
SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at Leysdown Village Hall, James Court, Wing Road, Leysdown-on-Sea, Sheerness ME12 4RS on Tuesday, 22 July 2025 from 7.00 pm - 10.09 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Elliott Jayes (Chair), Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Lee-Anne Moore, Tom Nundy, Mike Whiting and Dolley Wooster (Vice-Chair).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Mike Brown (Eastchurch Parish Council (PC)), Gaynor Bedgood, Geoff Partis, Pat Sandle, Alison Stuart and Louise Switters (Leysdown PC), John Nurden (Minster PC), Sue Simpson and Paula Telford (Queenborough Town Council (TC)), Linda Brinklow, Phil Crowder and Chris Reed (Sheerness TC) and Lynda Russell and Susannah Constant (Warden PC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Lisa Gransden (Queenborough TC) and Emily O'Neill (Leysdown PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martyn Cassell, Janet Dart, Rebecca Dart and Inger Lorraine.

OFFICER PRESENT (Virtually): Andre Bowen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Kent County Councillor Maxwell Harrison, Divisional Member for Sheppey.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Mark Tucker.

Kent County Councillor Isabella Kemp, Divisional Member for Sheppey.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth, Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Ashley Shiel and Mark Tucker.

213 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

214 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor of East Kent College, Sheppey.

215 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 4 February 2025 (Minute Nos. 603 – 612) and 14 May 2025 (Minute Nos. 28 – 29) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

216 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

The Capital Programme Manager gave an update on the Sheerness Revival Project.

Beachfields Regeneration – the demolition and strip out had been completed. The leisure facility reception continued to operate from temporary cabins outside, with gym and workout studio in the sports hall. The Adventure Golf official opening was on 23 July 2025.

Sheppey College – the steel frame had been installed and brickwork was underway. Several students were participating with works on site. Works were expected to be completed in Winter 2025/26 and opened to students in January 2026.

Masters House – contractors were onsite with works commencing in July 2025 and completion expected Autumn 2025.

Communications and engagement – a soft launch event of the Sheerness Shipwreck Adventure Golf took place on Friday 18 July 2025. There would be a milestone event for Masters House. School engagement was planned, along with engagement with the wider community.

The following comments were made:

- How was the pricing structure set for the adventure golf?;
- one hour was not enough for a family to play 18 holes;
- there needed to be concessions for carers;
- as the Isle of Sheppey was an area of deprivation, what free activities would be available?;
- were the guard dogs kept comfortable during the recent periods of hot weather?;
- would another litter bin be installed at the adventure golf facility?;
- could there be some reference to the Royal Air Force (RAF) presence on the Isle of Sheppey on the adventure golf course?;
- what would happen to any profits achieved with the running of the adventure golf?;
- were the Isle of Sheppey town and parish councillors invited to the adventure golf official opening that took place on 18 July 2025, as councillors reported not receiving an invitation?; and
- would the skatepark be reinstated?

Officers responded that comparisons with other leisure activities and adventure golf facilities were considered before deciding on the pricing structure, and there would be scope for resident promotions outside peak periods. There would not be a limit of one hour if the course was not completed in that time. The one-hour booking was more of a guide for the operator to manage bookings. The outdoor gym would be a free activity as well as the multiuse playing courts and paddling pool. Precautions were being taken to ensure the guard dogs were being treated humanely. Litter would be monitored and Swale Borough Council (SBC) were working with McDonalds about the possibility of installing additional bins. Some of the income

would be used to pay the contractor to operate the adventure golf, any remaining funds would be used to subsidise the leisure contract. As the skatepark was not in a repairable state, there was no intention to re-instate it. That area would be used for new seating for the paddling pool to help remove clutter from around the paddling pool itself and improve the environment for the young children who used it. The Capital Programme Manager would check to see if parish and town councillors had been invited to the soft launch of the adventure golf.

217 CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

The Service Improvement & Project Manager, gave a presentation on the Customer Access Strategy.

He stated that SBC's current Customer Access Strategy was written in 2013, which ensured easy, clear and convenient access to Swale's services for all. While the overarching aim still existed, the way this was achieved needed to be revisited. In the last decade there had been a shift in local demographics, political control, technological developments and social norms post the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and soon to be Devolution.

The Service Improvement & Project Manager went through the various channels currently available to customers and the trend in customer contact over the last few years. He also explained the stages of reviewing the Customer Access Strategy before asking for feedback from everyone in attendance at the Sheppey Area Committee meeting.

The following comments were raised:

- Although using the self-service was not too difficult to use, people struggled to get responses to queries or find out who would be dealing with their question;
- it was not always possible to get through to customer services by telephone;
- the option to be able to book video calls with officers would be useful;
- some people were not aware of the opening hours;
- it was not always easy to find the right information on the website;
- the website and self-service facilities needed improving;
- a call-back option would be beneficial;
- telephone and face-to-face contact methods should be maintained;
- email contact details should be easier to find on the website;
- opening hours after 6 pm would be helpful for people who worked;
- reporting times for missed bins should be longer than two days;
- some people did not have the skills to use self-service facilities on smart phones;
- not all areas had a good internet signal;
- older people and neurodivergent people would welcome someone sitting with them at places such as the Sheerness Gateway to assist with accessing services;
- efforts to reach people without internet access was necessary for example, for responding to consultations;
- officers could consider paying for advertising space in newspapers to promote activities such as consultations;

- parish and town councils could publish information in their newsletters; and
- needed to consider if 'Inside Swale' was the best way to provide information.

218 SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES

The Chair, Councillor Elliott Jayes, raised the issue of the problems parents experienced with the allocation of secondary school places for children on the Isle of Sheppey. Councillor Lee-Ann Moore said that parents did not know what was happening and had received no help from Kent County Council (KCC). Some pupils on the Isle of Sheppey had been allocated schools in Faversham which would run the risk of safeguarding issues if they had to travel on public transport by themselves. Both Councillor Moore and Councillor Tara Noe had submitted a Motion on secondary school places on the Isle of Sheppey to the SBC Full Council Meeting on 30 July 2025.

Councillor Wooster said she had set up an online petition on the KCC website and encouraged people to sign it. She also asked people to host hard copy versions of the petition.

Kent County Councillor Maxwell Harrison said that KCC advised there were only 15 children with no allocated school, but he was waiting for this to be confirmed along with details about what would be happening to resolve this matter. Councillor Harrison was asked to provide a written update after the meeting.

219 REVIEW OF AREA COMMITTEES

The Chair said that earlier this year, the Council agreed that a review of Area Committees should take place and he would like to hear everyone's thoughts on how effective the meetings were.

After a short presentation by the Policy & Engagement Officer on the background and purpose of Area Committees, a discussion took place.

The following comments were raised:

- Sheppey Area Committee was usually well attended, members of the public were more likely to attend area committees instead of other formal Council meetings;
- area committees were a 'talking shop' and a waste of time and money;
- when area committees had funding to allocate, a lot of good came from the projects they supported;
- they were a good opportunity for residents to meet their local councillors, however they should be more easily identifiable at the meetings;
- sound quality at the meetings was poor, could a microphone be provided so everyone in the meeting could hear what was being said?;
- councillors and officers should go on public speaking courses to ensure they could be heard and understood easily, especially for people with hearing problems; and
- PowerPoint presentations should be less wordy and the text large enough for people at the back of the room to read.

The Chair thanked everyone for their comments which would be fed into the area committees review, especially the issues raised regarding accessibility.

220 BLUE FLAG AND SEASIDE AWARDS UPDATE

At the request of the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Head of Environment & Leisure gave an update on the Blue Flag and Seaside Awards. He said he was proud of the work that the Seafront Team did to get the awards. They had worked tirelessly and the councillors on the Isle of Sheppey wanted to celebrate their achievements.

Councillor Wooster said that she would like to see the Blue Flag raising ceremony returned and also recognised the many volunteers who helped keep the seafront litter-free.

221 BARTON'S POINT UPDATE

The Head of Environment & Leisure gave an update on Barton's Point and Members' ambition to improve the offering at the coastal park. The Council had sought expressions of Interest (EOI) in May 2022 to manage the various elements of the site and selected an operator.

Following a process to find a preferred operator and initial enquiries about planning permission, a year-long ecological survey had been carried out which revealed the park's exceptional biodiversity and emphasised the complex and fragile relationships amongst species. The findings of the survey indicated that the proposed inflatable waterpark and accommodation pods would increase the site usage, potentially disrupting the fragile eco-system. This presented a challenge for any efforts to diversify and intensify the use of the site for commercial operators and has led the Council's preferred bidder to reconsider their position.

The relevant Council service committee would be presented with options for the long-term future of the site which would need to be considered in light of the ecological survey's findings.

The following comments were made:

- Considered time had been wasted over the last three years progressing this project;
- the access route should be widened;
- the boathouse was not fit-for-purpose;
- ecology should come first, the focus should be on it being a country park; and
- opportunities for groups such as the Sea Cadets at the site should continue.

The Chair requested that this matter should be a standing item on future Sheppey Area Committee agendas.

222 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

The update report was noted.

A request was made that regular updates on the Swale Community Governance Review should be taken to future Sheppey Area Committee meetings as well as updates on the Local Government Reorganisation.

223 LOCAL BUS FORUM MINUTES FOR NOTING

The Swale Local Bus Forum Minutes were noted.

Councillor Wooster proposed that as no Swale Local Bus Forum meeting had taken place since January 2025, the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods be asked to make enquiries about the future of the Swale Local Bus Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Elliott Jayes and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Sheerness Town Councillors asked if the Sheppey Area Committee representative on the Forum could highlight the lack of bus services along Queenborough Road by the new development. SBC councillors advised that Minster Road, Halfway was closed due to works on gas supplies.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods be asked to make enquiries about the future of the Swale Local Bus Forum.***

224 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the progress on actions.

The Chair requested that the Heritage Officer be invited to attend the September 2025 Area Committee meeting to give updates on heritage issues.

225 PUBLIC FORUM

SBC consultation on public toilets - various members of the public and parish councillors raised concerns about the proposal to close the public toilets. The following comments were made:

- Visitors to Leysdown would have nowhere to go to the toilet, they should be kept open;
- Leysdown Parish Council were considering taking the running of Leysdown toilets but needed more information before making a decision;
- closure of the public toilets could mean that people might defaecate in public spaces which could be a health hazard;
- children struggled to wait to find a toilet further away;
- how had the number of people using Leysdown public toilets been calculated?
- and
- were the public toilets at Eastchurch going to be demolished?

The Head of Environment and Leisure urged everyone to respond to the SBC consultation on public toilets and said that the matter will be brought to the September 2025 Sheppey Area Committee meeting for further discussion. He said

that the average daily use of the Leysdown public toilets had been taken between May and September using passive infrared (PIR) motion sensors. However, the average figure would not be the only determining factor for the decision to close, other factors would be taken into account such as ongoing investment needed, proximity to other facilities and the outcome of the public consultation. The public toilets at Eastchurch had been closed for some time, and one of the options was to demolish them. Other options were for them to be re-used for another purpose or taken on by someone else.

Litter bins – the following questions were asked:

- Why had certain litter bins been removed?;
- there was an issue with dog waste being left on Leysdown Football Pitch; and
- the Quick Response (QR) codes for reporting problems were not working on some bins.

The Head of Environment and Leisure asked for the location of the bins that had been removed to be provided after the meeting so he could take the matter away to investigate. He said that dog waste could be placed in any bin and the old-style bins were gradually being replaced. Officers were aware that some QR codes were not working and the problem was being addressed.

Dumping of rubbish – a parish councillor said that since the Leysdown overnight charging for parking had been introduced, there had been an increase in dumping of rubbish in the layby opposite Harty Ferry Road. Would it be possible to close it off? The Head of Environment & Leisure said that a lot of resources had been spent on this issue already. Some of it was private land. A request to close it had been made and officers were waiting to hear back from KCC. If needed, it could be raised at the Swale Joint Transportation Board.

Communications with councillors – a member of the public said that some SBC councillors did not come across very professionally when responding to comments on social media and this could put people off asking them for assistance.

Shingle Bank car park – a Sheerness Town Councillor asked that when the Shingle Bank car park was closed for maintenance, would new facilities be added such as toilets and chemical toilet disposal points? The Head of Environment and Leisure said that no additional facilities were being added to Shingle Bank and the maintenance was just surface treatment and signage.

Disabled parking bays – a parish councillor raised the issue of disabled parking bays along the sea wall being used for overnight parking. The Head of Environment and Leisure confirmed that the Traffic Order would allow for penalty charge notices to be issued for anyone not displaying the required permit. Other legislation was being used to deal with people parking there long-term.

Warden Bay drainage – a resident said that there had been an ongoing problem with the drains not being cleared near the village hall. It was agreed that Councillor Moore and the Head of Environment and Leisure would look into the matter.

Councillor Tom Nundy asked if there would be any opportunity to suspend car parking charges at the Ship-on-Shore car park while Minster Road was closed to alleviate car parking pressures. The Head of Environment and Leisure said that the situation would be monitored and Members would be consulted about any action to be taken.

A parish councillor asked if there was any information that could be circulated to town and parish councils on the Isle of Sheppey about who to contact if they identified a potential emergency situation. It was agreed to email relevant contact information to town and parish councils.

A Sheerness Town Councillor highlighted how dangerous Marine Parade, Sheerness, could be. Councillor Mike Whiting said that there had been a proposal to reduce the speed limit but Kent Police had objected. It was suggested that Sheerness Town Council contacted Kent County Council Highways and Transportation for an update.

227 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

228 EXTENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Chair

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