
Housing, Health and Communities Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 3 July 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.58 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Vice-Chair), Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Lee-Anne Moore (Substitute for Councillor Lloyd Bowen), Pete Neal, Tom Nundy, Hannah Perkin (Chair) and Karen Watson.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Charlotte Hudson and Graeme Tuff.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mark Last, Terry Thompson, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Carole Jackson and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen and Carrie Pollard.

135 Order of Business

The Chair altered the order of business as minuted.

136 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

137 Minutes

The Minutes of the Housing and Health Committee Meeting held on 4 March 2025 (Minute Nos. 710 – 716) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Community and Leisure Committee Meeting held on 5 March 2025 (Minutes Nos. 717 – 727) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Housing, Health and Communities Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2025 (Minute Nos. 18 – 19) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

138 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ben J Martin disclosed a pecuniary interest with respect to Item 14, Appointment of Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee as he was a board member of the Swale Rainbow Homes. He left the chamber and did not take part in the discussion or vote for this item.

139 Exclusion of the Press and Public***Resolved:***

That under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A of the Act:

3. Information to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

140 Swale Leisure Contract Exempt Appendix

This item was discussed in confidential session and the decision was announced in public session under the Swale Leisure Contract item.

141 Swale Leisure Contract

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which set out the recommendations from the Members Leisure Working Group (MWG) on the car parking refunds policy for the leisure centres and the recommended capital investment from the council to fix general issues at the three leisure sites.

The Head of Environment and Leisure gave a verbal update to inform Members that the Faversham Swimming Pools Board had met earlier in the week and they formally agreed to join the new Swale Leisure contract.

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

- The Sheerness Leisure site would be affected because the levelling-up bid works proposed moving the car park;
- the leisure centres needed to be accessible for all users;
- car park refunds encouraged the use of the leisure facilities;
- removing the parking concessions would result in people not visiting the leisure centres;
- Isle of Sheppey residents had long journeys to get to the facilities;
- preferred having no refunds in place to encourage the use of public transport or active travel to leisure sites;
- could there be an option to give refunds to those residents who are on low incomes?;
- welcomed Faversham pools joining the leisure contract;
- the recommendations set out in the report made it fair across the whole borough;
- welcomed the additional capital investment to improve the background equipment of the leisure centres;
- some residents struggled to get to certain centres because they lived in rural areas of the borough with little transport links;
- residents had to use public transport or other forms of transport to get to the centres;
- Faversham pools often had large vehicles use the car park; and
- hoped for a contractor that would come forward with ideas on how the leisure activities could be improved in the borough as well as coordinating the activities to

make the accessible for all.

The Head of Environment and Leisure clarified that the intention at the Sheerness site was to move the car park due to the creation of a new entrance, but to keep the refund policy in both the Beach Street, Sheerness and Beachfields, Sheerness car parks.

The Head of Environment and Leisure understood the need for there to be a balance between encouraging health and wellbeing activities and meeting the Council's budget challenge. The report laid out the pros and cons for Members to consider.

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

- Supported the Council in making capital investments into Council owned assets to improve the facilities for residents;
- needed to make sure there were lots of opportunities for the local communities to have an opinion about how the leisure centre were run; and
- was there a requirement for the new contractor for the leisure centres to facilitate a community voice forum?

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded and said that there had been strong community voice in the levelling-up scheme at Sheerness. He said that a lot of the £2 million capital investment was needed to fix and improve the basic running costs of the leisure centres such as air handling and boilers. During the tender process the Council would be asking the contractors what sort of activities they wanted to introduce to improve the variety of activities available to the local community and if they would invest their own capital. The new contract required the contractor to set up user forums to make sure the community voice was better heard.

Resolved:

- (1) That the car parking refunds be reduced to a period of one hour only for all sports activities at Swallows and Sheppey Leisure centres and a one-hour refund at Faversham Pools be introduced, effective from 1 April 2027.***
- (2) That the £2 million capital investment be referred to the Policy & Resources Committee for budget allocation and approval.***

142 Playing Pitch Strategy Update

The Green Spaces Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the current position of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

A Member commented on the accuracy of the report and was glad to see the inclusion of Netball in the study.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report update be noted.***
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure in consultation with the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes.***

143 Play Strategy Update

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which set out the work that had been completed on the Play Strategy.

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

- Many play areas in the borough were vandalised because older children were using them;
- there were too many play areas for younger children but not enough for the older ones;
- inspecting the play areas cost the council a lot of money;
- the review would help access the areas of the borough that needed a play area the most;
- could officers explore the possibility of reviewing alternatives such as organisations taking on the responsibility of the play areas?;
- were there any figures on how well the areas were used; and
- Queenborough and Rushenden had plenty of play areas that were well used but they did have problems with the smaller quadbikes being able to get under the current barriers, could officers consider improving the barrier systems at play areas?

The Head of Environment and Leisure explained that the RAG rating of play areas was rated on the age of the facility rather than the age of the children and unfortunately officers did not have any data on how often play areas were used. However, when officers went on their inspections they could monitor the wear and tear of the equipment to understand how often the equipment was used.

The Head of Environment and Leisure welcomed any help from Town and Parish councils that wanted to provide support in making the play areas better in their local areas.

Referring to paragraph 2.10 in the report, the Head of Environment and Leisure said the actual strategy document could not be completed until the outcome of the Highsted Park planning application had been decided.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that the play area review work be carried out straight away with an overview of the findings to be reported back to the October 2025 Housing, Health and Communities Committee. With the full strategy document to be prepared following the inspection outcome. This was seconded by Councillor Hayden Brawn and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update report be noted.***
- (2) That the play area review work be carried out straight away with an overview of the findings to be reported back to the October 2025 Housing, Health and Communities Committee.***
- (3) That the remaining Play Area Strategy work be paused until the outcome of the Highsted Park Planning enquiry was known.***

144 Member appointments to Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Questions for the Police and Crime Panel

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report to nominate and appoint a second Member to the Swale Community Safety Partnership for the duration of their term of office and to consider the proposal for a standing agenda item for the committee to discuss policy points of escalation for the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that Councillor Karen Watson sat on the Swale Community Safety Partnership. This was seconded by the Chair and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

The Chair proposed that she would formulate a question based on the questions the Committee had on policy points of escalation for the Kent Police and Crime Panel. This was seconded by Councillor Kieran Golding and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor Karen Watson be appointed as the second Member to the Swale Community Safety Partnership, for the duration of their term of office.***
- (2) That a standing agenda item be added to the Housing, Health and Communities Committee so that Committee Members could escalate any appropriate concerns to the Kent Police and Crime Panel.***
- (3) That the Chair formulated and submitted a question based on the Housing, Health and Communities Committee points of escalation for the Kent Police and Crime Panel.***

145 Housing Assistance Policy - To-Follow

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which set out the Housing Assistance Policy following consultation and sought approval to adopt the final Housing Assistance Policy 2025.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Housing Assistance Policy be adopted.***

146 Affordable Housing Emergency Update

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the Affordable Housing Emergency which was declared on 3 April 2024 and following the Government's recent announcement of new policy ambitions to increase and accelerate housing delivery.

Resolved:

- (1) That the current progress on the Affordable Housing Emergency Motion be noted.***

147 **Housing, Homeslessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2027 Annual Update**

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-27.

A Member raised a point on page 37 and the use of analytical tools to identify individuals at risk of homelessness and asked if it would be possible to have data that could identify those that were at risk of poverty not only at risk of homelessness?

The Head of Housing and Communities responded and said that it had recently become difficult to carry out some of the analytical work due to multi-agency partners not signing up to the programme. This was a project led by Kent County Council (KCC) and Swale had been invited to do scoping work on how the data could be collected to see what results could be achieved. The policy and practice had been renewed for another year and there was a lot of proactive work being done, and officers were looking at continuing to integrate into the One Swale Roadshows.

Resolved:

(1) That the progress on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-27 be noted.

148 **Temporary Accommodation (TA) Purchase Programme**

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the progress of the Temporary Accommodation Purchase programme which was agreed by the Housing and Health Committee on 17 January 2023.

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

- Congratulated officers and Members for their hard work in making the programme as successful as it had been;
- thanked the committee for their scrutiny in making sure every stage was done properly and thoroughly;
- it was a privilege to see the project grow and to see the Council had now owned 50 properties for families to live in;
- if the Council did not approve purchasing additional properties what happened to the left over budget?;
- how much did the programme save?;
- understood that it was too early to look into the modelling and understanding the costs of the programme long term but hoped to see a report come to the committee in the future; and
- would officers look at rolling out a phase two of the programme to purchase another large amount of properties for temporary accommodation housing stock?

The Head of Housing responded to points raised and said that any funds that were not spent on purchasing additional properties would be returned to the capital budget.

With regard to any potential savings the programme had brought to the Council, the Head of Housing and Communities said it was difficult to say so early on in the

programme. However, she did say that there was an early reduction in temporary accommodation spend per unit, and there was the additional benefit of the Council owning the asset.

The Head of Housing said that if the Housing, Health and Communities Committee wanted to explore the option of phase two to the programme, it would need the approval at the annual budget. Additionally, if Members were minded to develop the programme, further thought would need to go into how the properties were managed. The Housing Team were now finding that individual needs were becoming a lot more detailed and there needed to be more work around what types of properties was needed based on the locations and needs in the borough.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that a vote of thanks be sent to the Housing and Legal staff who had put a lot of hard work in making this programme a success. This was seconded by Councillor Karen Watson and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress of the Temporary Accommodation purchase programme and initial reporting be noted.***
- (2) That the purchase of additional properties within the remaining budget be agreed.***
- (3) That the extension of the contract for the consultant to work on the acquisitions of the new properties be agreed.***
- (4) That a full evaluation be conducted once all the properties had been occupied for a minimum of 12 months.***
- (5) That a vote of thanks be given to the Housing and Legal teams who had worked hard on implementing the Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme.***

149 Temporary Accommodation (TA) Spend - Scrutiny Report

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the current performance in relation to Temporary Accommodation and the current budget position.

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

- Were officers continuing with the landlord forums?;
- thanked officers for their hard work during the restructure;
- page 49 of the agenda pack referred to relief duty and the assessment, it would be useful information on the process of this at future committees; and
- found that some people did not apply to be on the Housing register when they could be on the register, so wanted officers to continue with their good work.

The Head of Housing and Communities confirmed that officers were still engaging with Landlords, especially with the limited affordable housing available. Officers had not held another landlord forum to date because they were waiting for more accurate information from the government about the renters rights bill that was due to come into force.

The Head of Housing and Communities responded to the relief duty and assessment process and said that relief duty timescales were tight and her officers struggled to get

the relevant information back from the various organisations when an assessment was being undertaken. She added that due to some vacancies in the team, which were filled temporarily, it had resulted in completing the assessments in a quicker timeframe.

Resolved:

- (1) That the performance report and controls in place to manage the Temporary Accommodation budget be noted.***

150 Appointment of Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which sought for nominations for the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Panel and appointment of a Chair and Vice-Chair to the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that the following Councillors sit on the Shareholder Panel; Ann Cavanagh, Angela Harrison, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Peter Marchington, Hannah Perkin and Karen Watson. This was seconded by the Chair and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that Councillor Hannah Perkin be elected as Chair on the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Karen Watson and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that Councillor Angela Harrison be elected as Vice-Chair on the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee. This was seconded by the Chair and on being put to the vote, it was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillors Ann Cavanagh, Angela Harrison, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Peter Marchington, Hannah Perkin and Karen Watson be appointed to the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder sub-committee.***
- (2) That Councillor Hannah Perkin be elected as Chair of the sub-committee and Councillor Angela Harrison be elected Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.***

151 Forward Decisions Plan

Members asked if the following items of business could be added to the Forward Decisions Plan:

- Playing Area Review for October 2025 committee;
- Community Lottery fund update for October 2025 committee;
- Affordable housing update; and
- Becoming a more dementia friendly council report for October 2025 committee

Resolved:

- (1) That the forward decisions plan be noted.***

152 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 8.20 pm until 8.28 pm.

Chair

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