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## Community Committee

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 6 March 2024 from 7.00 pm - 9.20 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Shelley Cheesman, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Mark Last, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Claire Martin), Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Richard Palmer (Chair), Hannah Perkin, Ashley Shiel, Terry Thompson, Mike Whiting (Substitute for Councillor Lee-Anne Moore), Tony Winckless and Dolley Wooster (Substitute for Councillor Karen Watson).

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Steph Curtis, Janet Dart, Jay Jenkins, Sarah-Jane Radley, Philip Sutcliffe and Emma Wiggins.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY):** Councillors Hayden Brawn and Angela Harrison.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Claire Martin, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal and Karen Watson.

### 735 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 736 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2024 (Minute Nos. 543 – 549) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 737 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Peter MacDonald declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to item 8 (Playing Pitch Strategy) as he had shares in the Sheerness Bowls Club.

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to item 7 (Built Facility Strategy) and item 8 as she was a trustee of the Oasis Academy.

Councillor Elliott Jayes declared a non-pecuniary interest with respect to Item 7 and 8 as he was a director and trustee of the Isle of Sheppey Community Hub at Oasis Academy.

### 738 **Draft Parking Policy**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which included comments made on the draft Parking Policy from the public consultation and the final version of the Parking Policy.

Two local residents spoke on behalf of the residents of Queenborough about the proposed parking charges on the Isle of Sheppey.

Councillor Tom Nundy proposed the following amendment:

*“Remove the charges proposed at the little oyster (Minster) park road and the library (Queenborough) This income would be replaced with:*

- 24k saved by not purchasing 3 parking machines.
- Charging at Swale House during week days and evening as we only charge at weekends currently.
- Charge for Motorhomes on the Shingle Bank and Shellness Road. Ideally there would be chargeable space at Barton's point as it has most the facilities.
- Charge from coach parking at the new coach parking facility agreed to be installed opposite the shingle bank by the community committee on 1st March 2023.
- Use the money that could be saved from connecting Barton's point to mains drainage and now not having to pay to empty the cesspit to fund this shortfall.
- Use any income from Barton's point this year to fund the shortfall".

This was seconded by Councillor Elliott Jayes who said that it was clear by the number of residents who had attended the meeting how important it was for the car parks in certain communities to remain free of charge.

The Chair invited Members to comment on the amendment, and comments included:

- Residents should not have to pay in order to carry out physical exercise;
- it was not right that volunteers had to pay to help local community centres and projects;
- considered how much it would cost the council if car parking was free and how that would affect the recently agreed budget;
- volunteers and residents had to pay for parking in Faversham Town centre and it would not be fair if it was not the same across the whole borough;
- if one area had free car parking then all the areas with volunteer groups and leisure facilities should have free car parking;
- it was important to listen to residents' concerns;
- the consultation posters placed in Queenborough and surrounding areas were not accurate;
- could officers explore the option of transferring car parking assets to the Parish or Town Councils so they would be held responsible for the up-keep of the car parks?;
- there were many heritage sites that provided key economic growth on the Isle of Sheppey so it was important people were not charged extra to visit those sites;
- the £38k income generated by charging for parking in these small areas could be covered elsewhere in the borough;
- would have liked to have seen a feasibility study in the report;
- noted that 23% of car parking spaces were free in Sheppey, 1% in Sittingbourne and 10% in Faversham;
- removing car parking charges would affect the budget in the future, not just the current budget;
- needed to consider the Council's climate change pledge and whether not charging for car parks was encouraging the use of cars; and
- most of the car parks on the Isle of Sheppey were often empty so was difficult to estimate the revenue income of the car parks if people had to pay.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to points raised and explained that parking machines were funded on a one-off basis from ringfenced funds that came from fixed penalty notices and resident parking permits and therefore could not be classed as a saving. The Parking Policy working group had reviewed a lot of data over the last year and had put forward these recommendations.

Councillor Mike Whiting proposed a recorded vote be taken for the amendment and this was seconded by the Chair.

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors Cheesman, Jayes, Last, MacDonald, Marchington, Noe, Nundy, Shiel, Whiting, Winckless and Wooster. Total equals 11.**

**Against: Councillors B J Martin, R Palmer and Perkin: Total equals 3.**

**Abstain: Total equals 0.**

The Chair announced that the amendment had been carried.

The Chair invited Members to make comments on recommendations (1) to (3) of the report. After a short discussion the recommendations were agreed.

The Chair invited Members to make comments on recommendation (4), which included:

- It was unfair to charge residents in the evenings when it was difficult to feed families during a cost-of-living crisis;
- needed to know the full impact charging for parking in the evenings had on local businesses;
- what would happen if the recommendation did not go through?;
- welcomed the good work that the Cross Party Parking Working Group had carried out and hoped to see more of their good work come forward to the committee;
- this was a necessary revenue income for the Council's budget;
- if no one used the car parks in the evenings due to the new charges would this be reviewed and brought back to the committee to consider future charges?;
- the change of evening time parking tariffs would be a cost saving as the Council would no longer need to have enforcement officers in car parks late at night; and
- the working group needed to consider possible overflows that charging in car parks would create in roads that were not suitable for additional cars.

On being put to the vote recommendation (4) was agreed.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the responses to the draft Parking Policy public consultation be noted.**

**(2) That the Parking Policy Member Working Group's recommendations to the draft parking policy be agreed.**

**(3) That the draft parking policy be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee for adoption.**

**(4) That the time period for car parking tariffs to be charged would be 7 am to 10 pm with no charge between 10 pm and 7 am.**

**(5) That the three car parks set out in paragraph 2.14 of the report remained free to use as agreed in the amendment.**

### 739 **Household Support Fund update**

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report and provided an update to Members following the Chancellors recent budget announcement that the Household Support Fund (HSF) had been extended by six months. She asked Members to note the progress made with the HSF and that officers could bring a future report to the committee once it was clear what the Government's plans were with the HSF after the six month extension.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Congratulations to the team on the good work they had carried out up to this point, but thought it was best to plan now rather than wait for the six month extension;
- the HSF had a positive impact on Swale residents;
- the HSF covered cracks in a flawed system and hoped the government did the right thing in six months;
- could officers work with other housing partners to help deliver similar packages to residents?; and
- thought it was a fantastic scheme that Swale officers delivered well.

The Community & Partnerships Manager responded to points raised and said that officers had already started talking to other housing partners in the local area to explore options if the HSF ended after the six month extension. She added that her team were looking at broadening their approach and learning from others to understand how they could best deliver the scheme.

#### **Resolved:**

**(1) That the Household Support Fund report be noted.**

### 740 **Built Facility Strategy (BFS)**

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report setting out the new Built Facilities Strategy which was to run for a similar period as the Local Plan. He added that the strategy had a focus on the built sports infrastructure in the borough and was complemented by a separate Planning Pitch Strategy.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- It was important that officers made sure all sporting facilities were met the equality and diversity regulations of sporting organisations;

- the swimming pool in Sheerness was very old and a new facility was needed; and
- developers needed constant pressure to provide contributions so officers could develop better facilities for new residents.

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager responded to say that the team were continually working with Sport England and the relevant National Governing Body to ensure the borough's sporting facilities were up to the correct standard.

The Head of Environment and Leisure added that the strategy was to provide evidence for the Local Plan so that planning officers could ask developers to contribute the correct amount towards sporting facilities in the borough. He hoped that it would provide evidence towards possible future grants that could help towards future projects such as a new swimming pool in Sheerness.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Built Facilities Strategy 2024 – 2038 as drafted in Appendix I in the report be adopted.**
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure, in consultation with the Chair of the Community Committee to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes.**

**741 Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)**

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager introduced the report which analysed the borough's sports pitches in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. He added that the strategy set out the Council's intended approach and priorities for ensuring there was sufficient provision to meet the current and future demand within the borough.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Developers should pay more towards sporting facilities;
- officers needed to think about the safeguarding of children and young adults especially the risks associated with trust;
- what would happen if schools took playing facilities away, would the Council struggle to find alternatives?;
- had concerns with the amount of sporting pitches that were rated 'poor';
- were officers in conversation with England Netball to improve the netball funding available to smaller clubs so that residents did not have to travel so far away to take part in the sport;
- over the last 15 years more volunteers were having to work Saturdays and extra hours which had led to a decrease in the number of clubs being able to operate and promote the sport in local areas; and
- organisations were constantly changing their rules around what type of facilities

were needed at sporting grounds which made it costly and difficult for local clubs.

The Leisure and Technical Services Manager responded to points raised and said that the strategy focussed on the provision of the sporting facilities, then it was down to individual clubs to operate under National Governing Body guidelines. New facilities considered safeguarding through the design process. He added that the pitches were graded against criteria set by Sport England and the borough had a variety of soil types, conditions and maintenance that all contributed to the quality of pitches across the borough.

With regards to the netball comment, the Leisure and Technical Services Manager said that there were a number of recommendations in the strategy that would be picked up with the different governing bodies of sport to help improve the provision of each of the sports within the borough and England Netball were part of the Swale playing pitch group.

The Head of Environment and Leisure commented on points raised and said that the key point of the document was that the Council relied on schools and other organisations to help improve the sport facilities in the borough, the Council could not do it on their own. He added that community use agreements were a method officers used during the planning process to help ensure the facilities were not taken away and this was a recommendation in the strategy.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Playing Pitch Strategy 2024 – 2038 as drafted in Appendix I in the report be adopted.**
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure in consultation with the Chair of the Community Committee to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes.**

742 **Forward Decisions Plan**

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.**

743 **Leisure Centre Options Report**

**Resolved:**

- (1) That option two for a 2-year extension of the existing leisure contract with Swale Community Leisure (SCL) and their operating agent Serco Leisure Ltd be agreed.**
- (2) That delegated authority is given to the Head of Environment and Leisure and the Head of Legal in consultation with the Chair of the Community Committee to finalise negotiations with Swale Community Leisure (SCL) and Serco and for the Head of Legal to negotiate, execute and complete the agreement(s), arising from the 2-year extension.**

**(3) That the future budget implications of the 2-year extension of the existing leisure contract with SCL and their operating agent Serco Leisure Ltd, be agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee so the contract could be signed.**

**(4) That the Leisure Options Member Working Group continued to meet to identify long term options from 31 March 2027.**

**744 Exclusion of Press and Public**

There was no need to consider Exclusion of the Press and Public as the confidential appendix was not discussed.

**745 Leisure Centre Options Report - Restricted Appendix**

This item was not discussed.

Chair

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