

Agenda

Housing, Health and Communities Meeting

Date: Thursday, 3 July 2025

Time 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Derek Carnell, Ann Cavanagh, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Vice-Chair), Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Pete Neal, Tom Nundy, Hannah Perkin (Chair), Carrie Pollard and Karen Watson.

Quorum = 5

Pages

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- (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Housing and Health Committee Meeting held on 4 March 2025 (Minute Nos. 710 – 716) as correct records.

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Community and Leisure Committee Meeting held on 5 March 2025 (Minute Nos. 717 – 727) as correct records.

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Housing, Health and Communities Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2025 (Minute Nos. 18 – 19) as correct records.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or friends.

The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

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16.	Exclusion of the Press and Public	

To decide whether to pass the resolution set out below in respect of the following items:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.

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

17.	Swale Leisure Contract Exempt Appendix	55 - 58
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Issued on Tuesday, 24 June 2025

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in alternative formats. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, please contact democraticservices@swale.gov.uk. To find out more about the work of this meeting, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Housing, Health and Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	3 July 2025
Report Title	Swale Leisure Contract
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Classification	Open / Part Exempt
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendation to reduce car parking refunds to a period of one hour only for all sports activities at Swallows and Sheppey leisure centres and to introduce a one-hour refund at Faversham Pools effective from 1 April 2027. 2. Recommendation to approve capital investment provision of £2 million and refer to Policy & Resources Committee for budget allocation approval.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report details the recent discussions with the cross-party Members Leisure Working Group (MWG) and Faversham Pools Trust (FPT) regarding the issue of car parking refunds and capital investment in the new leisure contract (the Contract) from April 2027.
- 1.2 The report confirms the views of the MWG regarding both items and provides two recommendations for Committee consideration.
- 1.3 The Committee are asked to discuss the implications (positive and negative) of adjusting the car parking refunds policy for the leisure centres and the issue of SBC funded capital investment into the contract.

2 Background

- 2.1 The existing leisure contract (covering Swallows and Sheppey) is due to expire on 31 March 2027.
- 2.2 On 21 January 2025, the Community Committee approved the MWG's recommendation to proceed to an external procurement process to agree the Contract on a 10 + 5-year basis from April 2027.

- 2.3 The FPT board met on 10 February 2025 and unanimously voted to be included into the leisure contract from April 2027 subject to final agreement on terms.
- 2.4 On 5 March 2025, the Community Committee approved the inclusion of Faversham Pools into the Contract (subject to agreement of final terms).
- 2.5 The current car parking refund arrangements are only applicable to Swallows and Sheppey leisure centres. Refunds were included in the existing contract but were not in Faversham pools lease arrangement.
- 2.6 Existing Swallows and Sheppey customers can get a refund of between 1 and 3 hours parking depending upon the activity they undertake. This only applies to sports and fitness activities and not play or commercial activities e.g. pool/hall hire or birthday parties/events.
- 2.7 The MWG has discussed a range of options for the new contract, including complete removal of car parking refunds, reducing the current arrangements by 50%, introducing a maximum of 1 hour refunds and only offering to concessionary members only. There is also an option to offer refunds at car parks further away from the centres to reduce overcrowding in key town centre car parks.
- 2.8 Competitor facilities in the Borough (in the private sector) all offer free parking at their facilities. There are a range of positions across other neighbouring Boroughs with some offering refunds and others not.
- 2.9 MWG has also discussed the implications of different car parking refund situations at Faversham and have all agreed that the new refund process should be the same for all the leisure centres in the Contract (all in or all out).
- 2.10 Having reviewed the pros and cons, the recommended option is to offer a maximum of a 1 hour refund across all three facilities from April 2027. This still gives an incentive for customers to use the facilities but caps the ongoing cost to the Council. The direct financial implications of this can be seen on Exempt Appendix 1.
- 2.11 By removing refunds or reducing them, it is likely that bidders will increase their tender price to cover the risk of existing members moving to alternative facilities.
- 2.12 Based upon recent and previous condition surveys and the age of the existing facilities, all three / facilities will require capital investment over the course of the new contract period. This is predominantly required in service areas, boilers, air handling, pool filtration systems, but the tender will also look to unlock capital investment from the contractor to try and add/improve the range of activities on offer. Evidence from previous tender processes suggests that capital investment helps to keep contract subsidy down.

- 2.13 Alongside other external funding streams such as government funding and developer contributions for improvements and increasing capacity to meet additional demand, the proposal is to utilise the SBC investment into these key areas of ‘behind the scenes’ service delivery, which will extend the longevity of the facilities.

3 Proposals

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to review the two recommendations in this report;
1. Recommendation to reduce car parking refunds to a period of one hour only for all sports activities at Swallows and Sheppey leisure centres and to introduce a one-hour refund at Faversham Pools effective from 1 April 2027.
 2. Recommendation to approve capital investment provision of £2 million and refer to Policy & Resources Committee for budget allocation approval.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The Committee could decide not to approve the parking refund recommendation and completely remove it, keep it the same, or not extend the scheme to Faversham. None of these are advised as it will likely lose members and require additional subsidy by the council, the existing scheme is not affordable and means a high level of subsidy for a non-statutory service and MWG feel there should be parity across the three facilities.
- 4.2 The Committee could decide to approve a lower capital investment figure or no investment at all, this is not advised as the facilities require significant investment from SBC and the Contract leisure operator.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with Faversham Pools Trustees.
- 5.2 MWG has ensured cross party involvement in this project and have discussed the implications of car parking refunds and capital investment.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
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Corporate Plan	Community, to enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Members have previously reviewed the financial variances between insourcing compared with outsourcing and the financial modelling of two facilities compared with three.</p> <p>There is currently no additional budget provision for the inclusion of Faversham Pools over and above the £80,000 set aside for the annual grant within the Medium-Term Financial Plan. A more detailed summary can be found in the exempt appendices.</p> <p>Members have discussed the implications of Car Parking refunds as part of the leisure working group and have all agreed that the refund process should be the same across the contract.</p> <p>Members have suggested and discussed a range of options but have agreed on the recommendation of offering a maximum one-hour refund across all three facilities.</p> <p>Capital Investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Investment values have been reviewed • Repayment rates can be seen at Exempt Appendix 2 • The Recommendation is to invest £2million. • The rate would be fixed at the point of taking out the loan • Impact on revenue budget would be referred to Policy & Resources Committee for their approval <p>In addition to the financial impacts, there are several community impacts.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The evaluation of capital investment offered by bidders is part of the procurement process.</p> <p>The provision of leisure centres is not a statutory service. So management of the service and cost is flexible for Members to decide.</p>
Crime and Disorder	The provisions delivered by the leisure centres act as diversionary activities for young people, likely contributing to reducing crime and/or ASB. Many activities for younger people are greatly being reduced due to funding issues by other agencies and therefore those that can be delivered by leisure centres are an important requirement.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Any investment in the buildings needs to consider reducing the carbon footprint of the service, due to their high energy usage. Including Faversham in the contract will likely help to generate more investment interest from operators. Reducing car journeys to leisure centres will positively impact our carbon footprint.
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Health & Wellbeing is a key output of any leisure contract. Social impact outcomes are directly linked to the Council's ability to offer a suitable and easily accessible leisure offering.</p> <p>The new contract will be prescriptive regarding working with local Health Partnerships (e.g. Health & Care Partnerships, ICB etc) to engage in Social Regeneration Programs to tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>SBC are having conversations with the NHS about social conscience and are considering specification inclusions.</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>All target groups will be considered as part of the tender process.</p> <p>Clearly the leisure centre environment needs a certain level of assurance that operators understand the implications and can manage successfully. The tender will ensure we capture the capabilities and experience of operators in this field.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>The leisure contract procurement project has a risk log in place which currently has identified 21 risks, all identified risks have control measures in place.</p> <p>Health and safety is a core component of the contract specification that tenderers will be asked to submit plans to cover this key area. The proposed capital investment will inevitably reduce health and safety risks and also future proof the facilities to reduce the risk of future major investment being needed and what closure of the buildings would cause.</p>
Equality and Diversity	A full equalities impact assessment will be presented with the award of contract report following the tender process. The tender process will follow standard Sport England recommended processes which ensure equality of access/opportunity is at the heart of the decision.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.

7 Appendices

7.1 – Exempt Car Parking estimates

7.2 – Exempt Capital Investment estimates

8 Background Papers

8.1 [Printed Minutes 05032025 Community & Leisure Committee](#)

8.2 [Printed Minutes 21012025 Community & Leisure Committee](#)

Housing, Health and Communities Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	3 July 2025
Report Title	Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note update report 2. That delegated authority is given to the Head of Environment & Leisure in consultation with the Chair of Housing, Health & Community Committee to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has developed a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for 2024 – 2040 which analyses the Borough's sports pitches in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. It considers pitches that are available for public use provided by the Council and other organisations. The Strategy sets out the Council's intended approach and priorities for ensuring there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.
- 1.2 This update report provides the current position with regard to the PPS.
- 1.3 The Strategy has been undertaken by independent consultants (Strategic Leisure) and uses the research, consultation, site assessments, data analysis and mapping that underpins the study to set direction and determine priorities for future provision.
- 1.4 The Strategy follows Sport England guidance and is supported by National Governing Bodies of Sport. This helps to provide robust evidence for supporting the Swale Local Plan process. Community and Leisure committee previously signed off stage B of the process.
- 1.5 The document recognises the balance needed between setting priorities for action and the pressure on budgets in the public sector. It therefore identifies the need for a partnership approach with Sport England, National

Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), schools, local clubs, and private facility operators, to enable delivery of the action plan as resources allow.

- 1.6 The findings are based on a technical assessment which pulled together the baseline data that the recommendations are informed by. This included physical visits to sites, consultation with site owners, and consultation with users.

2 Background

- 2.1 The existing Swale PPS expired in 2023. The new strategy will cover the period in line with the Local Plan, 2024 – 2040. Previous PPS reports have been reviewed by this committee on 6 March 2024, 9 January 2024, 31 October 2023.
- 2.2 The primary purpose of producing the PPS is to provide the Council with a strategy to fulfil effectively the Sport England objectives relating to promoting, protecting, enhancing and providing sports facilities as appropriate and as set out in Sport England's Planning for Sport Guidance. It will achieve this by:
- Accurately auditing the supply of pitches and ancillary facilities, and the demand for pitches, within Swale (from which deficiencies and surpluses in provision can be measured).
 - Assessing whether the current supply (in terms of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the provision) in Swale is adequate to meet both current and future demand.
 - Developing a clear, succinct and deliverable strategy, in the form of a set of recommendations and an Action Plan which addresses deficiencies and surpluses in provision.
- 2.3 Scope of the study includes:
- Football (including 3G pitches)
 - Rugby Union
 - Cricket
 - Hockey (sand/water-based pitches)
 - Bowls
 - Netball
 - Tennis
 - Athletics

- 2.4 The strategy is developed through a number of stages in accordance with Sport England's PPS Guidance:
- Stage A – Prepare & Tailor the Approach
 - Stage B – Gather Supply and Demand Information
 - Stage C – Assess Supply and Demand Information and Views
 - Stage D – Develop the Strategy
 - Stage E – Deliver the Strategy
- 2.5 Since the last update to committee, the original scope of the study was increased to include Athletics (at the request of England Athletics) and revised population data to 2040 has been provided by Planning. The impacts of these changes needed to be reflected throughout the document.
- 2.6 Consultation meetings with relevant governing bodies have been undertaken with some having already signed off. There has been a steady flow of data between the consultants and the various NGB's.
- 2.7 New up to date data has been included and it is envisaged that stage C will be signed off by the end of June 2025.
- 2.8 Stage D is drafted but requires further work on scenario's particularly relating to planned participation growth proposed by NGBs, but it is aimed to be signed off by the end of July 2025.
- 2.9 This will enable the Strategy to be reported and agreed by Members at the October 2025 cycle of meetings.
- 2.10 It is important that Sport England sign-off the document as this will ensure the sports sections in the Local Plan are supported in the Local Plan approval process.
- 2.11 It will be a "live document" used to set parameters for maintaining facilities the Council owns and to help influence those owned/operated by others. The baseline data can be refreshed periodically to allow quicker decisions to be made based upon changing needs.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To note update report.

- 3.2 That delegated authority is given to the Head of Environment & Leisure in consultation with the Chair of Housing, Health & Community Committee to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Failure to adopt a Playing Pitch Strategy is not a feasible option given the requirements of Sport England and the value that this robust assessment will give to the developing Local Plan.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with facility providers, clubs, schools, appropriate National Governing Bodies of Sport, Sport England, Town & Parish Councils, Kent County Council Sports Service, countywide partners, health organisations and local leagues.
- 5.2 A NGB and Sport England Meeting took place on 6 June 2025 where a revised timeline was agreed for each of the first four stages (A – D).

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Community: To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>This Strategy will ensure that the Council and its partners are providing cost-effective services and are making best use of the appropriate resources and property.</p> <p>By adopting a robust Playing Pitch Strategy, the authority will stand a better chance of being successful with external grants and developer contributions to assist in delivery of the action plan.</p> <p>At this stage, no additional costs to the Council have been identified. However, there may be requests for contributory funding for individual projects as they are developed, and which will go through the usual budget request process.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Strategy will underpin key sections of the Local Plan relating to Open Space. This is a required element of the Local Plan process, providing a robust evidence base for decisions. It will therefore assist in the Planning Inspectorate process.

	By providing a robust strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, the Council will be better placed to defend any challenges which may be presented by developers.
Crime and Disorder	The provision and good management of a broad range of playing pitches and changing rooms can make a positive contribution to managing issues of crime and disorder by providing diversionary activities and encouraging community cohesion.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Where possible, maintenance regimes which are “environmentally friendly” will be considered and adopted.
Health and Wellbeing	By providing and supporting a broad range of quality facilities across Swale, there will be greater opportunities for people to participate in healthy activities.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Without a strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, the Borough will be at risk of not having the Local Plan agreed, missing funding opportunities, losing challenges to planning applications by developers, and not providing high quality facilities for its residents. By maintaining its own pitches to agreed standards, the Council will ensure their facilities are safe and fit for purpose.
Equality and Diversity	Issues of equal opportunity will be addressed through applications for any changes to existing or new developments, ensuring that such facilities are compliant and fit for purpose.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.

7 Appendices

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [Community Committee 6 March 2024](#)
- 8.2 [Community Committee Minutes 9 January 2024](#)
- 8.3 [Community Committee Minutes 31 October 2023.](#)

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Housing, Health and Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	3 July 2025
Report Title	Play Strategy Update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Graeme Tuff, Greenspaces Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To note the update report.2. Agree to the principles set out in 2.11 for undertaking the Play Area Review

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following agreement by Policy and Resources committee last year, the Council started work on a Strategy that encapsulates all the information required to enable the Borough Council to make informed decisions on the provision, management and development of the Borough's Open Spaces. The previous strategy also included a specific section on the provision and management of children's play areas across the Borough. This report updates on the work to date.
- 1.2 The objective of this is to ensure the Borough Council is furnished with an evidence base and resulting strategy document that is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.3 The Strategy is being developed with the assistance of independent consultants Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) and uses the recommended guidance and methodology to ensure it provides robust evidence to support the Local Plan process.
- 1.4 A report to Environmental Services and Climate Change committee considers the current position regarding the Open Spaces Strategy and the different typologies. This report focuses on Provision for Children and Young People (Play Provision) which is in the remit of the Housing, Health and Communities Committee. Given the differences between play area typology and open spaces, a separate play area strategy is being developed.

2 Background

Technical Audit Data

- 2.1 The new strategy is planned to meet the emerging Local Plan evidence timetable. New updated National Planning Policy Framework and the associated standard

method for calculating housing need, has been incorporated to ensure that the strategy will be compliant with this new guidance.

2.2 KKP have completed the initial audit having gathered evidence of existing provision and have presented the initial report. However, with the unknown spatial allocations resulting from the Highsted enquiry, a decision has been made to pause the second stage of the strategy development pending the outcome and clarity on where future housing development may be located and how much will be required.

2.3 A total of 144 sites are identified and included in the evidence as shown in the table below.

Typology	Number of sites	Hectares
Play	144	7.8

2.4 Quantity Evaluation – The table below shows that due to population increases since the last study, the current provision levels (hectares per 1000 population) have decreased slightly.

Typology	2017	2025
Provision for children and young people	0.06	0.05

2.5 Quality Evaluation - The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment (where applicable) for open spaces across Swale.

- There is a generally a positive quality of open space across all typologies. This is reflected in over half (60%) of assessed sites scoring above their set threshold for quality.

Typology	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score	Sites below typology threshold	Sites above typology threshold
Provision for children & young people	24%	50%	80%	61	82

2.6 Summary Findings:

- There are 144 sites identified as play provision. An equivalent to nearly 8 hectares.
- Swale has a current provision level of 0.05 ha per 1,000 population. This is well below the Fields in Trust suggested standard of 0.25 ha per 1,000 population. However, if surrounding amenity land (which can be used for informal play) is factored in, a current provision level of 0.32 ha per 1,000 population is noted.

- Minor gaps in catchment mapping are highlighted. There are however opportunities to explore the role of existing play sites nearby and the potential for them to accommodate additional play provision.
- Quality of assessed sites is mixed however value is generally positive. Lower scoring sites tends to reflect either a lack of ancillary facilities at a site and/or equipment appearing dated.

2.7 The provision standards used to determine deficiencies and surpluses for open space are set in terms of quality, accessibility, and quantity. The table below sets out the figures for existing quantity standards, current provision levels identified and national benchmarks.

Typology	Current provision	National benchmarks	Previous standards
Provision for children & young people	0.05	0.25	0.06

Developing the Strategy

2.8 Report Initial Recommendations - The following provides a summary of what the consultant's feel the Council should be seeking to achieve to help address the issues identified on the key findings and through the application of the standards. These need to be further developed over the next few months with input from Swale officers and Members, followed by public consultation.

1. Sites helping, or with the potential to help, serve areas identified as having gaps in catchment mapping should be prioritised as opportunities for enhancement.
2. Ensure low quality/value sites helping to serve potential gaps in accessibility catchments are prioritised for enhancement.
3. Review areas with sufficient provision in open space and consider how they may be able to meet other areas of need.
4. Keep data, reports and supporting evidence base up to date to reflect changes.
5. Recommended standards to inform future growth requirements.

2.9 The final strategy document will summarise some of the existing elements such as fully setting the standards of provision (to help the local plan) and identified shortfalls at the front end. It will also explore the play area requirements based on housing numbers and the allocation locations, providing what the provision requirement is for each and exploring if there are any potential options around offsite contributions/enhancements (if for example there is an existing site/shortfall in the area). It will also set policy for how we will manage, maintain and develop our play areas in future.

- 2.10 As soon as the Highsted enquiry is complete and a decision made on future location of development allocations, the second stage of the process can be developed, essentially expanding upon Recommendation 5 to produce the actual strategy.

Reviewing the provision

- 2.11 The original budget setting report for 25/26 included a saving, proposed by Members, to be achieved by a reduction in playgrounds. Reductions could come from asset transfers or complete removals. Whilst this was amended on the night to remove from 25/26, it remains for 26/27 onwards. This committee is therefore asked to consider the principles on which the play area review will be undertaken. Officers recommend it utilises;
- our own play area RAG rating which takes into consideration age, proximity to others, identified defects, maintenance costs, health and safety and play value.
 - Fields in Trust national benchmarking data,
 - health and social deprivation data analysed by our community team to really make sure we have provision in the areas that need it most.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To note the update report.
- 3.2 Agree to the principles set out in 2.11 for undertaking the Play Area Review.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Failure to adopt a Play Area Strategy is not a recommended option given the evidence base that this robust assessment will give to the developing Local Plan.
- 4.2 Proceed with the next stage without considering the implications of Highsted enquiry. This is not recommended as it will mean a number of assumptions on location and demand for play areas.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders following approval of the initial draft of the full strategy.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Community: To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience.</p> <p>Environment: To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment and to prepare our Borough for the challenges ahead.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>This Strategy will ensure that the Council is providing cost-effective services and are making best use of the appropriate resources and property.</p> <p>By adopting a robust Play Area Strategy, the authority will stand a better chance of being successful with external grants and developer contributions to assist in delivery of the action plan.</p> <p>At this stage, no additional costs to the Council have been identified. However, there may be requests for contributory funding for individual projects as they are developed, and which will go through the usual budget request process.</p> <p>The medium-term financial plan contained a £100k reduction in revenue spending on playgrounds (total budget estimated at £312k per annum). This can only be achieved by reducing provision, which in turn reduces spend on maintenance and inspection.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Strategy will underpin key sections of the Local Plan relating to Play. This is a required element of the Local Plan process, providing a robust evidence base for decisions. It will therefore assist in the Planning Inspectorate process.</p> <p>By providing a robust strategy that is compliant with National Planning Policy Framework, the Council will be better placed to defend any challenges which may be presented by developers.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>The provision and good management of a broad range of playing pitches and changing rooms can make a positive contribution to managing issues of crime and disorder by providing diversionary activities and encouraging community cohesion.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>The strategy will guide and influence the future provision and management of valuable open space facilities and promote sensitive quality management to support biodiversity. In addition, it has a role supporting sustainable urban drainage and carbon reduction through the provision of grassland and planting.</p>

Health and Wellbeing	By providing and supporting a broad range of quality open space and facilities across Swale, there will be greater opportunities for people to participate in healthy activities.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Without a strategy that is compliant, the Borough will be at risk of not having the Local Plan agreed, missing funding opportunities, losing challenges to planning applications by developers, and not providing high quality facilities for its residents. By maintaining and inspecting its own facilities to agreed standards, the Council will ensure their facilities are safe and fit for purpose.
Equality and Diversity	Issues of equal opportunity will be addressed through applications for any changes to existing or new developments, ensuring that all open space and such facilities are compliant and fit for purpose.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified

7 Appendices

7.1 None.

8 Background Documents

8.1 None.

Housing, Health and Community Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	Thursday 3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Member appointments to Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbours
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Stephanie Curtis, Strategic Policy and Communities Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To nominate and appoint a second Member to the Swale Community Safety Partnership, for the duration of their term of office.2. To agree mechanism by which this committee and the Community Safety Partnership escalate any appropriate concerns to the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the Committee 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 points of escalation for the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

2 Background

- 2.1 Swale CSP is a statutory body bringing together a number of public sector agencies to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and reduce re-offending. These agencies include Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Probation services, and Health services, working closely with the local housing associations such as Southern Housing, voluntary and community sector organisations and HM Prison Service.
- 2.2 As the Council is a statutory partner of the CSP, Members and Officers have sat on the CSP Executive Board. The CSP is a strategic group and the Member appointed will be able to relay concerns of this nature affecting Swale residents. It is not a forum where operational ward-based concerns can be discussed.

- 2.3 In 2009, councils were given powers to scrutinise CSPs through provision made in the Police and Justice Act 2006. Within the Cabinet system this function sat with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This function now sits with the Community and Leisure Housing, Health and Communities Committee and it should be noted that this will form part of the representatives being scrutinised rather than being part of the committee for this function.
- 2.4 In September 2024, it was agreed by the Communities and Leisure Committee that Members be appointed to the Community Safety Partnership for the duration of their term of office for consistency and Councillors Tom Nundy and Hannah Perkin were agreed as the Member representatives.
- 2.5 Following Councillor Perkin becoming Chair of the Housing, Health and Community Committee, due to the scrutiny function of the overall committee and the role the Chair plays as part of this, a replacement Member representative for her needs to be agreed.
- 2.6 The Chair of the Housing, Health and Community Committee is also an invited representative for Swale Borough Council on the Kent Police and Crime Panel and there is an opportunity for a question to be submitted on our behalf at each Panel meeting, which must be strategic in nature. This panel provides a scrutiny function to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Discussions have taken place as to how Swale Borough Council can best engage with this Panel and the question submission process.
- 2.7 The Kent Police and Crime Panel meets more frequently than this Committee and the meeting timings do not always coincide clearly. It is therefore proposed that as per the table below, that this Committee along with the CSP determines the agreed question to be submitted.

Police and Crime Panel Meeting Date	Who determines question to be submitted
October 14 th	Housing, Health and Communities Committee at July meeting
December 16 th	CSP to determine
February 5 th	Housing, Health and Communities Committee at January meeting
February 19 th	CSP to determine
April 23 rd	Housing, Health and Communities Committee at March meeting

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To nominate and appoint a second Member to the Swale Community Safety Partnership, for the duration of their term of office.
- 3.2 To agree mechanism by which this committee and the Community Safety Partnership escalate any appropriate concerns to the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not appoint a second member to the CSP - Officers sit on the CSP as well as Councillor Tom Nundy who was previously appointed to the CSP by the committee in September 2024 for his term of office and therefore the statutory duties would be covered.
- 4.2 To not add a standing agenda item in relation to CSP updates and escalation points to the Kent Police and Crime Panel – the Chair of the committee has the remit to be able to take questions to the Panel without the input of the committee.
- 4.3 To consider alternative proposals for the Committees engagement with the scrutiny of the Kent Police and Crime Panel.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 These are routine appointments to existing arrangements, so no consultation has been undertaken or is proposed beyond asking committee for their nominations and what length term the appointments should be for.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This supports the community objective - To work as part of the Community Safety Partnership to delivery priorities to address domestic abuse, crime, and disorder, ASB and support vulnerable people.
Financial, Resource and Property	No implications identified at this stage
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	The CSP is a strategic body which sets priorities for tackling crime and disorder within the borough.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	The CSP links with health and wellbeing activities
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The CSP focuses and delivers services and projects that support vulnerable individuals.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage

7 Appendices

None.

8 Background Papers

Swale Community Safety Plan 2025/26 can be found at <https://swale.gov.uk/news-and-your-council/strategies-and-policies/community-safety-plan>

Kent Police and Crime Panel meeting dates can be found at <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=776&Year=0>

Housing, Health, and Community Committee	
Meeting Date	3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Affordable Housing Emergency - Update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the current progress on the Affordable Housing Emergency Motion.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing, Health, and Community Committee with an update on the Affordable Housing Emergency that was declared on the 3rd of April 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 On the 3rd of April 2024 Full Council unanimously declared an Affordable Housing Emergency, the Council resolved to conduct a number of actions in support of the motion.
- 2.2 According the Regulator of Social Housing data sets in 2024 there were 9,963 social and affordable homes in Swale operated by 32 registered providers, an increase from 9,505 reported in 2023. Southern Housing remain the largest provider as our LSTV with 68.2% of the homes, with Moat Homes (10.4%) and Hyde (6.7%).
- 2.3 During 2024/25 there were 228 Affordable Housing Completions in the borough reported to SBC, 153 affordable rent, 73 shared ownership and 2 First Homes. The housing register at the time of drafting the report contained 1,859 households. 105 in Band A, 666 in Band B, 1056 in Band C, 31 in Band D and 1 in Band E. Total lets through the housing register for the 2024/25 financial year was 388.
- 2.4 The Comprehensive Spending Review that took place on 11th June 2025, outlined a range of measures for Housing, which should support additional delivery of Affordable Housing. The below summary is from the District Council's Network Briefing, although it is too early to fully understand the direct impact that this may have on Swale and delivery of new affordable homes.

- £39 billion for a successor to the Affordable Homes Programme over 10 years from 2026-27 to 2035-36. Spending will reach £4 billion per year in 2029-30 and rise in line with inflation subsequently.
- 10-year social housing rent settlement from 2026 at Consumer Price Index +1%, alongside a consultation to follow shortly on how to implement social rent convergence.
- £2.5 billion low-interest loans over the SR for social housing providers.
- £950 million investment for the fourth round of the Local Authority Housing Fund to support local authorities in England to increase the supply of good-quality temporary accommodation and drive down the use of costly bed and breakfasts and hotels.
- £100 million, including from the Transformation Fund, for early interventions to prevent homelessness.
- £840 million to turn the Household Support Fund into a new Crisis and Resilience Fund for households, incorporating discretionary housing payments.
- £1 billion new investment between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to accelerate remediation of social housing, by giving social housing providers equal access to government funding as private building owners.
- Confirming £4.8 billion in financial transactions (such as guarantee schemes) from 2026-27 to 2029-30. This additional capacity will be managed by Homes England.
- Investing in infrastructure and land remediation to deliver new housing schemes in partnership with the private sector.
- £200 million to transform the asylum system and end the use of asylum hotels this Parliament.
- .

2.5 The table below details the actions agreed at Full Council and the status of these actions.

No.	Action	Response	Status
1	Declare an Affordable Housing Emergency for the Borough of Swale.	This was declared on 3 rd of April 2024	Complete
2	Recognise and endorse the work of the Leader of the Council in working with District Council's Network in highlighting and tackling this issue.	This does currently form part of the Lobbying work being undertaken by District Council Network that we are a part of and will continue to be a focus.	Complete
3	Continue to work with the sector and try and engage Government to develop long term solutions to fix the national housing crisis.	Members and officers continue to engage and look for long-terms solutions. The government have announced a range of policy ambitions to increase and accelerate housing delivery, and a range of funding	In Progress

		measures was announced in the CSR.	
4	Call on the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the housing minister to urgently seek proper solutions to this crisis.	This has been actioned.	In Progress
5	Lobby government, for Local Housing Allowance Rates to be matched to Affordable Rent levels and to be linked to future increases in the Affordable Rent levels.	This forms part of the overall lobbying strategy.	In Progress
6	Policy and Resources committee to consider introducing and implementing discounts on planning fees for Registered Providers for land led schemes which deliver new social rent homes.	As fees are nationally set this is not something that we can change locally.	Complete / Not progressed.
7	Policy and Resources Committee consider increasing the length of the council tax exemption period for Unoccupied properties owned by a charity to 12 months instead of 6 months to encourage registered providers to undertake works to bring existing social and affordable rent homes that are long term empty back into use instead of selling them off.	This will be considered when the policy is next reviewed. Consultation will take place with RP's ahead of the policy review to understand their views and if this would have a tangible impact.	Scheduled to progress.
8	That the Housing & Health Committee consider updating the rules for applying and use of the Community Housing Fund grants to allow applications for grants towards capital spend as well as for research.	The CHF Swale BC has is not available for capital spend as per the Conditions of Grant imposed nationally on the fund.	Complete / Not progressed.
9	Lobby for Government to update the rate at which housing benefit can be claimed for temporary accommodation costs to be set at current Local Housing Allowance rates and to be index linked.	This forms part of the Lobbying work being undertaken by District Council Network that we are a part of and will continue to be a focus. We can claim current and full LHA rate for our own stock which we do. The government have also	In Progress

		provided LAHF to enable the purchase of our own TA.	
10	That the Property and Regeneration Committee review the land holdings of the council particularly in areas that were transferred under the stock transfer to “Swale Housing Association” to ascertain if the transfer of some of this land to registered providers or community led housing organisations could provide additional new social and affordable rent homes.	There are several small parcels of land that exist, these have previously been explored with Registered Providers and viability was an issue. The Property Officer working group will monitor this work as part of the Property Asset Strategy and bring a report forward to Economy and Property Committee in due course. The working groups TOR have been updated to ensure that any disposals also consider Affordable Housing as part of the options analysis.	In Progress

3 Proposals

3.1 To note the current progress on the Affordable Housing Emergency Motion.

4 Alternative Options

4.1 None

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 None

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.
Financial, Resource and Property	As an update report there are no additional financial, resource and property implications. There are implications related to some of the actions and these will be highlighted in relation to the individual decision making.

Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Housing Motion has been declared in relation to the challenge to be able to deliver our statutory responsibilities in relation to Homelessness Services.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	There is a significant link between the impact of quality affordable homes and the wider determinants of health.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts. The Affordable Housing Emergency and its associated actions are in place to assist in controlling the risk.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 None

8 Background Papers

8.1 Affordable Housing Emergency - [Agenda for Council on Wednesday, 3 April 2024, 7.00 pm \(swale.gov.uk\)](#)

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Housing Health and Community Committee	
Meeting Date	3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2027 Annual Update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note progress on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 27.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing, Health, and Community Committee with an update on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 27.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 27, was adopted by the Housing and Health Committee on 4th July 2023. As part of the Strategy governance, it was agreed to bring an annual report to the Committee to ensure the Strategy is progressing and to highlight any risk or issues to delivery.
- 2.2 The priorities within the Strategy are:
 - Delivering Affordable Homes
 - Preventing Homelessness
 - Developing a more efficient housing options service; and
 - Improve conditions in existing homes.
- 2.3 A progress report on work to date is shown in Appendix I.
- 2.4 We are now halfway through the Strategy, and it is felt that the priorities are still relevant and there is currently no requirement to make any amendments or alterations to the main priorities or objectives. Good progress has been made in all areas of the Strategy, during 2024/25 there has continued to be a large focus on the homelessness service as this continues to be a large financial risk and to ensure implementation of the actions identified. This year has also seen a greater focus on the remit of private sector housing and enforcement, with the newly named team Housing Standards and Assistance to reflect the functions of the team and that many services are also open to the social housing sector. The new manager has been in place for just over a year

and has laid the foundations for improvement which should come to fruition this financial year. The biggest focus for the service this year will be the implementation of the Renters Rights Bill, which is expected to become law between July 2024 and January 2026, this will have wide ranging impacts on all the housing teams.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To note progress on the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 27.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 None

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 This is an update progress report and therefore no consultation has taken place. The Strategy went out to consultation last year before adoption.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.
Financial, Resource and Property	The budgets within the Housing Service are in place to support the delivery of the Strategy.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must conduct a review of homelessness in their area and publish a homelessness strategy which sets out what it plans to do to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
Crime and Disorder	The housing service works closely with the Community Safety Partnership in managing clients that have an offending background. Having stable and affordable housing, can assist in breaking the re-offending cycle.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Grants promoted by Housing Standards and Assistance Team can assist with improvements to homes to be more energy efficient.
Health and Wellbeing	Housing is a wider determinant of health and having secure and decent homes significantly improves the health and wellbeing on residents.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The housing service undertakes the most Safeguarding referrals than any other department in the Council, the nature, and circumstances of some of the clients mean they are very vulnerable and therefore support is required from partner agencies.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	The provision and affordability of Temporary Accommodation continues to be a corporate risk.
Equality and Diversity	This was considered at the time of the adoption of the Strategy. Due consideration to the Equalities Act is embedded in the Housing teams processes.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

Appendix I - Annual Progress Report

8 Background Papers

8.1 Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2023 - 2027

Appendix I – Annual Progress Report

Housing, Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2027

Update July 2025

Priority One – Delivering Affordable Homes

Objective	Update
Deliver affordable homes through Swale Rainbow Homes.	Swale Rainbow Homes secured Planning permission at Cockleshell Walk for 51 homes, procurement of the build contract has taken place and evaluation of the tender is currently taking place to finalise construction costs and complete application to Homes England's Affordable Homes Programme.
Assist developers in promoting affordable homes to RP's in the borough.	A long-term and consistent approach to partnership working is ongoing with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) and Developers to enable the delivery of affordable homes across Swale. It remains very challenging for RPs to take on s106 schemes and small sites due to ongoing financial pressures relating to investment in the condition of their existing stock due to new regulations. The Accommodation and Resettlement Manager continues to work closely with RPs to enable the on-site delivery of as many affordable homes as possible.
Work with Homes England, Registered Providers, and institutional investors to secure additional affordable housing in the borough.	Work is ongoing to deliver additional affordable homes with a couple of large sites secured that will be delivering affordable rent tenure, social rented and shared ownership homes.
Support Community Led Housing schemes and other initiatives for residents to secure housing in the borough.	The Kent wide Rural & Community Housing Enabling Service (RACE) has been extended for one further year to enable continued work with the Council and Local Community Groups to bring forward small local needs led affordable housing schemes. Future funding for this scheme is not clear at this stage and there is the possibility that the RACE service will cease after March 2026.

Priority Two – Preventing Homelessness

Objective	Update
Develop an enhanced triage service.	Following the restructure of the Housing Options team, the enhanced triage role has now evolved into the Housing Advice team, which now consists of 4 Housing Advisors, who are able to give detailed advice at that first point of contact. Housing Advisors successfully dealt with 80% of all cases (Jan-Dec 2024) where an applicant was homeless to avoid escalation to Assessment Officers.
Promote the prevention services to residents.	The Prevention team is now fully staffed with a new team leader in place, and work is starting to promote the service to partner agencies.
Develop a PRS offer for landlords and tenant support.	Offers to landlords are in place providing landlords and tenants ongoing tenancy support to maintain new and existing tenancies, and the Landlord Introduction scheme remains a positive tool for supporting landlords with new tenants. The team have expanded in the last year, adding two more Landlord Liaison Officer's and a dedicated Tenancy Support Office for those households placed in the PRS by the teams. The team also continue to provide dedicated work to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme and support those clients where host family support was unable to continue.
Use analytical tools to identify individuals at risk of homelessness and offer support.	We are working with KCC on the Xantura programme which helps identify individuals that may be at risk of homelessness. We are also using the LIFT programme which also identified risk factors and again can offer support to clients. This is also being fed into the welfare support project run by the Community Development Team to assist with long-term prevention.
Deliver focused prevention work in relation to family evictions	The Housing team deal with high numbers of potential family and friend evictions. Home visits to families are being increased to find solutions to avoid eviction and allow the person to remain.
Deliver focused prevention work in relation to s.21 notices.	The Renters Rights Bill is expected to be law soon and this will end Section 21 – no fault evictions. All private rented tenancies will become assured tenancies. This should provide greater security for tenants, although we are aware that some landlords are leaving the market, and we are monitoring the impact of this on the service.

Priority Three – Developing a more efficient housing options service

Objective	Update
Carry out a full-service review of the relief and main duty process to speed up decision times.	<p>The review was completed and fed into the restructure; we currently have a vacancy within the team due to a recent resignation. Caseloads are monitored effectively to ensure decisions are issued within statutory timescales.</p> <p>The complexity of cases continues to be a pattern and the team work with a multi-agency approach to relieve homelessness and to try and ensure support is put in place by appropriate agencies where needed. This can often be extremely challenging with reduced and reducing resources from crucial partner agencies.</p>
Review the type and use of temporary accommodation to ensure value for money and effectiveness for clients.	Phase 1 of the council's TA Purchase Programme is nearing completion with 47 open market homes completed and a further three in the pipeline nearing completion. A cost and quality review will be undertaken to decide on next steps. However, initial views are that this programme is already looking positive with full LHA payments enabled for each home used and positive feedback from customers on the quality and location of the homes purchased. As part of the Housing Options restructure, a dedicated member of staff has now been employed to manage compliance requirements of these homes.
Review and monitor the Housing Allocations Policy to ensure those most in need access Affordable Housing.	The Housing Allocations Policy is monitored and analysed quarterly to ensure Affordable Housing is allocated to those most in need. We are waiting on revised government amendments on domestic abuse, children leaving care and armed forces.
Implement a range of projects to support homeless households to enhance employment and housing options and reduce time spent in TA.	<p>A current project supporting rough sleepers into housing and employment has been started and outcomes will be monitored.</p> <p>The rough sleeper team has had some success in helping to secure both employment and volunteering opportunities and although this is on a small scale, we are hoping to build on the success and develop further opportunities for people across the services.</p>
Deliver the RSI service in line with the bid submission.	This programme has seen a significant service delivered which includes regular outreach to those on the streets several times a week. Accommodation is also provided to some individuals. Wider programmes have also been funded through this programme, including funding to continue the services at The Quays and a Housing First programme to support the most vulnerable clients.

	<p>Funding to continue the RSI services has been allocated for a further year for 25/26. We are currently waiting for news regarding future funding, although it has been suggested this may be another 3-year allocation.</p> <p>Since January 2025 we have worked with Southern Housing and are providing an 8-bed hostel for ex-rough sleepers. RSI have staff present at the scheme daily and are helping the residents to gain the skills needed for them to maintain future tenancies. Two residents have now taken up full time employment and two are currently working voluntarily.</p>
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Priority Four – Improve conditions in existing homes.

Objective	Update
Target enforcement on the worst private sector properties to improve living conditions.	6 enforcement notices have been issued to address the conditions of poorly managed properties. As the previous senior officer stepped up to take on the management role, there was a gap in enforcement activities. The team has defended appeals against legal notices including two civil penalties. A fund of £110,000 has also been secured from MHCLG to enhance the capacity and capability of the team to enforce robust measures against damp and mould in residential dwellings. The funding allowed the team to run the Health Homes Project, which is now being extended for a year with pending additional funds of £30,000.
Promote the Government energy schemes in Swale.	The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG Phase 2) has come to an end. Currently there is no new government grant scheme due to lack of financial and human resources. However, the Winter Warmth Grant stays in place that provides up to £5,000 towards the cost of repairing or replacing heating systems or installing insulation.
Carry out a full-service review on the Disabled Facilities Grant to ensure it is being delivered as efficiently as possible.	The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process audit and review has been completed with resulting recommendations to streamline and optimise the existing process. A project to transform the DFG process has been implemented with the adoption of Foundation case management to completely digitise and make it paperless by April 2026. A test system has been established and will be finalised by the end of July 2025. Along with this a clearance of backlog cases is underway with external agencies support.
Promote the Housing Improvement Agencies work.	In addition to web promotion of Home Improvement Agency work on the Swale website, we increased HIA profile through the Inside Swale magazine as well as news release of the staying put works.

<p>Tackle empty properties that impact on local neighbourhoods the most.</p>	<p>The service is currently operating below capacity to effectively address problematic empty homes that are affecting neighbours. It was as a result of a previous decision to reduce the resource within this area. As we are recruiting two more apprentices, they will be trained as part of their programme to bring the empty homes back into use through advice, education, and financial incentives to owners.</p>
<p>Review and implement Council responsibilities in relation to Renters Reform Bill* / Act. <i>*Renters Reform Bill is now Renters Rights Bill</i></p>	<p>The Renters Rights Bill is expected to come into law this year placing a duty to enforce the legislation on the Housing Standards and Assistance Team. It will bring challenges and opportunities, so we have begun workforce development in terms of upskilling and recruiting two apprentice roles to get ready for the upcoming legislative change.</p>

Housing, Health, and Community Committee	
Meeting Date	3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Temporary Accommodation (TA) Purchase Programme
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the progress of the TA purchase programme and initial reporting. 2. To agree to purchase additional properties with the remaining budget. 3. To agree to extend the contract for the consultant to work on the acquisitions of the new properties. 4. To conduct a full evaluation when all properties have been occupied for a minimum of 12 months.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing, Health, and Community Committee with an update on the progress of the TA Purchase programme that was agreed by the Housing and Health Committee on 17th January 2023.

2 Background

- 2.1 The former Housing and Health Committee on 17th January 2023 agreed to the TA Purchase programme, giving authority to purchase 50 properties from the open market within Swale to utilise as temporary accommodation, providing a capital budget of £11m. A model was also developed to assess whether properties were suitable for purchase, it was the basis of this model that provided delegated authority to purchase relevant properties. The model also assumed the outsourcing of the management of the properties.
- 2.2 In addition to the Capital Budget identified by the Council, the government provided match funding towards TA purchases through the LAHF funding programme. We have successfully received funding from three rounds of the programme which has increased the size of the programme and has also enabled us to purchase some 3-bedroom properties as well as the original proposal for one- and two-bedroom properties. The first round focused on TA to support Homes for Ukraine households where host arrangements had broken down and were now entitled to TA, the remaining rounds were for general needs TA.

- 2.3 A project surveyor was recruited through a temporary recruitment agency to identify suitable properties and manage the conveyancing process with the SBC legal team. We managed to recruit an experienced surveyor who had delivered a similar programme for another Council and had extensive local knowledge of the Swale borough.
- 2.4 47 properties within the programme have been completed and we have 3 more properties that are near completion and are anticipated to be completed by the date of the committee, bringing the programme to completion. Of the 50 properties, 40 are in Sittingbourne, 9 on Isle of Sheppey and 1 in Faversham. The properties comprise of 7 one bed properties, 37 two bed properties and 6 three-bedroom properties.
- 2.5 The original model assumed that we would outsource the management of the TA properties, however when the team undertook research with other Council's it was apparent that these arrangements had not worked with outsourced providers for a range of reasons, and they eventually brought the services back in house. Taken their experience and advice, we therefore decided to manage the TA properties internally and staff within the restructure have been identified to support these functions. This did cause an initial delay in mobilising the properties fully as we did not have the processes, systems and contracts or staffing resource in place that an existing provider would have. The team have done an excellent job rising to the challenge and ensuring that the properties are suitable as occupation for TA, however, this has taken longer than originally anticipated and put additional pressure on the team.
- 2.6 It has taken on average 60 days for completion to first occupation. This does exclude the one property that was damaged due a fire on a neighbouring property and insurance works have been undertaken, this property has been void for an extended period. Initial works have been required at most properties to ensure they are compliant and safe to be used as TA. The team are now working towards a 30-day completion to tenant occupation period, and this will apply at void turnaround as well.
- 2.7 The other change in the model was that we factored housing benefit in at the 90% of the 2011 TA rate, however, we became aware that we are able to claim the current and full rate of housing benefit for our own properties, The TA Policy was amended by the Housing and Health Committee on 22nd October 2024 to enable us to charge the relevant rent and claim the revised HB level.
- 2.8 We have looked to complete a formal evaluation of the programme, however, very few properties have been occupied for a full year and therefore full operating costs for the whole programme are not currently available. Therefore, it is recommended that a full evaluation is undertaken next year when the whole programme would have been completed and all properties occupied for a 12 month period, we will however closely monitor the cost and quality of the properties and report to the committee in year through the TA scrutiny report.

2.9 Capital Programme Summary Costs – Year End Position (31 March 2025)
(47 Properties)

Item	Cost
Property Purchase	£9,980,291
Professional and Other Fees	£702,308
Grant	(£2,187,271)
Capital Programme	(£11,000,000)
Balance	(£2,504,672)

Since 1st April there has been one further completion at a property purchase price of £255,000 and other fees incurred so far total £19,300. This leaves a balance of £2,230,400 as of 17th June 2025 to pay for other professional fees not yet charged, and to cover the cost of the last two remaining properties.

- 2.10 As there is a balance on the programme, it is recommended that the remaining budget is utilised to secure additional properties. Therefore, this report is seeking authority to purchase additional properties to fully utilise the programme budget.
- 2.11 The cost of the surveyor has now exceeded £120,000 including VAT, so retrospective approval of this contractor is now requested. Due to his knowledge of the area and the project, approval is sought to continue contracting the same surveyor to purchase the remaining properties that can be financed within this phase of the project. Costs for the surveyor are being met from the £11m capital budget provided, so there are no further budgetary implications from this decision.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To note the progress of the TA purchase programme and initial reporting.
- 3.2 To agree to purchase additional properties with the remaining budget.
- 3.3 To agree to extend the contract for the consultant to work on the acquisitions of the new properties.
- 3.4 To conduct a full evaluation when all properties have been occupied for a minimum of 12 months.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not purchase any additional properties, this is not recommended as this will support the work to minimise costly nightly let provision as part of our Housing Options Improvement Plan.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 None.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	This report provides an update on the Capital programme to purchase Temporary Accommodation, and the assets acquired as part of this.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Local housing authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	None at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

None

8 Background Papers

8.1 [Temporary Accommodation \(TA\) Purchase 17th January 2023 Report](#)

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Housing, Health, and Community Committee	
Meeting Date	3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Temporary Accommodation (TA) Spend – Scrutiny Report
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To scrutinise the performance report and controls in place to manage the TA budget

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing, Health, and Community Committee with an update on the current performance in relation to TA and current budget position, the report also discusses the current controls in place to manage the TA budget.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has a Housing Options Improvement Programme (HOIP) in place to manage and control the spend on TA. The costs of TA to Council's are increasing nationally and there is a risk to the overall financial position of the Council if it is not monitored and managed effectively. A refresh of the HOIP has been undertaken for the new financial year.
- 2.2 The Housing and Health Committee have made some significant investment in interventions to support the control of the TA budget, the most significant are the TA Purchase Programme and an investment in additional staff to work with enabling clients to move effectively through the system. Both these interventions have been implemented.
- 2.3 The Council receives a Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) from MHCLG each year, in 2025/26 we have received £1,346,129, which is an uplift from previous years. Although this grant is welcomed it does not cover the full cost of providing the services and substantial growth has been made within the Council's base budget in previous years.

Performance Information

2.4 Statutory TA Placements – Total Households on last day of period

	22/23	23/24	24/25
No. in Statutory TA	337	305	281
SBC Own Stock	3	3	38
Homeless Hostel	8	14	11
Housing Assn	79	84	73
B&B and Nightly Let	247	204	159
No. outside Statutory Duty (RSI Funded)	54	22	23

TA Purchase Programme

	22/23	23/24	24/25
No. of SBC Owned Stock (cumulative)	3	8	50

Households on the Housing Register

	22/23	23/24	24/25
No. of households on Housing Register	1,433	1,730	1,816
No. of lets through housing register.	297	423	388

Affordable Homes Delivered

	22/23	23/24	24/25
New Affordable Homes	208	289	228

- 2.5 The trend for reducing the use of B&B and Nightly let continues (although still makes up our largest proportion of provision). We have seen an increase in use of our own stock this quarter as more properties have completed, this will be a continuing trend until the current programme is completed. Although we have now completed on 47 properties of the current programme not all properties are occupied because of works that are required before occupation. These works are currently taking place to enable the use as TA. Once all properties are commissioned the void rates will also be included in this report.
- 2.6 The Housing Register demand is still high with limited lets becoming available. Residents are regularly frustrated at the length of time it takes to successfully secure a property and the availability of properties to proactively bid on.
- 2.7 Old Johnson House is being used and this is fully occupied, although we have had difficulty in identifying suitable households for Bridge House so are still in discussion with Southern Housing about its practical utilisation for TA. A revised accommodation plan will be developed to identify location and size of properties

that we require for main duty cases. Relief cases are more likely to remain in nightly let and B&B provision until they have been fully assessed.

- 2.8 The Housing Options restructure has been implemented and recruitment to new roles has been completed, all but one new member of staff has already joined the team.

Financial Monitoring

- 2.9 The gross external TA costs from April 2024– March 2025 was £3.4m which is a reduction compared to the same period in 2023/24 of £3.8m. This has been attributed to the reduction in the overall no. of households in TA and the use of our own TA during this financial year.
- 2.10 The outturn position for Housing Options for 2024/25 was an underspend of £297,083 this was attributed in part to some additional one-off grants which could offset spend, but also the vacancies in staffing due to the recruitment of new staff as part of the restructure. This does however demonstrate stabilisation of the budget and that the decision on the virement should cover the additional staffing in the new structure. This will of course be closely monitored as part of the budget monitoring process.

Risks and Issues

- 2.11 The following have been identified as the current risks and issues:
- Demand for homelessness services across the country is still high and is anticipated to continue.
 - Delivery of Affordable Housing remains an issue, despite planning committee securing a strong pipeline, there are not RPs prepared to purchase the properties. I am currently unaware if the announcement on additional Affordable Homes Programme will change this position for our local RPs.
 - RPs have scaled back delivery programmes due to viability and capacity within the sector.
 - Caravan Park utilisation as a main home remains a concern.
 - Renters Rights Bill is predicting some landlords exiting the market.
 - We are increasingly seeing demand for hospital discharge support and suitable accommodation.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To scrutinise the performance report and controls in place to manage the TA budget.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 None

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 None.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing. Running the Council - Working within our resources to proactively engage with communities and outside bodies to deliver in a transparent and efficient way
Financial, Resource and Property	This report looks at the performance monitoring in relation to the TA budget.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Local housing authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Households might be placed in temporary accommodation pending the completion of inquiries into an application, or they might spend time waiting in temporary accommodation after an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	None at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

None

8 Background Papers

8.1 There are no background papers.

Housing, Health, and Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	3 rd July 2025
Report Title	Appointment of Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>The committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint 7 members to the sub-committee. 2. Appoint a Chair and Vice Chair.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the Housing, Health, and Communities committee to appoint members of the committee to the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Panel and appoint a chair and vice-chair to the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 In October 2020 it was resolved to create a Local Housing Company (LHC) Swale Rainbow Homes. Swale Rainbow Homes was constituted in April 2021 and directors appointed to operate the Company. The Council is the sole shareholder of the company.
- 2.2 To provide appropriate oversight and scrutiny a Shareholder Panel was established, and a Shareholder agreement drafted setting out the roles and responsibilities, reporting mechanisms and decisions that need to be raised to the Shareholder Panel.
- 2.3 The Shareholder Panel is a sub-committee of the Housing, Health and Community Committee and must be made up of members from that committee, political balance is not required. The previous Shareholder Committee had 7 members. The Shareholder Panel cannot include anyone who is a director of Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To appoint members to the Swale Rainbow Homes Shareholder Panel.
- 3.2 To appoint a Chair and Vice Chair of the sub-committee.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The sub-committee needs to be in place and therefore there are no alternative options.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 None.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	No implications identified at this stage.
Financial, Resource and Property	The training will cost around £1k and funding has been secured for this.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The training will cover the legal responsibilities of the Shareholder Panel.
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The training will manage the risk of Shareholder Panels acting outside of their remit.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 None

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 There are no background papers.

Housing and Health Committee Forward Decisions Plan – July 2025

Report title, background information and recommendation(s)	Date of meeting	Open or exempt	Lead Officer and report author
Reducing Permissive Environments Policy	28 October 2025	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Playground Improvement Programme Update Report	28 October 2025	Open	Lead Officer: Rob Lucas Head of Service: Jay Jenkins
Loneliness Project Update	28 October 2025	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Open Spaces (Play) Strategy	28 October 2025	Open	Lead Officer: Graeme Tuff Head of Service: Jay Jenkins
TA Scrutiny Report	28 October 2025	Open	Lead Officer: Charlotte Hudson Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Domestic Abuse Policy Refresh	20 January 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Annual CCTV Report	20 January 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Swale Community Safety Partnership Priority Setting	20 January 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Household Support Fund Annual Update	20 January 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
TA Scrutiny Report	20 January 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Charlotte Hudson

			Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Swale Good Causes Community Lottery Update	25 March 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis
			Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Empowering You in Swale Strategy Update	25 March 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Stephanie Curtis
			Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
Housing Enforcement Policy	25 March 2026	Open	Lead Officer: San Nyunt
			Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson
TA Scrutiny Report	25 March 2026	Open	Lead Officer: Charlotte Hudson
			Head of Service: Charlotte Hudson

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