibson, Harrison, Hunt, Jackson, Miller, Perkin and Thompson. Total equals 9.

Against: Councillors Jayes, Marchington, Mishchuk, P Stephen and S Stephen. Total equals 5.

Abstain: Councillor Wooster. Total equals 1.

Resolved:

(1) That charges should be levied year-round at the following car parks, at the standard tariff rate, from 1 April 2026;

- a) Little Oyster, Minster on Sea**
- b) Park Road, Queenborough**
- c) Library car park, Queenborough**
- d) Front Brents, Faversham**
- e) Grafton Road, Sittingbourne**
- f) Halfway road, Halfway**

(2) That officers proceed to formal Off-Street Parking Order consultation for each of the above.

(3) That it be agreed to remove the 30-minute tariff for all car parks starting 1 April 2026, subject to the approval of the budget and fees and charges by the Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council in due course.

(4) That a report be written reviewing the income generated from levying the charges, at a time that was right, so it fitted in with the 2027 Council budget.

456 Performance report for waste collection and street cleansing service (April 2025 - September 2025)

The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report which set out the first Swale Borough Council (SBC) mid-year waste collection and street cleansing report since the

annual report was presented to the committee in June 2025.

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

- Some roads were still being missed, despite numerous calls to the Council;
- the waste contract would always have individual situations of failure, but these were being resolved quicker;
- Members were key in asking for some social value inputs and it was good to see them coming forward now;
- considered more work needed to be done by contractors placing empty bins back to where they were collected from;
- acknowledged that the recycling message was getting through, but some residents still needed information on what they could put in each bin;
- tetra packs were a recycling issue;
- flyposting and weeds needed to be addressed by the street cleansing teams;
- more deep cleans were needed;
- considered the contractor needed to 'up their game' on street cleansing after 18 months working with the Council;
- the waiting period for bulky waste was too long, which often resulted in fly tipping;
- this was a really helpful report;
- figure 5 at paragraph 2.27 illustrated the problem of contamination;
- it needed to be made clearer the impact on contamination on the environment to try and deter people from putting the wrong rubbish in bins;
- surprised by the 72% figure of waste food which could have been avoided;
- people not clearing up their dog's mess was a real issue;
- clarification sought on assisted collections as these were very important to those who needed them and it would be good to get some data on failed collections in the next report;
- food waste had improved, but there was still a long way to go, the Council needed to do more to help residents with this;
- concerned, with reference to paragraph 2.35 that road cleansing scheduling had not already been completed, considered it would have been done earlier in the contract;
- Ward Members would like to be made aware of the autumn leafing plan and the areas of focus;
- clarification sought as to whether communal properties would receive food caddies;
- suggested more be done to educate young children at school on recycling; and
- data to show people the benefits of fuel generation from food waste would be good.

Officers responded to some of the comments: the Council continued to focus on contamination issues; Tetra packs were being looked into on a national level, they were not easily recyclable, and the industry needed to get behind this; the road cleansing had been scheduled from the start, but was always being updated and improvements with IT systems were being looked into in terms of street cleansing to make it easier to measure performance; regular offenders were being contacted and re-educated on what went in each bin; a more detailed communications plan was being developed; there were limited resources to deal with fly posting; packaged food was being deposited in general waste; assisted collections data could be added to future reports; communal properties would have food bins by the end of March 2026 and residents would receive food caddies;

there had been a positive response to the recent sticker campaign and more food bins had been distributed; engagement with schools was taking place via the Suez environmental and social value campaigns officer; and recycling a ton of food waste was cheaper than incinerating it. All comments made by Members would be investigated by officers.

Resolved:

(1) That the contents of the performance update be noted.

457 Public Conveniences Review - Consultation Outcome

The Service Improvement & Project Manager introduced the report which set out the details of the consultation, the responses and the formulation of the recommendations.

The Chair thanked the officer for the wide range of opportunities to speak with the public and the Chairs of the Area Committees for helping to promote responding to the consultation.

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

- Welcomed the report which was very good;
- concerned with the plans for the Library car park facility upgrade if the Forum, Sittingbourne facilities were also going to be closed;
- in theory the Community Toilet Scheme sounded like a good idea, but concerned about giving up the Council's resources for potentially nothing;
- fully accepted that some needed to be closed; and
- clarification sought as to whether Town/Parish Councils would charge for the facilities, once they were transferred.

Officers responded to some of the points raised: upgrades to the Library car park facilities were planned to be funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and investigation on what was needed had already started, in terms of the Community Toilet Scheme, the money they would receive through subsidies was much less than it would cost the Council to run the toilets and there would be criteria they would need to meet; toilets transferred to parish or town councils would not be charged for their use as agreed at the last meeting; and the timings of the closure of the Forum and Library car park facilities would be taken into consideration so they were not closed at the same time. The Library toilet could cope with the increased capacity and walls would not be made bigger, but improvements would improve the resilience of the facility, resulting in less downtime and bring in further energy and cost savings.

Councillor Charles Gibson moved the following amendment to Recommendation (4): That the Community Toilet Scheme be expanded so that it was borough-wide. The Head of Environment and Leisure did suggest that any widening of the scheme would erode future savings and this would need to be considered in the budget proposals.

The amendments was seconded by Councillor Wooster and on being put to the vote agreed.

Further comments included:

- Considered it 'wild' that these facilities were non-statutory;
- closure of the facilities would have a detrimental impact on lots of people with long-term illnesses, pregnant people and the elderly;
- the Community Toilet Scheme was a positive initiative where they were reliable and consistent;
- needed to consider gender inequality, especially women, accessibility and homeless people accessing a private business; and
- considered the facilities outlined in recommendation (2) should be offered a transfer.

Councillor Jayes moved the following motion: That baby changing facilities be installed in all toilet facilities, space allowing. This was seconded by Councillor Sarah Stephen.

- Acknowledged that the proposal was a good idea, but concerns with how it would be funded;
- these would need to be installed in both male and female toilets which would increase the cost;
- suggested the proposal be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for capital budget;
- this should not be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee;
- these were difficult decisions, the Council could not be saying some facilities were closing, whilst adding more spend; and
- the Council was supposed to be saving money.

On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

A visiting Ward Member was invited to speak and he raised the following points: concerned over the potential loss of the Milton Regis facilities; considered it would cost more to renovate the Library facilities in Sittingbourne than it would to keep the Milton Regis facilities open; and concerned with what would happen to the building, once the facility had closed.

Another Ward Member raised the following points: considered the second question in the consultation was irrelevant with regard to the White House, Minster toilets as they have been shut for months; and it was important that this type of facility was open all year round for walkers and cyclists and during the summer months when there were a lot of tourists.

The Head of Environment and Leisure referred to the second question of the consultation and said that this had been a compulsory question, but was then removed. However, none of the recommendations were made solely on a single question in the consultation. The ones proposed had low usage (even before temporary closure), were in poor condition and were in close proximity to other sites.

Councillor Hannah Perkin moved the following motion: That the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee writes to the Secretary of State to advocate public conveniences being a statutory obligation. This was seconded by Councillor Jayes and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Councillor Harrison proposed the recommendations and these were seconded by Councillor Gibson.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2) a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Bowen, Cheesman, C Gibson, Harrison, Hunt, Jackson, Marchington, P Stephen and Wooster. Total equals 9.

Against: Councillors Jayes, Perkin, Mishchuk, S Stephen and Thompson Total equals 5.

Abstain: Councillor Wooster. Total equals 1.

Recommendations:

- (1) To note the outcomes of the consultation exercise, as shown in Appendix I.***
- (2) To close three public conveniences from 01 April 2026;***
 - 1. Milton Regis High Street***
 - 2. The Forum, Sittingbourne***
 - 3. The White House, Minster***
- (3) a) To offer to transfer seven public conveniences to Town and Parish Councils or other appropriate local organisations;***
 - a. Oare Gunpowder Works Visitors Centre***
 - b. Central Car Park, Faversham***
 - c. Rose Street, Sheerness***
 - d. Beachfields, Sheerness***
 - e. Leysdown Beach Services***
 - f. The Spinney, Leysdown***
 - g. Queenborough Park***

b) To include these toilets for a 12-month period to the contract whilst negotiations continue with the above Town/ Parish councils. Should the transfers not occur within this timeframe, options for these public conveniences will come back to this committee in order to achieve the budget requirements as detailed in 2.21 and 2.22.
- (4) To aim to introduce a Community Toilet Scheme in the areas impacted by the closure and then borough-wide in a timely manner.***
- (5) To authorise officers to undertake a tender process for the opening, cleansing and maintenance of the remaining facilities, considering the matters raised in 2.27 – 2.30.***
- (6) That the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee writes to the Secretary of State to advocate public conveniences being a statutory obligation.***

The following recommendation (set out as Recommendation (6) in the report) fell as it was no longer relevant:

(was 6) Should the recommendations not be approved and as such the savings not achieved, committee are asked to identify where else savings could be made within the scope of this committee.

458 Barton's Point - considering future options for management of biodiversity

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which gave an update on recent ecological surveys conducted at Barton's Point Coastal Park and considered the future implications and actions required. He suggested to Members that Recommendation (3) be amended 'to all users'.

The Chair moved the following amendment to Recommendation (1): That a Working Group be set up to include one Member from each Group, to give a steer on what options they wanted officers to pursue, and to get the views of the various users. This was seconded by Councillor Jayes and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Councillor Terry Thompson Moved the following amendment to Recommendation (3) so that it read: To write to **key users** informing them of the Ecology report. This was seconded by Councillor Gibson.

The Chair invited Members to make comments and ask questions and these included:

- Funding for the park drainage works had come from the Sheppey Improvement Fund, it should be returned to them if the Council withdrew from managing the park;
- the café on the site was rarely open and poorly stocked;
- kayak use and camping on the site was still taking place, but this was not formalised;
- acknowledged the large cost needed to connect the site to mains drainage;
- the Council could save money by no longer managing cutting the grass for licensed areas at the site;
- needed to be aware that any Working Group would take officers away from their 'day job';
- suggested the park be managed in the same way as Elmley Marshes;
- it would be beneficial to have the common names of all the creatures named in the report;
- this was a very diverse site and it did not appear that the sea cadets had had too much of an impact; and
- suggested other interested parties joined the Working Group.

Councillor Bowen moved the following amendment to Recommendation (2): That the subject of removing the mains drainage project from the capital programme be referred to the Working Group. This was seconded by Councillor Hunt and on being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Councillor Bowen proposed all the amended recommendations and these were seconded by Councillor Hunt.

Recommended:

(1) That a Working Group be set up to include one Member from each Group, to

give a steer on what options they wanted officers to pursue, and to get the views of the various users.

(2) That the subject of removing the mains drainage project from the capital programme be referred to the Working Group.

(3) To write to key users informing them of the Ecology report.

459 Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no need to exclude the press and public as the exempt item was not discussed.

460 Public Conveniences Review - Consultation Outcome - Exempt Appendix III Business Case

This item was not discussed.

461 Adjournment of meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 8.35 pm until 8.45 pm.

462 Extension of Standing Orders

At 10 pm and 10.30 pm Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders in order that the Committee could complete its business.

Chair

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