
SITTINGBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Committee Room, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne ME10 3HT on Thursday, 26 February 2026 from 7.00 pm - 9.06 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Tim Gibson, Mark Last (Vice-Chair), Charlie Miller, Carrie Pollard, Tony Winckless and Ashley Wise (Chair).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Julie May, Kelly Mehmet and Donna Seager.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillors Kieran Mishchuk and Dolley Wooster.

Inspector Julia Bassindale, Kent Police.

Olivia Nagle, Senior Project Officer, Communities Prepared.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Derek Carnell, Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark and Karen Watson.

769 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

770 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2025 (Minute Nos. 569 – 579) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

771 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tony Winckless declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the Milton Regis High Street Society, and as a Trustee of Milton Regis Country Park and Milton Court Hall.

772 POLICE UPDATE

Inspector Julia Bassindale gave an update on policing matters in the Sittingbourne area, a summary of the main items covered are:

- The new town centre team comprised six Police Officers and 1 Sergeant;
- their main focus was tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Sittingbourne Town Centre, so far there had been positive results;
- there had been a reduction in street drinking with 123 alcohol seizurers;
- funding had been obtained for 80 new Swale Link radios;
- a database of images of banned individuals from Sittingbourne Forum had been set up;
- the My Community Voice app was a valuable tool to sign up to on the Kent Police website providing two-way engagement with residents and the Police;
- the Swale Police Community Day which took place in 2025 was successful and would be repeated in July 2026;

- Swale Police had put a bid in for funding for Charlie's Promise which was a scheme dedicated to helping the fight against the rising issue of knife crime;
- Swale Police were looking for additional funding to continue with the Gaming Bus; and
- Police days of action were planned for the coming months.

The following comments were raised:

- E-scooters were still an issue in the Sittingbourne area and posed a risk of accidents;
- were figures available on the numbers of bikes seized?;
- a member of the public said that an increasing number of laughing gas canisters were being found during litter-picks, were the Police aware of this?;
- there had been a noticeable improvement in Sittingbourne Town Centre and the Swale Police Town Team should be congratulated; and
- the lack of ticket barriers at Sheerness Railway Station continued to be a problem and resulted in issues such as drug dealing near Kemsley Railway Station. Network Rail had said they would not install barriers. Could the Police write to Network Rail to support the request to install barriers?

Inspector Bassindale said the Police had zero tolerance with e-scooters. Work was ongoing to get statistics on things like the number of bikes seized. The Police were aware of the increased use of laughing gas canisters. The Police regularly ran operations at Sittingbourne and Sheerness Railway Stations, they could look to include Kemsley. Inspector Bassindale said she would speak to the Chair outside of the meeting to discuss writing to Network Rail.

The Chair thanked Inspector Bassindale for taking the time to give the Area Committee an update.

773 RECYCLING WORKSHOP EXERCISE TO DISCUSS HOW WE CAN IMPROVE RECYCLING RATES IN SITTINGBOURNE

The Chair said that he requested a workshop was held at Sittingbourne Area Committee on how to improve recycling rates in Sittingbourne. He said he was keen to hear what people's thoughts were on what could be done to improve recycling rates.

Why we should recycle – the Government have a 25 year environment plan to have zero avoidable waste by 2050. Each rejected load costs £2,000 more than if the load was recycled and there were benefits to the planet by reusing valuable resources.

What was contamination – it referred to the presence of incorrect or unsuitable materials within a waste or recycling stream.

Consequences of contamination - contamination could disrupt sorting operations, increase costs and cause otherwise recyclable items to be rejected and treated as refuse.

Contamination rates – spoiled loads in Swale could cost the tax payer more than £1m this financial year if the current rate continued. Between April and July 2025, 181 collections were spoiled across Sittingbourne, Sheppey and Faversham. The highest number of rejected recycling loads took place on Fridays, mainly from the Sittingbourne area.

Most common contaminants – included textiles, food waste, electrical items, black sacks containing non-recyclable waste, sanitary items, nappies and personal hygiene products.

Battery fires – one battery could start a fire in a refuse vehicle or waste facility when crushed or damaged. Lithium-ion batteries were a leading cause of waste truck fires. Fires put crews at serious risk and they could destroy vehicles costing tens of thousands of pounds. It was an increasing problem due to vapes and toys, batteries should be removed and disposed of at donation points which could be found at www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk

Items that cannot be recycled kerbside – just because something can be recycled, it does not mean it belonged in your blue bin. Many items could be recycled using participating shops, pharmacies and manufacturers take-back schemes.

Simpler recycling – from April 2027 residents would be able to recycle flexible plastics kerbside. But until then, please continue to take flexible plastics and film to your local supermarket. More information could be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/simpler-recycling-household-recycling-in-England

The following comments were raised and responded to by the Environment Campaigns & Performance Officer and the Environmental Contracts Manager:

- Education in some areas was a challenge, could letters be sent out to households? *officers responded that Swale Borough Council (SBC) were starting a joint campaign with Kent County Council (KCC) and would be monitoring crews initially. They would then follow-up with letters. The campaign would start in April 2026 in Sittingbourne. This was a countywide project and Swale was the pilot area.*
- There was a potential cost to life as every Fire & Rescue crew attending a truck fire, were not available to attend house fires. Members suggested putting together a video jointly with the Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS) to highlight this issue. *Officers would contact KFRS to see what campaigns they had planned.*
- Some people could not travel to recycling centres – *there were recycling bins in locations such as Milton Recreation Ground.*
- It was not always possible to completely clean out some food containers – *officers confirmed that a small amount of residual food was acceptable but as much should be cleaned out as possible.*
- It was difficult to get clear sacks for recycling – *officers advised that clear sacks were available at Swale House or Sheerness Gateway or could be ordered online. Cardboard boxes could also be used.*

- To help educate residents about what could be recycled, could stickers be put on bins? *Officers said that new residents would have stickers on their recycling bins.*
- KCC were not making it easy to recycle at their centres which could result in fly-tipping. Could information be published about what could go there? *Officers responded that Kent Resource were doing a campaign about this, and they would also speak to KCC about this issue.*
- To encourage education on recycling at schools, could there be a community recycling champions scheme where prizes could be awarded to the best school, it could be an incentive for children to recycle.
- Currently residents in Sittingbourne High Street could not recycle. *Officers responded that from 31 March 2026 recycling has got to be made available to all residents in Swale.*
- Could Tetra Paks be recycled? *Officers said they will be recyclable in Swale from 6 April 2026.*

The Chair thanked everyone for their input and asked if feedback on this item could be provided at a future Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting.

It was also agreed that a summary of this discussion should be submitted to the Environmental Services & Climate Change Committee for their information.

774 STRENGTHENING PREPAREDNESS TOGETHER IN SWALE (PILOT PROJECT TO HELP COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES SUCH AS FLOODING, SEVERE WEATHER AND UTILITY OUTAGES)

Olivia Nagle, the Senior Project Officer from Communities Prepared gave a presentation on the pilot project to help communities prepare for emergencies. She said the pilot project aimed to:

- Help strengthen communities to become better prepared for the impacts of emergencies such as flooding, severe weather, and utility outages; and
- broaden the base of local volunteers trained in emergency preparedness to help meet future challenges and impacts of climate change.

She said people could get involved by:

- Spreading the word about the project to different community and volunteer groups;
- sign up to attend the online training;
- speak to your council about your community's resilience plan; and
- help to organise in-person, hyper-local training with your volunteer group or community groups.

Full details on how to book a place on a free webinar could be found via this link: [Communities Prepared](#)

The Chair thanked Olivia Nagle for her presentation.

775 PUBLIC FORUM

World Scout Jamboree - Scouts from the Milton and Sittingbourne Scouts Division came along to Sittingbourne Area Committee to talk to Members about the World Scout Jamboree to be held in Poland in 2027. The Jamboree had taken place every 4 years since 1920 and 30,000 scouts attended from 226 countries. It gave the scouts an opportunity to travel and gain personal experience and confidence by stepping out of their comfort zones. They each needed to raise £4,000 by July 2027 to attend and they were holding fundraising events.

The Chair said that if any SBC Members had funds from their Member Grants available, could they consider making a donation and could they also support the scouts fundraising events.

The Chair thanked the scouts for coming along and Councillor Tim Gibson praised the scouts for giving such a good presentation in front of so many people.

Local Transport Group – Jackie Davidson said that he had been invited by the Member of Parliament Kevin McKenna to join a Local Transport Group. He said he would keep the Sittingbourne Area Committee updated.

776 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

777 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE (POTENTIAL CHANGES TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS)

Members noted the update report.

778 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATES (GOVERNMENT WANTS US TO DELIVER YOUR SERVICES DIFFERENTLY)

Members noted the update report.

779 SWALE BUS PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Chair advised that the last Swale Bus Forum meeting took place on 19 January 2026 and as soon as the minutes were available, they would be circulated.

It was noted that the live times at the Sittingbourne Bus Hub were still not available. Councillor Winckless said that the funding was there but had not yet been allocated. It was agreed to raise the matter with the Kent County Council Members for the Sittingbourne area.

Councillor Winckless was asked to raise the issue of displayed timetables being out of date at bus stops.

780 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

In the absence of KCC Councillor Chris Palmer, Divisional Member for Sittingbourne North, the Chair read out the following update: *Sittingbourne Library, which was currently closed for refurbishment, would have a family hub going into it. Families would be able to access several services through the hub, midwifery, health visitors, breastfeeding/weaning support, speech and language therapy, and portage amongst other services. The Library was due to reopen in late March/early April 2026.*

£1.5m of Pride in Place funding had been approved for Swale and £485k had been allocated to the following projects in Sittingbourne:

- Improving the public toilets in Central Avenue, Sittingbourne;
- providing more closed circuit television cameras;
- improvements in Sittingbourne Town Centre;
- sign-posting to key attractions from Sittingbourne Railway Station; and
- the Sittingbourne Supplementary Planning Document had a range of projects to rejuvenate Sittingbourne Town Centre.

Several planters around Sittingbourne had been taken on by residents to maintain them. People were not always aware that volunteers were looking after them.

781 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

It was also agreed that a summary of the recycling discussion should be submitted to the Environmental Services & Climate Change Committee for their information.

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