SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held at Warden Bay Village Hall, Warden Bay Road, Leysdown-on-Sea ME12 4NB on Thursday, 18 September 2025 from 7.00 pm - 9.15 pm.

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

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Mike Brown (Eastchurch Parish Council (PC)), Louise Switters and Geoff Partis (Leysdown PC), John Nurden (Minster-on-Sea PC) and Susannah Constant (Warden PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Michelle Anderson, Janet Dart, Rebecca Dart, Inger Lorraine and Emma Wiggins.

OFFICER PRESENT (Virtually): Andre Bowen.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Lee-Anne Moore.

Kent County Councillor Maxwell Harrison, Divisional Member for Sheppey.

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

319 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

320 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

321 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 213 – 228) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair a correct record.

322 CONSULTATION ON PUBLIC TOILETS

The Service Improvement & Project Manager gave a presentation on the Public Toilets facilities consultation.

He said that Swale Borough Council (SBC) currently operated 16 public toilet facilities across the borough and the Council were considering options which would help to reach a balanced budget position. The options included delivering all services in-house, outsourcing, closing all toilets, charging for use of SBC public

toilet facilities, transferring toilet facilities to Town or Parish Councils and some other appropriate local organisations or the community toilet scheme model.

SBC proposed a mix of the following options:

- Carrying out formal negotiations to transfer seven public toilet facilities to town or parish councils, or other appropriate local organisations;
- closure of three public toilets;
- introducing a community toilet scheme in areas affected by the closures; and
- continue to operate the remaining six toilet facilities outsourced.

At this stage SBC would like to hear the views of Swale residents, visitors, community groups and businesses and were carrying out a public consultation which closed on Friday 3 October 2025. The information gathered would be carefully considered by councillors before any final decisions were made. SBC were committed to ensuring that the voices of local communities were heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making.

The following comments were raised:

- Question 2 of the online consultation gave frequency of use options for Minster-on-Sea public toilet facilities, however, those toilets had been shut. This could skew the results of the consultation;
- the Isle of Sheppey was a tourist area and visitors did not want to hunt around to find toilet facilities;
- the message should be that everyone was welcome, including those with disabilities;
- the money should be found to keep as many toilet facilities open as possible;
- how were the costs of running the public toilet facilities calculated?;
- the 'Radar' key at Barton Point toilet facilities had not been working and the facilities had closed earlier than advertised;
- if a public toilet was closed, there should be more information about alternative facilities on the closure sign;
- when reporting problems with public toilets, no feedback on the issues raised was provided;
- how much weighting would the data obtained as part of the consultation process have on the final decision?; and
- the opening times should not be seasonal as people were increasingly visiting the Isle of Sheppey throughout the year.

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods and the Service Improvement & Project Manager responded to say that disability and community organisations had been consulted. The point about Minster-on-Sea public toilet being closed would be fed into the consultation, however, there was pre-closure data available. The Isle of Sheppey had the highest investment in new toilet facilities in Swale. The challenge was that there were some toilets that were not in good condition and the consultation was looking at options for them. No decision had been made and the document was an options appraisal. The maintenance of public toilets was contracted out, those costs were used when putting the proposal together. The data would be given equal weighting and would be addressed in the final report.

323 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

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

Beachfields Regeneration – works to reconfigure the internal layouts were progressing well. Piling and foundation works for the new extension were taking shape. The adventure golf had far exceeded expectations, welcoming over 4,300 visitors since opening *(post meeting note – this figure had risen to 6,261 at the time of drafting the minutes*).

Sheppey College – works to make the building weather tight continued. Contractors had broken through to connect the new and existing buildings. Works were expected to be completed in the winter of 2025.

Masters House – a milestone event was held in August 2025. The garage roofs had been removed and structural works to existing foundations were ongoing.

Communications and engagement – work with local secondary schools continued. Conversations with community focused services to reach hard to engage groups was ongoing. Social Value commitments were being developed that would benefit a broader demographic.

The following comments were made:

- Pleased to see the improvement and expansion of Sheppey College;
- a careers event was taking place in Sheerness on 13 November 2025;
- a heritage trail was taking place during the October 2025 half-term holidays;
- the project was beneficial to the economy and young people;
- as there were areas of deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey, would some community groups be able to access the adventure golf at a lower rate?;
- was there any potential to reinstate the skatepark?; and
- when would something be done to provide new facilities, such as a doctor's surgery, at the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey?

The Kent County Council (KCC) Divisional Member for Sheppey, Maxwell Harrison, said that the KCC Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, Paul King, was visiting the Isle of Sheppey on 8 October 2025 and some of the issues could be raised with him.

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods and the Capital Projects Manager said that the Sheerness Revival Project was phase 1 and hopefully it would lever in more funding in the future. There were already some concessions in place for the adventure golf. The old skatepark was not fit for purpose and there were no plans to reinstate it. There was going to be a multi-use games area (MUGA) which young people could use freely. It was hoped to engage young people in apprenticeship schemes and work experience with plans to also hold a business forum.

324 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP) - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Active Travel Co-ordinator gave a presentation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) public consultation.

She said that LCWIPs were evidence-led, long-term plans to identify cycling, walking and wheeling improvements. In recent years there had been a growing interest in walking, cycling and wheeling and as a result there was increased emphasis on the importance of high-quality infrastructure. By developing a Swale-wide LCWIP, it would be possible to take a network-based approach to planning and delivering this infrastructure.

There were many benefits to active travel which included improved physical and mental health and environmental and air quality benefits.

Swale already had one agreed LCWIP in place, in Faversham, led by Faversham Town Council. The current open LCWIP public consultation referred to the Faversham LCWIP but largely concentrated on the Isle of Sheppey towns and Sittingbourne. Using data, evidence, and stakeholder engagement, the Swale LCWIP had identified an aspirational high-level network of future walking, wheeling, and cycling corridors across the borough.

A public consultation was launched on 1 September 2025 and would close on 26 October 2025. Anyone could respond via the online link https://swale.gov.uk/consultations. Maps could be viewed and comments and/or photographs could be added to map pins. Paper copies were available at the three hubs across the borough: Swale House reception (Sittingbourne), The Gateway (Sheerness) and Faversham Town Council (Faversham).

All feedback would be reviewed and a final report would be drafted for councillors to consider.

The following comments were raised:

- The maps were small and responding to the consultation was difficult using a smart phone;
- cycle paths should not go near roads;
- could hard copies of the consultation be made available to collect in the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey?;
- dropped curbs should be installed in places to improve disabled access;
- it was not possible to access the sea wall on a mobility scooter;
- it was essential that the eastern end was linked to the rest of the Isle of Sheppey;
- the public needed to get behind the Greenway Project;
- would the number of responses to the consultation affect the outcome?; and
- the speed limit on the Lower Road needed to be lowered.

The Active Travel Co-ordinator said that she would deliver hard copies of the consultation to parish councils if they would like to provide her with contact details. The next stage would be to look at design and issues such as dropped curbs so examples of where they were needed would be helpful. The LCWIP could be used

in the future, for example, with town planning. The number of responses to the consultation would be taken into account but specific feedback was most useful. Issues such as speed limits could be addressed in local Highway Improvement Plans.

325 PUBLIC FORUM

Highway Improvement Plans - the KCC Divisional Member for Sheppey agreed to arrange a session with the KCC Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, and SBC councillors and parish/town councillors on the Isle of Sheppey, to discuss highway matters.

Eastchurch GP surgery – a member of the public said that residents had been advised they would be losing the General Practitioners (GP) surgery at Eastchurch, they would need to attend Leysdown surgery instead where there were already delays in getting appointments. Councillor Tom Nundy said that infrastructure, such as health and education, were reducing on the Isle of Sheppey but the Government were continuing to impose additional house building. He suggested that a representative from the National Health Service (NHS) be invited to a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting. Councillor Dolley Wooster said that there were two housing developments where land had been set aside for health services, there was funding for it but so far it had not been spent by the NHS. Councillors said that the NHS should be held accountable.

Congestion on roads – Councillor Peter MacDonald said that there had again been chaos on the A2500 road between Cowstead Corner and Barton Hill Drive. He said a second carriageway was essential to accommodate the amount of traffic. It was agreed that KCC Councillor Maxwell Harrison and Councillor MacDonald would discuss the matter further after the meeting.

Resolved:

1) That a representative from the National Health Service be invited to a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting to respond to concerns about the lack of health services on the Isle of Sheppey.

326 ISLE OF SHEPPEY GROWTH BOARD

Councillor Mike Whiting said that SBC's last Economic Development Plan ran out in 2023, and it no longer had an Economic Development team.

There were no plans to spend any money on the economic development of the Isle of Sheppey. He said that as a result, there was nothing planned to improve the prospects for economic growth on the Isle of Sheppey.

The Thames Estuary Growth Board (TEGB) was set up by the Government and was charged with promoting growth across the whole of the estuary, but did not focus on the Isle of Sheppey.

Councillor Whiting said that the TEGB Chair was supportive of an Isle of Sheppey Growth Board being created, with the specific aim of promoting and delivering growth on the Island. He had discussed this proposal with the SBC Leader and Chief Executive.

The ask of SBC was for funding to get the Island Board up and running. SBC could not spend money without it going through the relevant service committee. The cost of getting the Growth Board expertise, together with their contacts in central government and the investor markets, would be £25,000 per year for two years.

Councillor Whiting said that with nothing else on the table for Sheppey from SBC or KCC, this independent body represented exceptional value for money. SBC and KCC ceased to exist by 2028, but the Growth Board, once established, could carry on, providing continuity for the Island.

Councillor Whiting proposed that the Sheppey Area Committee referred the proposal to set up a Sheppey Growth Board to the Economy and Property Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Peter MacDonald and on being put to the vote was agreed.

Resolved:

1) That the Sheppey Area Committee referred the proposal to set up a Sheppey Growth Board to the Economy and Property Committee.

327 SWALE BUS FORUM UPDATE

The Minutes of the last Local Bus Forum were noted.

Councillor Dolley Wooster said that Chalkwell Buses had pulled out of two major routes but in the past Chalkwell had done a lot for the Isle of Sheppey, stepping in when Arriva stopped their services on the Isle of Sheppey.

The KCC Divisional Member for Sheppey said that he had written to the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to ask how much of the funding allocated by Government was going to the Isle of Sheppey. He said that he would feedback to the Sheppey Area Committee when he received a response.

Councillor Wooster said she would be happy to take any issues to the Swale Local Bus Forum.

328 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

329 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Warden Bay drains – A representative from Warden Bay Parish Council said that the drains had still not been cleared and it was a health and safety hazard. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods said that SBC officers were working on getting the issue resolved.

330 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

That the Sheppey Area Committee referred the proposal to set up a Sheppey Growth Board to the Economy and Property Committee.

Chair

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