
Housing, Health and Communities Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 28 October 2025 from 7.00 pm - 10.10 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Vice-Chair), Peter MacDonald, Ben J Martin, Tom Nundy, Hannah Perkin (Chair), Carrie Pollard, Ashley Shiel (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Golding) and Karen Watson.

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Pete Neal.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Charlotte Hudson, Jay Jenkins, Kellie MacKenzie and Sarah-Jane Radley.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Rebecca Walker.

APOLOGY: Councillor Kieran Golding.

404 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

405 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 July 2025 (Minute Nos. 135 – 152) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

406 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Lloyd Bowen disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 11 (Swale Community Lottery Update), as he was Chair of Teynham Village Hall.

407 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

408 **Chairs Briefing**

The Chair provided an update on her work as Chair of the Committee. She had attended the Kent Health and Wellbeing Partnership where items considered included: an update on the NHS 10 Year Plan; and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2025 Report.

The Chair had also attended a meeting of the Kent Police and Crime Panel, which had included an update on the priorities of the Kent Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) and his work over the year. The Chair reported that of particular interest to Swale were the responses to the Safer Streets Initiative which had been positively received, and work to improve the safety of women and girls within Swale. The Chair had, on behalf of the Chair of the Swale Community Safety Partnership (CSP), asked if Kent Police were able to adequately resource the protests and counter protests which had been held recently in Kent. The Police confirmed that they were currently confident they could resource the protests. However, if they continued to be held as often as they currently were, then

they would have to monitor the situation further.

The Chair said she had forwarded the relevant documents from the above meetings to members of the Committee. If any Member had any questions on the documents they could email her directly.

The Chair reported that both she and the Mayor of Swale had attended the Swale Dementia Alliance 'Ask the Experts Event'. She had also attended two training events, one provided by 'Communities Together' on 'Community Resilience' in respect of dementia. Communities Together were keen to provide the training to Parish/Town Councils, and the Chair asked Members to contact her for further details if they had Parish/Town Councils within their Wards. The other training event was about Carbon Literacy.

409 **Community Safety Partnership Chair Update**

The Council's representatives on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) meeting gave a verbal update on the Partnerships last meeting. It had been a good meeting and items discussed included:

- The Draft Community Cohesion Draft Action Plan which it was hoped could assist the Council's staff and partner agencies particularly in light of the anti-immigration protests and concerns around disinformation;
- the White Ribbon International Day of Action to end men's violence against women and girls was on 25 November 2025. Swale Borough Council (SBC) were hosting a Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Conference at the Alexander Centre, Faversham on 20 November 2025. Representatives attending the event included: the relevant SBC officers; Kent Police; Kent Fire and Rescue; the Prison Service; and the Probation Service. The event was about sharing best practice to protect women, girls and victims of domestic abuse across Swale;
- a new Law which would require that details of any molestation orders issued would be sent automatically to Kent Police, this was welcomed by SATEDA;
- discussions about the CSP's work with Sports Connect on the Isle of Sheppey which had helped keep crime at a reasonable level. There had been a substantial increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB), and often residents did not report this as their perception might be that the Police would not do anything about it. The Police could not prosecute if there was no evidence;
- there needed to be more communication between SATEDA and Kent Police to ensure that the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Surgeries were held in the most appropriate location; and
- concerns raised about the narrative from Kent County Council (KCC) about the nationality and ethnicity of perpetrators of domestic abuse which was unhelpful as it was a 'home-grown' problem;
- welcomed that Southern Housing (SH) were seeking to address ASB at their properties; and
- highlighted with PREVENT the work carried out with young people during the asylum protests and counter protests in Faversham.

The Chair invited comments from Members, and these included:

- Had recently attended an Amnesty International campaign which highlighted concerns about the rise of the far right. They were looking at possible venues and agreed to forward contact information to the CSP representative;
- The Police were often their own worst enemy in terms of PR, and had not always been transparent. ASB used to be considered as low level crime and if people had a bad experience with the police not responding they dealt with the issue themselves;
- the Police non-emergency 101 helpline needed to be better publicised; and
- 91% of sexual assaults were from somebody known to the victim.

The Chair encouraged Members to read the PCC's report which highlighted lots of changes the Police had made to reduce crime. She spoke about the dangers of miss-information and that Members should be aware of this.

Resolved:

(1) That the verbal update be noted.

410 Questions for the Police and Crime Panel

The following suggestions were put forward:

- Did the PCC consider the reported evidence of reductions in the various aspects of crime were factually accurate or whether there was an element of public perception built into that and complacency?;
- what were the Police going to do to ensure the people of Kent felt confident in reporting something to them so that residents felt safe?; and
- could we have an update on the roll-out of the neighbourhood policing model, and why there had been a failure in providing a dedicated officer to each ward and what were the Police going to do about this.

The Chair thanks Members for their suggestions, and advised them to forward draft question to the Committee for their approval.

411 Dementia Update

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report as set out in the agenda pack. The report provided an update on the progress of the work to raise awareness and understanding of dementia within Swale.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- Had attended the Dementia event and virtual tour on 6 October 2025 and encouraged others to attend if they had the opportunity as it was well worth it;
- as the Council's representative on 'Pathfinders', aware that the Council needed to be more dementia friendly and have more discussions with groups such as Pathfinders;
- there should be more information about events such as the Dementia event in the Members' Room, Swale House; and
- important to consider the impact of dementia on the wider family.

In response, the Chair referred to support groups such as The Swale Action Alliance and a charity 'No Place Like Home', which supported families living with someone who had dementia. Kent County Council (KCC) Social Services also offered respite events. The Chair spoke about the important role Members had to ensure that families were signposted to such support groups.

The Council's representative on Pathfinders agreed to forward details of her discussions with them to the Committee following their next meeting.

A Member asked whether SBC could ensure that any direct debit payments were set-up in such a way that people could nominate 'an appropriate adult', in the event that they were diagnosed with dementia. The Head of Housing and Communities agreed to look into whether this would be possible and report back to Members.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the suggested activities in the report be agreed.

412 Loneliness Project Update

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report, which provided an update on the progress of the Swale Loneliness Project. The project aimed to raise awareness and tackle the significant negative consequences loneliness could have on an individual's health and wellbeing.

The Chair invited comments from Members, and these included:

- This was a 'vanity' project;
- what difference had the £40,000 spend of the project made to the residents of Swale, given that the private sector had carried out very good work about loneliness and the impact it had;
- considered this was a lot of money spent when independent projects had already been set-up;
- referred to the 'natural' groups set-up across Swale, such as Heather House, Sittingbourne and the great work they did to combat loneliness;
- not convinced that the natural groups set-up to combat loneliness would have responded to the consultation;
- concerned that it might not be a good use of public money and would rather that the organisations and groups experienced to deliver reports on loneliness and then inform the Council on their findings;
- the two aspects of digital loneliness: not having digital access; and only having digital access, i.e. no face-to-face contact;
- the Council could publish a list of the events that Parish/Town Councils and village halls held to combat loneliness in their areas;
- considered that £40,000 for a Borough Council was a 'drop in the ocean';
- referred to the Council's priorities, and the importance of protecting vulnerable people;
- anybody could be affected by loneliness;
- if the Council relied only on charities to address loneliness there was a danger that residents might 'slip through the net';

- the Council should be ensuring it was the leading force in addressing loneliness in Swale going into the Local Government Review (LGR);
- legacy of the project was very important;
- the Council must not step away from its partners, or adopt the “it is not our job we should not be doing it” attitude, otherwise it increased the risk of residents slipping through the net; and
- was the work proposed ‘doable’ within the five month time period?

In response, the Community & Partnerships Manager stated that the data had been collected by: postcode; age; and various partner groups. She stated that the project linked together with other aspects of the Council’s work such as health inequalities. Mapping of what services events were available across Swale would all be included within the final report. Officers were confident the work could be delivered within the timeframe.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

413 Swale Community Lottery Update

The Community & Partnerships Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the launch and progress of the Swale Community Lottery and future plans for growth of the scheme. She reported that there had been a positive response from charities and good causes and since publishing the report over 50 good causes were now registered and officers would continue to promote the scheme.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- A lot of work had gone into setting up the scheme with apparent little return;
- could the money have been better spent elsewhere?;
- officers and Members needed to explore why the public were not engaged with the lottery and how tickets sales could be increased;
- there were many charities that had signed-up but were not receiving any money from this lottery;
- the levels of money were so small that did not consider it was helping anybody;
- the Council should have ‘capped’ the lottery for the first year to a certain amount of charities just to get it rolling;
- could the list of charities that had signed-up for the lottery be circulated to all Members to assist with signposting etc.;
- the Communication’s Team could send a poster out to all the charities involved detailing the community lottery with a QR code for people to get involved;
- how much money was the Council out of pocket from this project?;
- could learn from the Faversham Town Council Community Lottery which worked;
- from a business point of view did not think it was worthwhile;
- there was a typographical error on the Appendix I, List of current Good Causes registered, Sheppey FM 92.2 were on the list twice;
- the issue currently was there were not enough tickets sold;
- the Council had no power over which good causes residents wished to support;
- Members had a responsibility to promote the project; and
- needed to ask the Parish and Town Councils to feed details of the project via their

media chat groups to reach a wider audience.

In response, the Community & Partnerships Manager reported that £4,049.00 had been raised since the lottery went live. The figures set out in Appendix II on page 24 of the report, were based on a projected outcome of the tickets being brought under the current scheme and the £10,639.20 was a predicted amount on the tickets currently being bought. Some of the smaller charities would benefit greatly from a small amount of money, it did not need to be large sums of money. There was a new member of staff who would be working directly with the good causes and how they were promoting it. The Council grant for the project of £10,800 was used to set-up the project and included: the extra staff time; the original licence; and the gambling fee. The only ongoing costs would be: £352 for the lottery licence; and £410 for the Lottery Council which would be generated by the ticket sales.

The Head of Housing & Communities explained that it was early days and the Council's £10,000 investment was to set-up the community lottery, and now it was up and running it should not require further investment. Officers were working with the Council's Communications Team and organisations that had signed-up to the lottery to promote the scheme further.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

414 Temporary Accommodation (TA) Spend - Scrutiny Report

The Head of Housing and Communities introduced the report which provided an update on the current performance in relation to TA, and current budget position. The report also discussed the current risks and controls in place to manage the TA budget.

She reported that with regard to grant levels, the Council had received the Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) in 2025/26 of £1,346,129, and the Rough Sleepers (RS) grant. She referred to Government announcements for further funding for Homelessness for Local Councils on 10 October 2025 World Homeless Day, and confirmed that unfortunately Swale did not receive any of this additional funding.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- A Member Briefing on how the housing system worked needed to be held as most Members did not know enough about the system;
- welcomed the report and thanked officers for their hard work;
- the Government needed to look at the list of Statutory Duties of Local Councils as it seemed 'bonkers' that rough sleeping and planning enforcement were not statutory services;
- it was important that Members asked residents to bid on any property, as there was always the opportunity to swap, it was important to get 'your foot in the door';
- how did the Council compare to Southern Housing in terms of housing turnaround?;
- all residents that qualified should be on the Housing Register;
- real concerns regarding the reduction in lets, and the increase in homelessness;
- the local MP's and all Members should be invited to attend the rough sleeper

count;

- if savings were being made from the interventions could the scheme be extended?; and
- phase II of the TA Purchase Scheme should be added to the Forward Decisions Plan (FDP).

The Head of Housing and Communities clarified where necessary, and agreed to ensure that the Performance Information set out on page 30 of the report was clearer for the next meeting. She said that the reduction in void turnaround lets was often due to the condition that tenants had left the properties. Also, a concern was the reduction in affordable housing supply. Officers were having multi-agency organisation meetings to tackle the issue of rough sleepers, and the majority of Swale rough sleepers were local caused by family breakdown; complex issues; addiction issues; or had been evicted. The consensus was that these were often due to a lack of mental health provision. With regard to extending the interventions, the Head of Housing and Communities was not sure this could happen currently due to resource issues.

The Accommodation Supply and Resettlement Manager advised that turnaround times were dependent on the property and how it had been left by the outgoing tenant. It could be ready for relet within a couple of weeks and they always ensured new gas and electric certificates were issued for every new tenant as it was best practice. They always made sure that basic furniture was provided and ensured turnaround was achieved as quickly as possible.

Councillor Angela Harrison moved the following motion: That the Council asked the Government to review the list of Statutory Duties of Local Councils and that rough sleeping and planning enforcement be added. This was seconded by Councillor Hayden Brawn. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed by Members.

Councillor Ben J Martin moved the following motion: That the Council invited the local MP's and all Members to assist with the count of rough sleepers in Swale. This was seconded by Councillor Harrison. On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted.***

Recommendation:

- (1) That the Council asks the Government to review the list of Statutory Duties of Local Councils and that rough sleeping and planning enforcement be added.***
(2) That the Council invites the local MP's and all Members to assist with the count of rough sleepers in Swale.

415 Affordable Housing Delivery

The Accommodation Supply and Resettlement Manager introduced the report which provided an update on affordable housing (AH) delivery in Swale including approved planning application pipeline delivery for s106 and additional grant funded affordable homes in Swale.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, and these included:

- Important that Registered Providers (RPs) were already sorted prior to putting in planning applications, and was that something Housing or Planning could dictate?;
- did the Council explain to residents about the length of time and limited availability of social homes on the Housing Register?
- a member briefing on how the housing market functioned would be helpful;
- what could the Council do to deliver more Affordable Housing units; and
- it would be good to set-up another Landlord Forum to discuss solutions to some of the issues raised.

In response, the Accommodation Supply and Resettlement Manager advised that Planning Services led on planning applications, and she was unsure what the mechanism would or could be to ensure RPs were involved before a planning application was submitted as it was a complex area. Regarding the Housing Register, she said it was about managing customer expectations and ensuring that the information given to them was clear. She asked Members to let her know if they were aware of any RPs. She spoke about the Government drive to bring forward more social rent, and that officers were working with local ward members on parish needs.

The Accommodation Supply and Resettlement Manager spoke about an Affordable Housing round table meeting for Kent, Sussex and Surrey which she attended every quarter. This was attended by RPs, some developers and local authorities.

Resolved:

(1) That the report be noted.

416 Forward Decisions Plan

Members asked if the following items of business could be added to the Forward Decisions Plan:

- Local Government Review (LGR); and
- Phase II of the housing Temporary Accommodation Purchase scheme.

The Chair considered that the LGR would be better held as briefings due to the cross-cutting nature it had on all of the service area committees.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

417 Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) update

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager introduced the report, which provided the current position regarding the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), and sought the Council adoption of the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy 2025-2040 Stage C Assessment Report and Stage D Report and Action Plan.

A Member drew attention to some errors within Appendices II and III:

- Page 203 paragraph 7.17 it stated the criteria was: Good; Average; Below Average; and Poor. However in the table below there was: Good; Standard; and Poor, so inconsistent.
- Page 229 should refer to Leaveland not Leavelands or Leavesland.
- Page 134 of the Action Plan the categories were L, M and H and an 'S' had been included which needed to be removed.

The Leisure & Technical Services Manager agreed to make the amendments.

Councillor Ben J Martin proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by Councillor Harrison.

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Resolved:

(1) That the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy 2025-2040 Stage C Assessment Report and Stage D Report and Action Plan be adopted.

(2) That the existing Officer resource be prioritised for the delivery and ongoing monitoring of the Strategy.

418 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned from 8.15 pm until 8.25 pm.

419 Extension 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