



AGENDA

COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 5 October 2021

Time: 7.00 pm

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

Membership:

Councillors Cameron Beart, Roger Clark, Mike Dendor, Simon Fowle, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, James Hunt, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald, Paul Stephen, Eddie Thomas, Ghlin Whelan, Tony Winckless (Vice-Chairman) and Corrie Woodford (Chairman).

Quorum = 3

RECORDING NOTICE

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Therefore by attending the meeting and speaking at Committee you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of those sound recordings for training purposes.

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Pages

Information about this meeting

*Members of the press and public may follow the proceedings of this meeting live via a weblink which will be published on the Swale Borough Council website.

Link to meeting: to be added

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1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Chairman will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures.

The Chairman will inform the meeting whether there is a planned evacuation drill due to take place, what the alarm sounds like (i.e. ringing bells), where the closest emergency exit route is, and where the second closest emergency exit route is, in the event that the closest exit or route is blocked.

The Chairman will inform the meeting that:

(a) in the event of the alarm sounding, everybody must leave the building via the nearest safe available exit and gather at the Assembly points at the far side of the Car Park. Nobody must leave the assembly point until everybody can be accounted for and nobody must return to the building until the Chairman has informed them that it is safe to do so; and

(b) the lifts must not be used in the event of an evacuation.

Any officers present at the meeting will aid with the evacuation.

It is important that the Chairman is informed of any person attending who is disabled or unable to use the stairs, so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Confirmation of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

To confirm the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2021/2022.

3. Apologies for Absence

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 6 July 2021 (Minute Nos. 133 – 139).

5. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary Interests (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the meeting while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

6. Verbal Updates from Cabinet

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|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 7. Covid-19 Memorial Garden Project | 5 - 6 |
| 8. Swale Volunteer Awards | 7 - 8 |
| 9. Parking Services | 9 - 12 |

Issued on Monday, 27 September 2021

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 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Cabinet, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

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

BACKGROUND

The coronavirus pandemic has claimed tens of thousands of lives across England with over 450 those being Swale residents; not to mention the dramatic and life-changing impact on people's livelihoods, family lives and mental wellbeing. It is proposed that the residents of Swale should have area set aside and designated as a place to remember loved ones and provide somewhere to reflect on the pandemic and the impact on all our lives. It is intended that a place be created where generations to come can take refuge from their daily lives and reflect. It also provides a focus on creating public outdoor space at a time when the importance of having access to gardens and outdoor space has been so vastly recognised as a core factor in maintaining good mental and physical health.

Memorial gardens have traditionally been created to remember the victims of conflict or terrorism attacks, but their background does have relevance to the current pandemic. According to a report by Historic England, memorial parks and gardens really took off after World War One when the scale of loss and the views of returning soldiers led to memorials that considered the needs of the living – rather than monuments that focus on the dead.

PROPOSAL

The initial proposal is for each of the three main areas within Swale to be provided with support and funding to create a memorial to remember those who have lost their lives, pay tribute to the amazing work our key workers and create a space for all residents to reflect on the experience of the pandemic.

It is not proposed for the names of those who lost their lives from Swale to be featured in the gardens as it is recognised that the deaths are continuing and due to the nature of how Covid-19 deaths are recorded, this could lead to some upset experienced by family members of those who feel their loved one's death may have been wrongly recorded.

The council would maintain any sites developed as part of the ongoing maintenance of the parks and open spaces, with volunteer support also welcomed where capacity and interest exists.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

As well as general feedback on the proposal, specific feedback is requested on the following areas:

- How should this be funded?
- Which Cabinet Portfolio/Cabinet Committee should lead on this?
- Should a Time Capsule of the pandemic be installed?
- Do you have any suggestions on the location of the memorial garden(s)?
- Is having one in each of the three main areas within Swale the right approach or should there be one larger garden to cover the whole of Swale?

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BACKGROUND

The Volunteer Swale Awards were launched in 2014, as a way of recognising and celebrating local volunteering champions, alongside the opportunity to raise awareness of volunteering and the benefits of 'getting involved'. The last 18 months has had many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, however the show of solidarity exhibited through volunteering has not only been heart-warming, but crucial to ensuring that the most vulnerable within our communities felt supported. It is therefore more important than ever, that we demonstrate our gratitude to those who give their time to help others, campaign for the causes that matter and provide opportunities that otherwise would not have been available. However, recent discussions between Members have led to the idea of moving away from the celebration dinner and awards presentation delivered in previous years and towards something that encompasses not only the celebratory and recognition aspect, but also an opportunity for volunteer recruitment and for would be volunteers to find out about the opportunities available to them.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to run a daytime networking and awards event. The event will be open to the public and will provide a networking and exhibition opportunity, smaller topic specific hosted breakout sessions plus an award ceremony. The first part of the day gives local voluntary and community sector organisations an opportunity to showcase their work and recruit volunteers to help them deliver their projects and aspirations moving forward. This also provides an opportunity for residents to find out about what volunteering options are available to them whether they're a seasoned volunteer looking for their next project, or someone brand new to wanting to volunteer looking for their first experience. The hosted breakout sessions will cover topics including 'How to become a volunteer' and 'How to apply for funding'.

The awards part of the day will be opened by Mr Paul Auston, Link Deputy Lieutenant for Swale and will recognise the contributions and efforts of local organisations and individuals contributing to volunteering in Swale across a range of categories. Nominations for the awards will be open to all between October and December with the judging panel reviewing all submissions in January 2022. It is proposed that there will be one **Community Inspiration Award** that will be chosen from all the nominations made.

It is proposed for the event to run from 12:00 to 16:30 on the 26 March 2022 at The Millennium Hall, Fulston Manor. The networking and exhibition part will run for the first 2.5 hours and the awards ceremony will start at 14:30.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

As well as general feedback on the proposal for the day and if there are any areas we haven't covered or should have included, specific feedback is requested on the following areas:

1. What do you think the event should be called? Some suggestions are detailed below:
 - Swale Volunteer Networking and Awards
 - Volunteer Swale Conference and Awards
 - Volunteer Swale Awards Conference
 - Volunteer Swale Exhibition and Awards
 - Volunteer Swale Awards Exhibition
 - Volunteer Swale Awards Show
 - Volunteer Swale Summit and Awards
2. What breakout session topics do you feel would best benefit the VCS Sector and those interested in volunteering?
3. Below are the current proposed award categories. Do you feel these are appropriate and sufficient? that have been discussed, please can you advise if you feel they are suitable:

- Volunteering contribution to supporting Older People (55+)
- Volunteering contribution to supporting Young People (18 and under)
- Volunteering contribution to Sport
- Volunteering contribution to Community Safety
- Volunteering contribution to the Environment
- Volunteering contribution to Heritage and Culture
- Volunteering contribution to Wellbeing
- Young Volunteer Award (18 and under)
- Fundraising Award (focusing on the method used rather than the amount raised)
- Covid-19 Volunteering Award (focusing on support to Swale communities)

Community, Economic Growth and Property Committee:

Car Parking Services and Pay Machine replacement

Background

Swale Borough Council is responsible for 38 car parks across the Borough made up of free to use and paid for services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of the Town Centre, impacting both leisure visits to Town Centres (due to public lockdowns and increases in online services) as well as a decreasing commuting due to teleworking / remote working, subsequently changing how people use car parks. This translated to a financial downturn in financial year (2019-20); the Council received £1,888,312.92 of income from pay and display machines against a projected budget of £2,026,970. In 2020-21 this was further compounded with figures of £734,964 against a budget of £2,001,940.

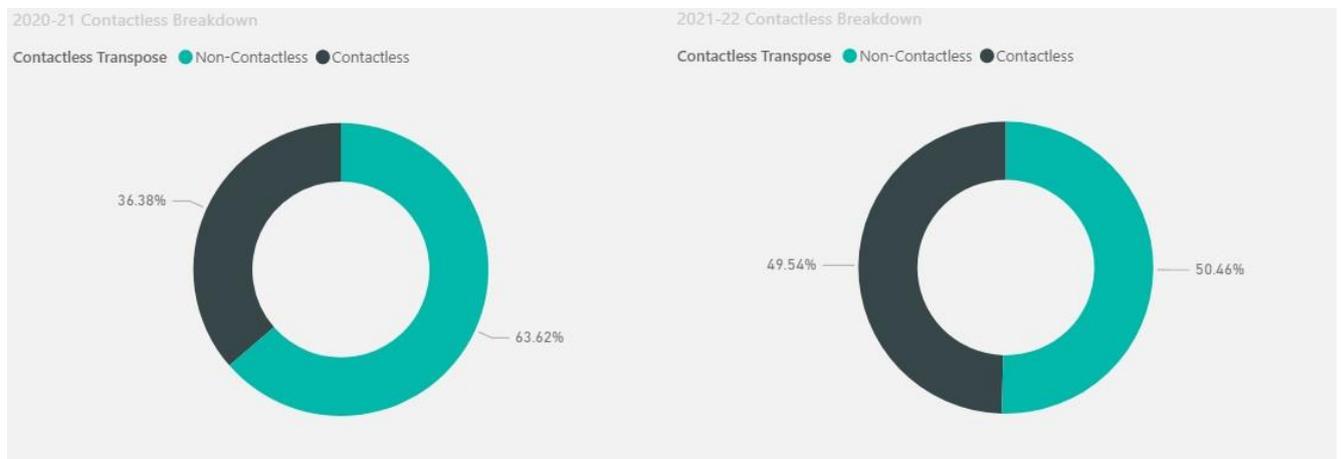
The recovery has started this year. As you can see from the graph below (*Graph 1*), the number of transactions is steadily increasing but has yet to reach pre-pandemic levels.



Graph 1

We currently offer three core payment options within these car parks: cash, card/contactless (being trialled on six units) and Cashless Parking (RingGo). There are 40 pay and display machines, 34 of these units only take cash. RingGo is used across every paid location.

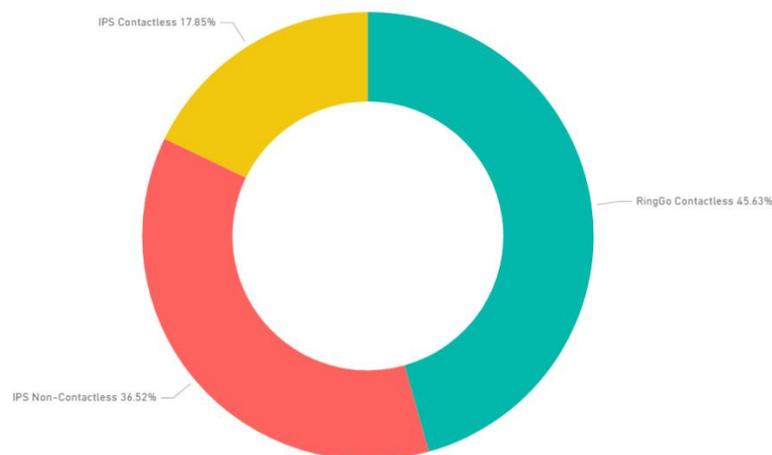
Transaction data over the past two years has identified a consistent growth in the use of cashless payments (*Graph 2*), this is without any large marketing campaigns and without any large rollout of new services. The majority of growth is natural growth caused by the RingGo service, with a small boost after the first pay units accepting contactless payments went live.



Graph 2

Trialling Pay and Display Machines

In Central Car Park where we have the larger body of data for our trial units which allow both cash and cashless payment options, the data has shown that the cashless option on the pay unit has been popular, accounting for 17.85% of total transactions in Central Car Park (*Graph 3*).



Graph 3

In addition to the three trial units supplied by IPS in Central Car Park, we have an additional three trial units supplied by Metric in Central Avenue and Albany Road car

parkers to allow us to compare the user experience between both suppliers so we can bring a more informed offer to market should we choose to replace our existing units.

One of the most impressive features when it comes to the popularity of cashless services in Swale, is that the huge levels of growth we have seen are natural and consumer led, and not a result of any extensive marketing campaign by the Council. It's fair to say that this shift to cashless then is being led by consumers and not by the Council. The Bourne Place MSCP already offers this option and cashless payments make up approx. 80% of transactions.

The proposal to replace our existing units for pay units which accept card/contactless/smartphone payments as well as cash would offer the following benefits:

- Reduction in unit faults
- Improved customer experience
- Staff time savings
- Cost savings for replacement parts
- Reduced reliance on cash collection services
- Cost savings for cash collection services

[Pay and Display Machine replacement](#)

We are embarking on a replacement of all machines in the Borough over the next two years. This proposal will generate a number of changes to the service which should have a positive impact on overall service performance.

[Solar vs Mains Power](#)

All current pay units are solar powered, and whilst this has been a positive scheme for environmental goals, it has caused some operational issues, particularly in winter months when the units (especially those in shade) do not receive enough sunlight and require our operations team to drive across the borough swapping machine batteries (effectively nullifying the impact of the solar panels).

By switching half of our units to mains powered units, we will still be able to maintain a lower reliance on the grid, whilst having a more stable option for customers should there be a fault with a solar only unit.

[Improved Resilience](#)

By converting to units utilising cash/contactless payments, we are also reducing the wear and tear on the mechanical components required for cash transaction.

Over time, this will improve the customer experience as there will be less unit downtime and have a net positive impact on the cost of maintaining machines due to a lower turnover of replacement parts.

Improved Accessibility

By broadening the number of payment options available to the public we create a far more accessible service. Customers wishing to pay using a pay unit will be able to pay by cash or using card/contactless if they do not have the correct change on them which will reduce customer frustration.

Additionally, RingGo remains an accessible option for customers with visual impairment and people without English as their first language, due to the phone-in audio payment options and the variety of languages available to the end user.

As each of these has a simple user experience, rather than creating a confusing experience, we have streamlined the ease of use, whilst keeping the variety for the customer.

Environmental Impact

Finally, by introducing card/contactless payments and reducing the chance of machine faults, we also reduce the number of times that second and third-line maintenance (our operations team and our supplier) will need to attend the machines.

This leads to a reduction in mileage for both our operations team and our suppliers, which in turn will reduce harmful emissions. Whilst they utilise an EV which already removes several harmful emissions, further reducing mileage will reduce other air pollutants such as VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds).

Additionally, for our suppliers who don't necessarily utilise EVs yet, the reduction in mileage will lead to significant reductions in CO2 annually.

Questions for committee

1. We are undertaking a review of fees and charges in order to try and recover the income we receive from car parking that helps to support other Council services. What alternative charges would members feel would be appropriate?
2. Electric vehicles form a small part of our total transactions, but this is a steep growth area. Should we charge a parking and electricity fee, electricity only fee or a parking only fee?
3. Pay and display replacement – what are your views on the benefits of alternative payment options?