
SHEPPEY AREA COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Criterion, 69 High Street, Blue Town, Sheerness ME12 1RW on Tuesday, 2 December 2025 from 7.00 pm - 8.50 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Elliott Jayes (Chair), Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy and Dolley Wooster (Vice-Chair).

PRESENT (Virtually): Councillors Hayden Brawn and Mark Tucker.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Mike Brown (Eastchurch Parish Council (PC)), Remy Noe (Queenborough Town Council (TC)), James Morrison (Warden PC), John Nurden and Ben Pointing (Minster-on-Sea PC).

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES (Virtually): Parish/Town Councillors Linda Brinklow (Sheerness (TC) and Pat Sandle (Warden PC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Rebecca Dart and Louise Galloway.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): Lisa Fillery, Claire Stanbury and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mike Baldock.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Shelley Cheesman.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth, Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Ashley Shiel, Mark Tucker and Mike Whiting.

522 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

523 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 September 2025 (Minute Nos. 319 – 330) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

524 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

525 BUDGET 2026/27

The Director of Resources gave a presentation on the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30.

She said that Swale Borough Council (SBC) legally must set a balanced budget and explained the financial challenges which included rising costs due to inflation.

Decisions needed to be made to raise income and make savings to offset rising costs. There was an estimated budget gap of £665k for 2026/27 even with current savings proposals. Reserves would help set a balanced budget for 2026/27 but would be depleted by 2029/30 without further ongoing savings being found.

The process for setting the budget for 2026/27 started in June 2025 when a Cross Party Member Working Group met to agree an approach to setting the budget. Full Council would meet on 18 February 2026 to approve the final budget.

The draft budget was approved for consultation at the Policy & Resources Committee on 26 November 2025 and would close on 9 January 2026. The consultation could be found on the Council's website: swale.gov.uk/budget-consultation.

The following comments were raised:

- How were the savings being made? and
- with all the new house building taking place, had the extra income from council tax been taken into account?

The Director of Resources responded that the proposed savings had been achieved through operational efficiencies. She said that the budget did include the assumption of additional council tax income from new house building.

526 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods gave an update on the Sheerness Revival Project.

Beachfields – construction was ongoing, a few issues had emerged during construction which had been addressed and completion was expected in July 2026. There had been over 7,000 visitors to the adventure golf which continued to be popular even in the colder weather. The paddling pool was going to be expanded and the tennis courts and outdoor gym was going to be refurbished ready for next summer.

Sheppey College – the building was now weather tight with windows installed. Internal works continued with features such as the blue roof being completed. Works to demolish the old registry office located on site were due to begin to allow for external works to start. The project was expected to be complete in December 2025 and opened to students from January 2026.

Masters House – all three garages and the kitchenette/welfare unit were nearing completion. Full completion was expected mid-December 2025.

The following comments were raised:

- Following the announcement that Swale had been awarded funding by Sport England, would that open up the possibility for a new swimming pool on the Isle of Sheppey? and
- would the benches and bins be in place by Spring 2026?

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that the Sport England funding was something really positive for the Borough but SBC were not leading on it. The funding was aimed at behaviour change and getting people active. A report would be going to the Housing, Health & Communities Committee in January 2026 providing an update on the scheme. The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said she would provide an update on benches and bins for Members.

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

Councillor Mike Baldock, the Vice-Chair of the Community Governance Review (CGR) Member Steering Group gave a presentation on CGR, explaining why it was being carried out.

CGR was an opportunity for residents, or the principal authority, to kick start a process around governance of the Borough. It was an opportunity to make governance better reflect local identities and facilitate a more effective local government. The review was an opportunity to consider how individuals and groups within the community were listened to and able to influence decisions that affected them.

Residents could be affected in one of the following ways:

If you lived in an area that was currently unparished:

- A new parish or town council could be created;
- one of the existing parish councils could expand to include the area in which you lived; or
- no changes.

If you lived in an area which was already parished:

- The council could change its size;
- there could be some changes to the boundaries; or
- no changes.

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Project Officer said that CGR was a 12-month process which started when the Terms of Reference had been published. There would then be a first stage public consultation from 18 December 2025 to 9 February 2026. The review would then move onto draft recommendations compiling all consultation responses and informing a second stage consultation in Spring 2026.

Following the second stage consultation, final recommendations would be drafted to go to Full Council in September 2026. If it was decided by Full Council to accept the recommendations, any changes would be implemented at the May 2027 local elections.

Any questions/comments/concerns please email CGR@swale.gov.uk

The following comments were raised:

- Who would make the final decision on the recommendations?;
- how would an unparished area vote if there were multiple recommendations for that area?;
- there would be costs associated with neighbouring parish and town councils taking on unparished areas;
- could parish and town councils join the CGR Steering Group?;
- could Councillor Baldock attend parish council meetings to explain the process?; and
- as not all households had online access, would paper copies of the consultation be sent out?

Councillor Baldock said that Full Council would make the final decision on recommendations. If there were multiple recommendations for unparished areas, residents would be able to vote on all the options. The CGR Steering Group was made up of Borough Councillors only. Councillor Baldock said he would be happy to attend parish council meetings if he was available. SBC did not have the budget to send paper copies of the consultation to all households, but could work with parish councils to provide paper copies for any households that did not have online access.

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

The LGR Project Officer gave an update on the Local Government Reorganisation. She went through the timetable and said that the final business case submissions had been made to Government on 28 November 2025 and the next stage was a public consultation which would be carried out in Spring 2026 followed by the Government's decision on their chosen model by Summer 2026. Shadow elections would be held in May 2027 and then the 'go live' date (vesting day) was 1 April 2028.

Each district in Kent along with Medway and Kent County Council (KCC) selected their favoured unitary model for Kent. The SBC Full Council met on 19 November 2025 and agreed that their chosen option for Kent was 4b which was made up of 4 unitary authorities which would mean that Swale would form a unitary council with Ashford and Folkestone and Hythe.

Full business cases for each unitary option were available at: <https://kentcouncilleaders.org.uk/councils-reveal-draft-business-cases-for-new-councils/>.

The following comments were raised:

- What was a shadow election? and
- how were the KCC and Medway options funded?

The LGR Project Officer said that about a year before the new unitary went live, an election would take place to elect a shadow administration. They would not have

day-to-day powers but they would prepare the unitary for vesting day. KCC and Medway funded the options they submitted themselves.

529 PUBLIC FORUM

A representative from Warden Parish Council said that if the battery farms that were proposed to be built in the Warden area went ahead, what would happen if the roads were closed during the building works as that was the only road in and out of the area?

The Chair responded that the planning application had not been submitted for this yet but as SBC were a statutory consultee then this issue could be raised then. Likewise, the Kent Fire & Rescue Service would be consulted as they may have similar concerns.

530 PRIDE IN PLACE PROGRAMME

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that the Pride in Place Programme was launched by Government in September 2025 and Sheppey East had been awarded £20m over 10 years starting from 2026. SBC would be the accountable body. The funding had been awarded based on data and the Government would be releasing a data pack to help the Board target interventions. The three strategic objectives were:

- Building stronger communities;
- creating thriving places; and
- empowering people to take back control.

An independent Board would be set up and be considered by the Policy & Resources Committee about how the external Chair would be appointed. The next step would be to get a delivery plan in place ready for the Government to sign-off. Delivery funding would be received in March 2027.

The following comments were raised:

- Whoever was appointed to Chair the Board needed to be someone with local knowledge;
- it was important that a lot of the funding was not spent on administration; and
- for transparency could this be added to the Audit Committee so that progress could be followed?

The Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods said that there would be an open recruitment process so local people could apply for the role of Chair of the Board. They would also need leadership and negotiation skills as well as local knowledge. SBC would need to consider how progress would be reported.

531 SWALE BUS PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Minutes of the last Local Bus Forum were noted.

The Sheppey Area Committee representative on the Forum, Councillor Dolley Wooster, said she had requested training for Members on Section 106 funding allocated for bus transport and asked for updates to be provided at the Area Committees.

A Town Councillor said she was concerned about the inconsistent bus service on the Isle of Sheppey and asked if an explanation could be provided about why services were either cancelled or delayed.

532 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members noted the update report.

It was agreed that representatives from the following organisations be invited to a future Sheppey Area Committee meeting to answer questions that frequently arose at meetings:

- National Health Service (NHS) Kent and Medway;
- KCC Education; and
- Active Kent and Medway.

533 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Councillor Tom Nundy reported that the keep-fit equipment on Minster Leas was in need of maintenance and also asked if it was possible to install memorial benches on the seafront if they were funded externally? A local mental health organisation were keen to fund a bench in Sittingbourne and/or on the Isle of Sheppey. The Chair said that the issues would be referred to the Greenspaces Team.

534 MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

535 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7.24 pm as Councillor Tara Noe left the meeting leaving it inquorate. The meeting restarted at 7.27 pm when Councillor Dolley Wooster joined the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned from 8:13 pm until 8:20 pm.

Chair

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