
Policy and Resources Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 20 March 2024 from 7.00 pm - 10.03 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chair), Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Tim Gibson (Chair), Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Mark Last, Rich Lehmann, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin (Substitute for Councillor Mike Henderson), Julien Speed, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Mike Whiting.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Steph Curtis, Janet Dart, Lisa Fillery, Robin Harris, Jay Jenkins and Jhilmil Kishore.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Joanne Johnson and Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Simon Clark, Carole Jackson, Tom Nundy, Mark Tucker and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGY: Councillor Mike Henderson.

776 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

777 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 31 January 2024 (Minute Nos. 579 – 583) and the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 February 2024 (Minute Nos. 594 – 615) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

778 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

779 **Annual RIPA Policy Update**

Resolved:

(1) That the Covert Surveillance and Access to Communications Data Policy and Guidance Notes for 2024/2025 be approved.

780 **Swale BC Street Trading Policy 2024 - 2027**

Resolved:

(1) That the Swale Street Trading Policy 2024 – 2027 be published and come into effect on 1 April 2024.

781 **Corporate Plan**

The Policy and Engagement Officer introduced the report which set out the final draft

version of the Corporate Plan and updated Members with an amendment which was agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2023, but had not been included in the consultation document which went out to the public. The wording had not been included at page 92 in the “Community – what we will do” section and the additional wording to be added was read out:

“To consult with our residents on ways of devolving power and giving communities a greater say in what happens in their locale potentially through the establishment of new Parish, Town and Community Councils but only with support of the majority of residents.”

The Chair invited Members to make comments, points raised included:

- Commented that the corporate plan needed to be understood by those at all levels, not just the senior management team;
- thought that going forward committee papers should have an extra box on how the report contributed to the corporate plan;
- concerned that the public did not see the full version of the corporate plan;
- members were not given enough time to fully consider the impact of the additional wording;
- concerned with ‘majority’ in the wording of the corporate plan as this was not always reflective of what the residents opinions actually were;
- having different versions of the same document online was not clear to residents on what was being agreed and it would not be good practice to agree to new wording without advance warning; and
- understood the new wording would bring flexibility to the residents and allow them to make their own decision about their community.

Councillor Mike Baldock proposed that the Corporate Plan for 2023 – 2027 be agreed, with the amendments set out in the report under paragraph 5.7, and to not include the extra amendment at page 92. This was seconded by Councillor Rich Lehmann and on being put to the vote agreed by Members.

Resolved:

(1) That the Corporate Plan be amended as set out in the report and presented at the next Full Council meeting for formal adoption.

782 Parking Policy

The Policy and Engagement Officer introduced the report which included the possible options to cover the £38k shortfall to cover the income lost from the parking recommendations agreed by the Community Committee on 6 March 2024.

The Chair invited members to make comments, which included:

- Congratulated the officers and working group for the good work they had done so far, but they still had plenty more work to do;
- Community Committee needed to decide how the shortfall would be covered;
- the budget had been agreed before the Community Committee recommendations did that decision make the budget unbalanced?;
- the Policy and Resources Committee were responsible for budget decisions so it was the responsibility of this Committee to cover the shortfall;

- the reserves should be used to cover the shortfall whilst officers worked with the Community Committee to come up with ways to cover the cost of the car parks for future years;
- could not see how using the reserves as a back-up option was correct as this would set a precedent for all service committees to use the reserves as a 'safety net';
- more information was needed around how the shortfall was going to be covered;
- parking income was always going up and down so £38k was not an accurate figure and was just an estimate;
- the public had some good alternatives for those car parks so officers needed to make sure they reached out to the local residents;
- it was not proper to have camper vans parked-up on sea defences and officers needed to protect sea defences on Isle of Sheppey; and
- could the Director of Resources clarify the position of the budget if the car parking charges in these locations were removed.

The Director of Resources responded to the point raised about the balanced budget and said that if reserves were used to cover the shortfall, then it should not affect the recently agreed budget for the next financial year. She added that the amount in reserves would be less in the next financial year.

The Director of Resources was hopeful that officers would be able to use the recommendations from the Community Committee to cover the costs of the shortfall and said that the reserves would be used as a last resort.

The Head of Environment and Leisure welcomed the work of the cross party parking policy working group and recognised that it could continue if Members wished it to. He would liaise with the Community Committee Chair on this.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Parking Policy at appendix I in the agenda pack be adopted.**
- (2) Noted the £38k shortfall in income following the Decision by the Community Committee not to implement pay and display charges at the Library, Queenborough and Park Road, Queenborough, and Little Oyster in Minster, Isle of Sheppey car parks.**
- (3) That officers work with members to address the £38k shortfall in revenue income in order to balance the budget for 2024-2025.**
- (4) That any balance that cannot be recovered in other ways be covered by using the Council's reserves.**

783 Faversham Town Conservation Area Review

The Senior Conservation & Design Officer (Projects) introduced the report which contained the updated appraisal and some boundary changes to the Faversham Town Conservation Area and the re-design of the conservation area under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

Members commented on the good work of the officers to get the area review completed and were pleased on the number and quality of responses that the officers had received.

Resolved:

- (1) That the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices be noted.***
- (2) That the changes to the review document proposed by officers in response to the representations received during the course of the public consultation be agreed.***

784 Forward Decisions Plan

Resolved:

- (1) That the forward decisions plan be noted.***

785 Recommendation from the Environment Committee held on 17 January 2024

Members made comments on the recommendation to move to paperless agendas and minutes, which included:

- Concerned this was placing extra pressure on Councillors that struggle to read online;
- an equality assessment needed to be considered;
- there should be a consideration for proper desk assessments to be undertaken in the council chamber if Members were being asked to view papers on an electronic screen;
- consideration to late reports coming to committee needed to be made;
- members should be reading agenda papers before the committee and not relying on spare copies being available at the meeting; and
- this was taking the right approach to tackling climate change, but officers needed to properly consider all the impacts it would have on Councillors.

Resolved:

- (1) That Minute No. 563 be noted.***

786 Recommendations from the Swale Joint Transportation Board meeting held on 4 March 2024

Resolved:

- (1) That Minute Nos. 717, 718 and 719 be approved.***

787 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A of the Act:

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

788 Leisure Centre Contract Extension

Resolved:

(1) That the budget impact of the 2-year Leisure contract extension be agreed and delegated authority be given to officers to carry out the necessary steps for final negotiations.

789 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 8.42 pm until 8.52 pm.

790 Suspension 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