
Council

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 1 October 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Derek Carnell (Deputy Mayor), Ann Cavanagh, Lloyd Chapman, Shelley Cheesman, Alex Eyre, Charles Gibson, Tim Gibson, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Mark Last, Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Claire Martin, Ben J Martin, Kieran Mishchuk, Lee-Anne Moore, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson, Mark Tucker, Karen Watson (Mayor), Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Simon Clark, Kieran Golding and Elliott Jayes.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robin Harris and Jo Millard and Larissa Reed.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Roger Clark, Rich Lehmann, Charlie Miller, Pete Neal, Carrie Pollard, Ashley Shiel and Julien Speed.

357 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

358 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 236 – 255) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

359 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

360 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor said since the last Full Council meeting, she and the Deputy Mayor had carried out over 20 engagements. She highlighted the Sittingbourne and Sheerness carnivals, the Faversham Hop Festival, and VJ Celebrations and said the visit to the Big Cat Sanctuary was a joint visit enjoyed with the Mayor of Ashford. The Mayor referred to her visit to the Choral celebration in Maidstone at which the Sittingbourne choir performed in the 'sing-off'.

The Mayor said the Leader and herself had taken part in the Baton of Hope and it had highlighted the support that was needed for mental illness and suicide awareness.

Describing her visit to the Willows Day Centre in Milton Regis that day, the Mayor said it was the only day centre in the area which cared for those with dementia.

Looking to events coming up, the Mayor said the following day there would be a launch event at Master's House, Sheerness, and a dementia event at The Swallows Leisure Centre on 6 October 2025. The Mayor said she was attending the unveiling of the Milton Regis sign and attending Faversham Carnival, both on 11 October 2025, and the launch

of the Poppy Appeal in The Forum, Sittingbourne on 25 October 2025. The unveiling of the Kemsley sign and community garden would be held on 31 October 2025. The Mayor welcomed Members to attend any of the events listed.

361 Questions submitted by the Public

There were no questions from the public.

362 Questions submitted by Members

The Mayor advised that one question had been submitted by Members.

Question 1 – Councillor Mike Whiting

During the debate on "Secondary School Places on the Isle of Sheppey" at the Full Council meeting held on 30 July, I raised the need for this council to engage with Kent County Council (KCC) as a matter of urgency to discuss KCC's Education Commissioning Plan. That Plan is currently being revised and due for publication in the autumn.

Left unchanged, the Plan will forecast a surplus of secondary school places on the Isle of Sheppey, with no plans to create more spaces. For this year's year-7 intake, the Plan showed a surplus of 39 places. We all know how wrong this forecast was. On secondary school offer day in the Spring, 60 Sheppey children were refused a place at the two local schools on the Island because they were full, with many being offered Abbey School in Faversham, over 25 miles away.

That same Plan (see pages 98 to 100) is currently showing a surplus of 34 places for next September (2026), and an average of 43 spare places for each year thereafter until 2035, despite 650 new homes currently under construction in Minster, a further 650 having just received planning permission east of Scocles Road, and approximately 1,000 more earmarked for Sheppey in the emerging Local Plan, with the majority of those in Queenborough.

What steps has the Leader taken to meet with KCC to ensure the forecasts in the 2026/2036 revision of the Education Commissioning Plan are more accurate, and that the revised Plan contains strategies and proposals to address any shortfall to ensure every Island family who wants a place at one of the two secondary schools for their children next September and beyond will get one?

Response – Leader

Officers and I met with the then conservative KCC Cabinet Member for Education and the Assistant Director for Education in December 2024, to discuss the Schools Commissioning Plan, during which it became clear that there were changes in approach to the provision of non-selective secondary places impacting on the Sittingbourne and Sheppey planning areas, about which Swale Borough Council had not been previously made aware.

As we all know, the history of poor provision on the Island has meant that large numbers of students from the Island have historically sought school places in Sittingbourne. This has meant that there are important inter-relationships in how provision on both Sheppey

and in Sittingbourne is planned and delivered. The changes and approach that were set out to us at the meeting raised serious questions for both Sittingbourne and Sheppey, which I set out in a letter in January 2025. Having received no response, and in light of the issues some island students were experiencing in terms of the location of school placements, I followed this up with a second letter to KCC in the spring seeking both answers and a meeting. Again, no response has been received.

I will continue to pursue this important topic with our County partners. Perhaps the new County Cabinet member for Integrated Children's Services could assist with securing a response from her Cabinet colleague. I am sure they are in regular contact given the complementarity of their remits.

Supplementary Question

I thank the Leader for his response and for the efforts he has made so far. Will he continue with those efforts to see a copy of the plan and ensure that Swale's officers are involved in the rewriting and updating of the plan before it is published?

Response

Yes, I have met with officers to discuss that, and rest assured I will not take my foot off the gas, you have my assurance.

363 Leader's Statement

The Leader said:

"I'm delighted to begin tonight with some excellent news for Sheppey East. Our community has been awarded up to £20 million over the next ten years through the Government's Pride in Place programme. This makes Sheppey East one of only 169 areas across the country to benefit from this long-term investment. The funding will provide up to £2 million each year, for the next ten years.

The key principle of this funding aims to ensure that local people will be at the heart of decision-making. To ensure, that, we will be establishing a new Neighbourhood Board by next summer, bringing together residents, businesses, and community leaders to shape the vision and oversee delivery. This is a golden opportunity to deliver real and positive change for our communities, building on the successes we've already achieved through the Sheerness Revival project and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

In addition to this decade-long commitment, Swale will also receive an immediate share of £150 million in capital funding to help kick-start improvements in our borough.

Having highlighted the Sheerness revival project it would be remiss of me at this point to let the opportunity pass without highlighting what an outstanding success our new Beachfields adventure golf course has proven to be.

Since opening eight weeks ago figures show more that more than 4,900 people have visited the heritage themed course after it was officially opened at the end of July.

Another example of investment in our community is the refurbishment of Sheppey Sea Cadets facility at Barton's Point. With this council's support, the facilities have been modernised with new classrooms, upgraded equipment, and even a ship simulator. This

centre now supports over seventy young cadets, giving them skills, confidence, and opportunities for the future. It is an investment not just in those young people, but in the community they are proud to serve.

Turning to another area where local action can make a real difference, I reflect on September's National Recycling Week when called on residents to help tackle contamination in our recycling bins. Every time a lorry load of recycling is rejected it costs around two thousand pounds. All too often this is caused by food, textiles, sanitary items, or black bags being placed in the recycling. It is also worthy of note that Food waste collections will become compulsory Nationally by April 2026 and as a reminder, food waste caddies are already available to our residents to assist. In short by recycling responsibly, we can save money, protect our environment, and make a real difference for Swale.

On a much more sombre note I feel that I must make mention of the recent vandalism of the Baby Memorial Garden in King George's Playing Field in Sittingbourne. This garden was created with the East Kent Baby Memorial Garden Charity to provide a place of reflection for families touched by pregnancy and baby loss. It is deeply upsetting that such a special place has been defaced.

While the personalised tiles remain undamaged, the plaque and site were marked with graffiti. We have worked quickly with contractors to restore the garden, so it can once again provide peace and comfort for those who visit. My thoughts are with all the families who use this space and who must be absolutely dismayed by this mindless vandalism.

Looking ahead, as we are all aware, the ensuing weeks and months will see the government's proposals for the biggest shake-up of local government in fifty years bringing changes to our borough. For Swale, this is a significant moment in our history and it is vital that we strive to get the best for our residents. We will be consulting with them and key stakeholders to make sure that their views are reflected and help shape our response to this reorganisation.

Whilst planning for the future, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that we are also safeguarding our heritage. To that end a consultation is now open on three conservation areas close to Faversham, i.e. Graveney Bridge, Graveney Church, and Goodnestone. These areas are rich with history, from the remains of medieval farming and churches, to the discovery of England's most well-preserved Viking ship, to signs of the once-thriving hop industry. We want to protect these areas from inappropriate development and ensure that their character is preserved and enhanced for generations to come. Local knowledge of course will be vital in shaping that work going forward.

Finally, I want to reflect on the Nationally significant Baton of Hope relay event that we were proud to host. I had the honour and absolute privilege of carrying the baton on its last leg of the relay. This is the UK's largest suicide prevention initiative, and the baton relay, along with the charity village, brought together organisations, campaigners, and residents to raise awareness and support. This was not just a symbolic gesture, it was a call to action. Suicide is still surrounded by stigma, but by opening conversations and making support more visible, we can show that no one in Swale has to face these challenges alone. Together we can build a community where compassion replaces silence, where hope is rooted and every life is valued.

To close whether it is investing in Sheppey East, recycling responsibly, supporting young people, protecting places of remembrance, shaping the future of local government, safeguarding our heritage, or tackling mental health stigma, all of these efforts point in the same direction. Together, we can build a stronger, more caring, and more sustainable Swale."

In response, the Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the news of the £20million funding for the Isle of Sheppey, but reminded Members that other parts of Swale would also benefit from funding and it was only 0.4% of the total grant money awarded. He praised the work of those that helped achieve the funding, paying particular praise to Councillor Lee-Anne Moore. The Leader of the Conservative Group urged caution that with improvements, housing developers may be attracted to build in the area. Referring to Recycling Week, he said it was positive that residents were picking up on information. The Leader of the Conservative Group endorsed the Leader's comments on the vandalism of the Baby Memorial Garden and said there had been an increase of instances of public places being vandalised for no reason.

The Leader of the SIA Group welcomed the grant funding and said Sheppey East was in need of attention and revitalisation. He acknowledged Recycling Week. The Leader of the SIA Group questioned what sort of person could vandalise a Baby Memorial Garden? Highlighting the Local Government Review (LGR), he spoke about the consultation and questioned whether Central Government were interested in what the people of Swale, or Kent, thought as residents had previously been ignored and Government were steamrolling ahead. The Leader of the SIA Group raised concerns that it might be a waste of money to consult. Finally, he welcomed the conservation area reviews and drew attention how few were carried out under the previous administration, and he stressed how important they were in making sure that future development was considered with accurate information.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said it was great news that the funding for Sheppey East was being put towards local communities and she wished success for the initiative. She said that Recycling Week showed that residents in Swale really cared about their environment and contributed to making a difference. Referring to the vandalism of the Baby Memorial Garden, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said it was a grim crime and she thanked contractors for looking to fix the damage as quickly as possible and the Police for their investigation into it. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said Swale had carried out consultation on the LGR but Central Government seemed to be disinterested in residents' views. Finally, she spoke about the Baton of Hope, saying it was a really important event for the borough. She highlighted that in addition to suicide being the biggest killer of men under 50, there had been a significant increase in rates of suicide of women under 24 since records began and any support to stop this was welcome.

The Leader of the Reform UK Group echoed what other Members had said about Central Government and the LGR, and said another consultation was not going to achieve much. He acknowledged the recycling information that the Council shared with residents but said some residents were still unclear about what they could or could not recycle and might recycle more. He spoke positively about the grant funding awarded to Sheppey East and said he hoped residents would have their say on how it was spent.

The Deputy Leader of the Green Group welcomed the good news in the Leader's Statement. Highlighting Recycling Week, he said recycling was good but reduction was

even better and residents should be encouraged to minimise their waste, and as much information that could be shared to assist with this was positive. Turning to the Baton of Hope, and suicide prevention, the Deputy Leader of the Green Group said that it started with inequality, community fragmentation, and other input such as social media and these aspects should be looked at from early roots.

The Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups wished the Senior Democratic Services Officer well as he would shortly be leaving Swale Borough Council (SBC).

Other Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- Felt devastated at discovering the vandalism of the Baby Memorial Garden and thanked the Head of Environment and Leisure and Green Spaces Manager for their quick action in arranging repairs;
- autumn planting and a community garden was planned for the Baby Memorial Garden;
- the Labour Government had promised a named Police officer for every neighbourhood and hoped this would help with anti-social behaviour in the borough;
- encouraged residents to report anti-social behaviour;
- noted the high numbers of those who had committed suicide and how important it was to end the stigma around men's mental health;
- there needed to be a better doctor-to-patient ratio and access to more meaningful mental health support from an early age;
- everyone should be rethinking, reducing, reusing and then recycling;
- simpler recycling was positive;
- there were contamination issues with different authorities' rules of recycling;
- different housing providers and landlords needed to be prepared for residents to recycle food waste and other general waste;
- thanked the Mayor for starting the Baton of Hope and walking the route;
- noted the support offered by MenTalk for mental health, and of the many lives the organisation had saved;
- hoped that MenTalk would be branching out to Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey;
- stressed the importance of listening to those who struggled with their mental health; and
- the Sittingbourne and Sheppey MP was in discussion with Safe Havens, who provided support for over 18's with mental health issues, to look at setting up a group in Sittingbourne.

In response, the Leader thanked everyone for their comments. He explained that the funding was based upon the depravation matrix and acknowledged there were other areas in Swale that would have benefited from grant money. The Leader thanked Members for their input into the issues faced when recycling. Turning to the Baton of Hope, the Leader explained that one of the initiators of the Baton of Hope, who had lost his own son to suicide, was keen to get the message out that his son did not 'commit' suicide, but 'died by suicide'. The Leader encouraged Members to keep communicating with those suffering from poor mental health. Finally, turning to the Conservation Area reviews, the Leader recognised Councillor Mike Baldock's contribution to preserving the heritage of Swale.

364 **Motion - Commemoration of Deceased Serving Councillors and Posthumous Conferment of the Title of Honorary Alderman**

In proposing the motion, as set out on the Agenda, Councillor Lloyd Bowen described the commitment that elected Councillors gave when serving residents and standing up for their communities. He said the motion was about recognising those elected Councillors who served their residents, and passed away whilst still in office, whilst giving their last days and efforts to public service. Councillor Bowen quoted from a poem by Linda Ellis called The Dash. Councillor Bowen said some of their former colleagues never had the chance to retire or saw their last term completed and were still working for their residents until illness or sudden tragedy took them away, as they died in service.

Councillor Bowen set out the three proposals from the motion:

1. To create a permanent memorial and appropriate civic space for Councillors who died during service;
2. That when a Councillor passes away during their third term without reaching 12 years or three full terms, the title of Honorary Alderman be conferred upon them;
3. That the records held by SBC be interrogated for those Members that were in their concurrent third term and passed away without reaching the end of the term or twelve years, and be recognised and awarded with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Bowen said that the motion sought to assure current and future Members and families of those elected that SBC cared, and their service would not go unnoticed.

In seconding the motion, Councillor James Hunt reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- Understood the sentiments and not against the idea but questioned the value of a memorial with the upcoming LGR disbanding SBC in its current form, and uncertainty around where any future office might be;
- supported the motion;
- commemorating the work of those that had given so much time and effort to the authority and the people of Swale was worthwhile;
- a decision could be made on where to place an existing physical memorial if the building was no longer used for SBC at that time;
- thanked Councillors Bowen and Hunt for bringing the motion forward; and
- it was an honourable and kind thing to do.

Councillor Hunt said it should be remembered that a memorial was about keeping remembrance alive – not necessarily statues, but boards that gave a history of the people that served, such as the current Honorary Alderman Board in the Council Chamber. He added that after SBC was disbanded in its current form, the boards would still be kept and he hoped that whatever future Council there was, those listed would continue to be remembered.

In summing up, Councillor Bowen thanked everyone for their comments. He said there was no detail on how a memorial was set up and drew attention to the Boards in the Council Chamber that listed Mayors and Honorary Alderman which could be used.

Councillor Bowen said it was not necessary to consider what might happen after LGR, we needed to look at our history and where we were now.

Resolved:

(1) That a formal memorial be established within an appropriate civic building, such as the Council Chamber or entrance to the Council Offices, to respectfully acknowledge and commemorate the service of those Councillors who had passed away whilst in office. The tribute should take the form of a plaque or other suitable marker and would serve as a lasting record of their contribution to public life in Swale.

(2) That in circumstances where a Councillor had passed during their term of office and would have completed twelve years of service (or three full terms) by the end of that term, the Council would, with permission from the family of the Member, confer the title of Honorary Alderman posthumously. This would allow due recognition to be given to those who had demonstrated enduring service and dedication, and whose full term of office was only interrupted by their untimely death.

(3) That officers referred back through records of instances that related to Members since SBC was created and include them in any future memorial or award the Honorary Alderman posthumously.

365 Motion - Management and Regulation of HMO's in Swale

In proposing the motion, Councillor Mike Whiting explained he had received complaints about works to convert a property in his ward to a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) which were lawful, and which planning permission was not required. This meant local residents, including elected Members had no right to comment on the development, and the motion put forward sought to give communities across the borough the right to be heard on the subject of HMO's. Councillor Whiting said a range of affordable properties were needed for local residents, and HMO's could play a positive role. He said the motion did not seek to prevent HMO's, but sought the Council's ability to set its own HMO development policy and give the Planning Committee the right to refuse or include planning conditions and give the public the right to be consulted.

Councillor Whiting explained the different controls in place for large and small HMO's under permitted development rights, and said removing the permitted development rights on small HMO's would necessitate planning permission. He also explained that an immediate Article 4 direction took effect straight away but may make the Council liable for compensation should the application be considered and then refused within 12 months of submission. A non-immediate Article 4 direction came into effect 12 months after the decision to implement it, but prevented applicants from claiming compensation. Councillor Whiting said there was a risk with a non-immediate Article 4 direction of a rush of applications before the Article 4 direction took effect. He said there had been very few claims for compensation on those Councils that had chosen to impose an immediate Article 4 direction.

Turning to the second recommendation at 2.2 in the Agenda pack, Councillor Whiting said he believed the Council should expedite a Supplementary Planning Guidance Document (SPD) to address the aspects of HMO's as set out in the motion, and he

raised concern that the increase of HMO's could be connected to increases in antisocial behaviour, increased pressure on car parking and the loss of single family homes. Councillor Whiting set out the benefits an SPD could provide to officers and members of the Planning Committee in managing HMO's.

Referring to 2.3 in the motion, Councillor Whiting stressed the importance of consulting residents.

In seconding the motion Councillor Kieran Mischuk reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- Thanked Councillors Whiting and Mischuk for bringing the motion to Full Council;
- noted the disruption that HMO's could have on an area;
- supported the motion which was about protecting communities, residents' rights to speak and giving guidance to the Council;
- considered landlords dividing properties to fit in as many people as they could was a negative, and the profits they made;
- the motion would assist in making HMO's fit for purpose;
- sought clarification on the Use Class a refuge would fall under, as was concerned that a refuge might be publicly identified at Planning Committee;
- there was a need to balance the desperate need for affordable, good quality housing with the legitimate concerns of the community and HMO's played a vital role in housing;
- poorly regulated HMO's could lead to terrible standards and strain on local services;
- raised concern that an immediate Article 4 direction could expose Councils to compensation claims;
- would only support a non-immediate Article 4 direction with a clear SPD;
- supported safe, decent and properly managed HMO's but should not rush into it;
- could not support the motion in its current form;
- this needed to be set up quickly in order to avoid a rush in developers setting up HMO's before they were considered by Planning Committee;
- clarified whether Council could make decisions when there were budget implications if compensation claims were made;
- gave examples where an HMO had provided much needed accommodation for residents but other examples where accommodation was inadequate and a health and safety breach;
- residents in HMO's and new flat conversions in Swale were not entitled to resident parking permits and this caused issues;
- gave experiences of HMO's with poor fire safety records;
- preferred immediate Article 4 to avoid landlords giving notice to existing tenants in houses that might be converted to HMO's, and the resultant issues of re-housing residents;
- sought clarity on the process for the motion to be implemented;
- understood the need to regularise but could not support because of the impact on under 35 year old's;
- referred to new legislation that would place more responsibility on landlords to provide adequate accommodation; and
- raised concern whether there was capacity for officers to assess HMO applications and to write a policy.

Officers confirmed the Use Class for a refuge was either Class 2 or sui generis, and would therefore not be included or impacted by the motion. In respect of compensation claims, the Monitoring Officer advised the decision would not be made at Council, the motion sought to refer the matter to the relevant Committee for decision.

The seconder of the motion, Councillor Mischuk, said the motion supported vital local decision making and gave the power to the Council to reject any HMO's it considered unfit.

The proposer of the motion, Councillor Whiting, thanked Members for the constructive debate. He agreed there needed to be protection for the anonymity of refuges and this should be looked at by officers. Councillor Whiting said there were very few examples of where developers had sought compensation. Finally he said there was a need for good HMO's and the motion sought to ensure that through its own policy and SPD's.

Resolved:

That this Council notes that:

1.1. Since 2010 the conversion of a dwelling house into a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) for up to six residents has been permitted development. This means that full planning permission is not required to undertake these conversions and the council, as the Local Planning Authority, has no control over the numbers or locations where these occur, and local communities are denied the opportunity to comment.

1.2. HMO's, while a valuable element in the overall housing supply offering affordable accommodation, they can have significant impacts on local amenity, including increased parking demand, refuse generation, local infrastructure, public services, housing balance and changes to the character of residential areas.

1.3. Unregulated or concentrated growth of HMO's in specific neighbourhoods may lead to a lack of available properties for families and single occupiers.

1.4. Several local authorities across England have implemented Article 4 Directions to require planning consent for all new HMO's, thereby allowing for better local oversight and policy application.

1.5. Article 4 Directions can either be non-immediate or immediate. A non-immediate Article 4 Direction does not take effect for a set period of time after it is introduced. This period of time can be any period from 28 days to 2 years, however it would normally be 12 months. An immediate Article 4 Direction takes effect as soon as it is introduced.

This Council therefore resolves to:

2.1. Commence the process of introducing a borough-wide Immediate Article 4 Direction under the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 to remove the permitted development right allowing the conversion of a dwelling house (Use Class C3) into an HMO for up to six residents (Use Class C4), where the following types of property will be among those most

likely to be classed as an HMO:

2.1.1. an entire house or flat which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet

2.1.2. a house or flat which has been converted entirely into bedsits or other non1self-contained accommodation and which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households and who share kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities

2.1.3. a converted house which contains one or more flats which are not wholly self1contained (i.e. each flat does not contain within it a kitchen, bathroom and toilet) and which is occupied by three or more tenants who form two or more households

2.1.4. a building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies

2.2. Refer this matter to the relevant Committee to develop a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) addressing:

2.2.1. A maximum threshold for HMO's within defined areas or individual streets to avoid over concentration

2.2.2. Minimum off-street parking requirements for HMO's to reduce pressure on local roads

2.2.3. Proper waste and recycling storage and management for all HMO's

2.2.4. Minimum room sizes and standards in line with national guidelines

2.3. Consult with residents, ward councillors, parish councils, area committees, and other stakeholders to ensure the proposed Article 4 Direction and revised SPD are responsive to community concerns while supporting access to affordable housing.

366 Waiver of six-month Councillor Attendance rule

The Leader introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

In seconding the recommendations, the Deputy Leader reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to make comments which included:

- Reminded Members to act with dignity and be kind to Members;
- sought clarity on why the report was not on blue paper and therefore not being discussed in confidential session; and
- was concerned that the extension would continue indefinitely as it was in the public interest that wards were represented by a Councillor.

The Monitoring Officer explained that, in response to previous criticism that similar

matters had been discussed in private session when some matters were in the public interest, the report had been written in such a way that it was not necessary to discuss in private session.

Councillor Richard Palmer proposed and Councillor Mishcuk seconded that each of the recommendations be voted on separately, but on being put to the vote, Members voted against.

Members continued to debate the substantive motion and made comments including:

- The waiver did not restrict the extension to six months, it was unlimited;
- clarified that the report referred to two Councillors, not three as referred to in the privacy and data protection implication at the end of the report;
- gave examples of previous waivers given to Councillors who were unable to attend meetings in the Chamber but were still representing their residents by carrying out casework and answering phone calls and emails;
- clarified that the subject Members in the report had not previously had a waiver;
- noted the work the subject Members had carried out previously, wished them well and hoped to see them attending meetings in future and urged Members to act with dignity and respect.

The Mayor sent her good wishes to Councillors Roger Clark and Rich Lehmann.

The Deputy Leader reminded Members it was for residents to determine at the time of an election whether they were being represented by their Ward Member and he hoped that with the space the waiver gave to the subject Members, they could focus on their health and he sent his good wishes.

Resolved:

(1) That health grounds were an appropriate reason to waive the requirement under s85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 for Councillor Roger Clark to attend a Council meeting within six months of his last attendance.

(2) That health grounds were an appropriate reason to waive the requirement under s85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 for Councillor Rich Lehmann to attend a Council meeting within six months of his last attendance.

367 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 Update

In proposing the recommendations, the Leader reminded Members that the report had been considered and agreed by the Audit Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee before being considered by Council.

Councillor Charles Gibson, Chair of the Audit Committee, seconded the recommendations and reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to speak and they made comments including:

- Thanked the Director of Finance and the Finance team for their work ensuring that reporting remained transparent, legally compliant and consistent with

CIPFA's code;

- raised concern around how the increased adjustments to reported debt might raise concern to residents or external partners about the Council's financial health; and
- congratulated the treasury team on their ongoing good work.

The Leader and Councillor Charles Gibson thanked the treasury team for their work.

Resolved:

(1) That the updated Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2025/26 be approved.

368 New and Amended Fees for Applications made to the Planning Service

The Leader introduced the report and proposed the recommendations. He thanked the Task and Finish group who met to discuss the proposals and referred to the Policy and Resources Committee agreeing the recommendations at their meeting on 10 September 2025.

In seconding the recommendations the Deputy Leader reserved his right to speak.

Members thanked the working group and referred to the useful, extensive discussions held at the working group.

The Deputy Leader said further information was provided following the Policy and Resources Committee meeting and this was helpful. He said some Member concerns had not been addressed earlier which delayed the process but additional information had now been considered and he was happy to second the recommendations.

Resolved:

(1) That Members agreed the introduction of charges for amendments to undetermined applications in accordance with the fee schedule as set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report.

(2) That Members agreed the introduction of fees for monitoring biodiversity net gain (BNG) in accordance with the fee schedule as set out in paragraph 2.11 of the report.

(3) That Members agreed the fee schedule for Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's) as set out at paragraph 2.10 of the report.

(4) That Members agreed the revised pre-application and post-decision advice fee schedule as set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3 at paragraph 2.6 of the report.

369 Constitution Amendment: Various

Councillor Lloyd Bowen, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report and proposed the recommendations. He said the changes had been discussed and agreed at the Policy & Resources Committee, and were sensible and practical changes which helped ensure the constitution remained accurate, clear and fit for purpose. He

highlighted the improvements and said they strengthened governance and made the constitution easier to apply in practice.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

Members were invited to make comments which included:

- Thanked Members of the Constitution Working Group;
- did not support the annual re-election of the Leader;
- Members sat on Committees on behalf of the Council, not on behalf of their ward;
- questioned whether other Councils elected their Leader annually and how practical this was;
- needed continuity for the Leader, particularly with the upcoming LGR;
- reminded Members that amendments could be submitted in advance and this might lead to more efficient debates;
- the annual election of Leader gave everyone the chance to support the Leader if they felt they had done a good job or otherwise;
- clarified the Leader role was a one-year term, not a limit, just as Committee Chairs were elected annually; and
- referred to the Localism Act which gave Councils the right to set the term.

Resolved:

(1) That the amendments at Appendix I be incorporated into the Constitution.

(2) That the Monitoring Officer be delegated to make the necessary changes to the Constitution.

370 Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned from 8.35 pm until 8.45 pm.

Mayor

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