
Environment and Climate Change Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 3 October 2024 from 7.02 pm - 7.35 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann (Chair), Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Julien Speed), Charlie Miller, Chris Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Angie Valls, Tony Winckless (Substitute for Councillor Ashley Shiel), Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster (Vice-Chair).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Martyn Cassell, Deborah Hardy and Kellie MacKenzie.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Janet Dart and Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Hayden Brawn and Elliott Jayes.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Roger Clark, Claire Martin, Pete Neal, Ashley Shiel and Julien Speed.

303 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

304 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2024 (Minute Nos. 92 – 97) were taken as read, agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

305 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

306 **Carbon Literacy Training**

The Chair reported that members of the Committee were invited to attend Carbon Literacy Training. The training would be split across two sessions, on the 9 December and 17 December 2024, and Members would need to attend both sessions to achieve the certification.

Post Meeting Note: The second session would now be held on 18 December 2024.

Democratic Services would provide a full itinerary of the sessions and formally offer places on the sessions in due course.

307 **Waste Scrutiny Review Progress - Verbal Update**

The Chair reported that the verbal update would be provided under Item 7 of the agenda (Swale Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review – deferral request) and considered first.

308 **Swale Waste and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review - deferral request**

The Chair introduced the report which provided a short update on the progress of the

Waste Scrutiny Panel set up to scrutinise the Waste and Street Cleansing Contract.

The Chair reported that the Waste Scrutiny Panel had met four times and had considered: resources and staff to deal with the changeover to the new contract effectively; the initial revised routes implemented by Suez and operational questions; the decisions made by the Council, before, during and after the tendering process and implementation of the contract. He said that the sessions had been very productive and informative, and the Panel had identified a number of recommendations and questions to ask representatives from Suez at one of the remaining sessions.

The Chair further reported that the Panel had raised concern that the remaining sessions due to be held week commencing 7 October 2024, would not allow sufficient time for a report to be produced with the level of care and attention it deserved. The Panel also noted that a considerable improvement in bin collections since the new routes were implemented in mid-September 2024, had helped to reduce the sense of urgency to publicly provide answers.

The Committee were asked to agree to moving the presentation and discussion of the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review report from the Extraordinary meeting arranged for 20 November 2024 to the scheduled meeting on 15 January 2025. The Chair explained that the extension would allow an additional panel session prior to their meeting with Suez in order that the questions put to them were as thorough and robust as possible. The questions would be shared with Suez in advance of the session to ensure that they came prepared.

The Chair thanked Members of the Panel for their dedication and thoughtful input. He said that he looked forward to continued work as they aimed to ensure the 'pain' of the last months was not repeated again in the borough.

The Chair invited comments from Members, which included:

- There had been improvements to the service but there were still delays in some wards, particularly in the rural areas;
- how were the missed brown bin collections processed?;
- agreed that the item should be deferred and that it was important that the review work be carried out properly;
- Ward Members did not receive an update on a Friday which made it difficult to communicate with residents if the work was in-hand;
- deferring the item would allow the Panel to review the public responses and the impact it had on residents lives; and
- deferring the item was necessary to allow a three-month baseline of the contract to be established and analysed.

In response, the Chair explained that with regard to missed brown bins work was ongoing, but if a brown bin was missed and reported that would not count as notification. If a brown bin was reported and still not collected within two weeks but reported again as missed, then the Council could look at extending their contract. He said that officers hoped to look at how many brown bin collections were missed and do a "blanket" reimbursement/contract extension.

The Head of Environment and Leisure advised that the Council offices were closed on

Friday afternoons which was why Friday updates to Ward Members were not provided. He added that he hoped that once the issues were resolved it would not be necessary to send Ward Members daily updates as the service was getting close to “business as usual”.

Councillor Carole Jackson proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Tony Winckless.

Resolved:

(1) That the Waste & Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review report timelines be extended and the report be presented and discussed at the Environment & Climate Change Committee Meeting on 15 January 2025 instead of the Extraordinary Meeting on 20 November 2024.

309 **Solar Panels - Swale House**

The Building operations and Maintenance Manager introduced the report which set out the investment to save business case for the installation of solar panels on Swale House, Sittingbourne. She drew attention to the cost benefit analysis set out at Appendix I of the report.

The Chair invited comments from Members, and points raised included:

- Fully supported the proposals which would demonstrate the Council’s aspirations to become more sustainable;
- the proposals would help the Council to gain finances whilst helping to achieve the council’s climate goals;
- thanked the officers for their hard work on the project; and
- the Council should explore provision of canopies over the Council’s car parks so that solar panels could be added to them.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said that solar panels over car parks was possible, but due to the initial construction required the pay back would be longer than five years.

In response to a question from a Member, the Building Operations and Maintenance Manager advised that if agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 16 October 2024 the project would then go out to tender.

The Chair proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Sarah Stephen.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Policy and Resources Committee allowed and delegated to the Director of Resources to use reserves up to £100,000 on an invest to save basis to provide solar panel coverage at Swale House with a payback of no longer than five years.**
- (2) That the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods be given delegated authority to prepare and award the contract for the delivery of solar panels on Swale House.**

310 Forward Decisions Plan

In response to a questions from a Member, the Head of Environment and Leisure explained that it was likely that the Open Spaces and Play Strategy and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan were likely to be considered at the March 2025 meeting. The Paperless Reports report was likely to be considered at the January 2025 meeting.

The Chair clarified, following a question from a Member, that paper agendas would be provided to any Member that requested them.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

Chair

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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