
Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Tuesday, 27 January 2026 from 7.00 pm - 10.05 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen (Substitute for Councillor Pete Neal), Shelley Cheesman, Alex Eyre, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Peter MacDonald (Substitute for Councillor Kieran Mishchuk), Peter Marchington, Charlie Miller, Ashley Shiel, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson and Dolley Wooster (Chair).

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillor Pete Neal.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alister Andrews, Samuel Brookfield, Martyn Cassell, Robin Harris, Janet Hill, Kellie MacKenzie and Larissa Reed.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Alex Wells and Emma Wiggins.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Tom Nundy and Mike Whiting.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Hayden Brawn, Mark Tucker and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Claire Martin, Kieran Mishchuk and Pete Neal.

645 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

646 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 November 2025 (Minute Nos. 448 – 462) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

647 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Elliott Jayes declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 Off-Street Parking Order Consultation Report as he was a member of Minster Parish Council.

Councillor Dolley Wooster declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 Off-Street Parking Order Consultation Report as she was a member of Sheerness Town Council and Minster Parish Council.

Councillor Peter MacDonald declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 9 Off-Street Parking Order Consultation Report as he was a member of Sheerness Town Council and Minster Parish Council.

648 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

649 **Chairs Briefing**

The Chair provided an update on her work as Chair of the Committee. She had attended the KITE Community College, Sittingbourne and had facilitated resources for young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) access to train travelling training, and it was hoped in the future access to bus training to help them become more independent.

The Chair advised that she had attended two meetings of the Local Government Association (LGA) Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) which was a national meeting led by Tyneside Council which she hoped would assist the Council with ideas and best practice to combat coastal issues. The disruption to water supply experienced in some areas of Kent was amongst the issues considered and interest around how residents had coped.

The Chair reported that she had chaired the Barton's Point Working Group which had full cross-party attendance. Members had received an excellent presentation from officers on Barton's Point which had led to lots of questions and debate. The Chair further reported that, whilst not a member, she understood that the Litter Working Group had met, and she asked officers whether the Chair of that working group could provide updates moving forward.

650 **Forward Decisions Plan**

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Environment and Leisure confirmed that the Procurement of minor maintenance and cleansing of public conveniences – tender award would not be required for the March 2026 meeting if Members agreed agenda item 11 of the agenda Provision of Minor Maintenance and Cleansing of Public Conveniences Contract.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

651 **Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan Annual Report**

The Climate Change Officer introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers.

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

- This was an excellent report;
- the Swale Cycle Recycle project worked well and with other groups such as the prison cluster, it worked well on many levels and typified what the Council should be looking for in partners moving forward;
- welcomed the continuance of the Carbon Literacy training at schools;
- the tree planting scheme was excellent;
- what were the costs of providing the carbon literacy day training?;
- the report should include more detailed information on the budgets for the service and what the cost to the Council was, versus the benefits;
- requested an update on the contamination of recycling bins;
- encouraged Members to lobby Government on reducing retail packaging etc.;
- the connection between the Borough's ancient woodlands and new tree planting

- alongside it was important as this improved biodiversity;
- there was a typographical error in paragraph 7.5 on page 43 of the agenda pack, and Conyer was a hamlet not a village;
- was there information on what environmental impacts, or savings the Council could receive from its suppliers?;
- was the Faversham Car Share scheme still operating?; and
- did the Council ensure that its suppliers provided ethical and fair trading?

In response, the Climate & Ecological Emergency Project Officer explained that two tool kits at a cost of £500 each had been purchased and enabled the provision of Carbon Literacy Training for schools and for Members at no additional cost to the Council. The Climate Change Officer advised that the climate change team was salary only with a small budget. Funding for the Active Travel scheme projects was from Kent County Council (KCC), and the targets were funded from the Council's existing departmental budgets and this information could be shared with Members. The Chair agreed that the budget for the Climate and Ecological Emergency would be discussed by the Steering Group.

The Environmental Services Manager reported that officers had carried out some work around contamination of the recycling bins with some positive communication around food recycling as previously reported. He said officers were working on reducing contamination alongside the Council's Communications team and the Council's refuse contractor Suez. There was some work proposed for March 2026 prior to the Simpler Recycling Regime, and rolling-out food and recycling bins to some of the communal areas.

The Climate & Ecological Emergency Project Officer reported that the supply chain omissions were monitored and fell within Scope three which had the net zero target by 2045. There were specific questions during the tender process which did look at the supply chain to avoid any environmental damage, and the Council's Procurement Policy had been updated in 2025. He was aware that a sustainable procurement tool-kit was being developed by the Kent wide climate change network. The Climate Change Officer added that with regard to solar panels, there was an industry protocol to ensure that no slave labour was used in the manufacturer of those panels.

The Climate Change Officer reported that the car share scheme in Faversham operated by HiyaCar, was no longer running as the Council could no longer justify subsidising the limited number of regular users.

Councillor Terry Thompson proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor James Hunt.

Resolved:

(1) That the Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Progress report be noted, and submitted to Full Council for noting.

652 Off-Street Parking Order Consultation Report

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers. He acknowledged the level of responses objecting to the proposals and the petitions received. He reported that with regard to the ownership of Queenborough

Library car park, he had that day requested the relevant documents from the Land Registry, and they had confirmed that there were three Title Deeds for the area and each of them showed Swale Borough Council (SBC) as the proprietor of the land. The Legal and Property teams would, however, do a more detailed investigation in due course.

The Chair thanked all those that had responded to the consultation.

A representative of Queenborough Town Council (QTC) was invited to speak. She raised the following points: Land Registry documents K5555380 and K555381 showed that QTC were owners of part of Queenborough Library car park; there had been over 4,000 objections from residents; the proposals were 'damning' and would destroy the Isle of Sheppey; how would the Council attract visitors to the Isle of Sheppey by imposing these car parking charges?; the Isle of Sheppey had poor public services and transport; this would lead to shop closures in Queenborough and Halfway; and please rethink as the Council would not generate any revenue from this but 'push' the car parking into the already congested local streets.

A Ward Member spoke against the proposals and raised the following points: the parking charges had been approved and the funds allocated prior to the public consultation, which was contrary to the Council's own Consultation Policy; the ownership issues around the Queenborough Library car park needed to be resolved prior to any decision being made to avoid any subsequent legal charges against the Council; residents would have to park in the streets which would make it difficult for refuse vehicles to navigate; and it would make it difficult for residents to access frontline services such as GPs and pharmacies; and also make parking difficult for local volunteers.

The Ward Member drew attention to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2025 and noted in one paragraph it stated that a decision would not be made until the consultation had taken place. However, in a later paragraph it stated that the decision had already been made.

Councillor Ashley Shiel made the following proposal: That the Traffic Regulation Order be withdrawn. This was not seconded.

In response, the Head of Environment and Leisure stated that the consultation was not carried out under the formal SBC consultation because it had to follow the national process for the off-street parking order consultation as written in legislation in terms of the order of the consultation. With regard, to the legal ownership of the Library car park, he noted the comments from QTC however the Council had made their decisions based on what they saw from the Land Registry. With regard to the impacts to residents, this was also the case for residents in Faversham, Sittingbourne, and other areas of the Isle of Sheppey where similar car parks were chargeable. The car parks cost the Council money and by levying charges the Council could recover some of the income to enable them to become self-sufficient.

Following a short adjournment to consider the point from the Ward Member regarding the minutes of the previous meeting, the Monitoring Officer referred to Minute No. 455 and the final paragraph of page 330 which stated *"parking order consultation would ensure views of local people were taken into account and a final decision would then be made by councillors; subject to the comments received, there could be amendments*

such as variables of times that charges could be levied.” So, the minute was clear that it was a consultation on the parking order and whether it needed amending, and not a consultation on the principle of charging generally.

A Member asked whether the operation of the Queenborough car parks had been offered to QTC? The Head of Environment and Leisure explained that giving them away would not meet the necessary property legislation under ‘Best Consideration, which was explained in the first committee when the decisions were taken’.

A Ward Member said she was not against the charges so long as they were fair and the same across the borough. She referred to the Front Brents car park, Faversham, which was in the most deprived area of Faversham. She explained it had 14 car parking spaces and was used by parents to drop-off their children at the nursery located opposite. She said it was only fair that if concessions were to be made at the Halfway car park, Minster Road then they should be at the Front Brents car park as well.

At this point, the Chief Executive reminded the Committee they had already agreed to implement charging at the six car parks referred to under paragraph 2.2 of the report at the November 2025 meeting. Members were being asked to consider any amendments to the Off-Street Parking Order as set out at paragraph 2.13 of the report.

Councillor James Hunt proposed the amendments to the Off-Street Order set out at paragraph 2.13 of the report, but with the following amendment (bold): a) Remove charges for the period 8.30 am – 9.30 am and 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm at Halfway car park, Minster Road **and the Front Brents car park, Faversham** to help alleviate school safety concerns; and b) Implement seasonal charges at Little Oyster and Queenborough, Park Road car park operating from 1 March to 30 September each year to ensure that peak season availability is controlled, but the car park is available for resident use through the quieter periods of the year. This was seconded by Councillor Lloyd Bowen.

Following advice from the Chair regarding the differing operating hours of nurseries compared to schools, Councillor Hunt proposed the following amendment to the motion, that point a) includes: Remove charges for the period 8.30 am – 9.30 am and 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm at Halfway car park, Minster Road and **that delegated authority be given to officers in consultation with the Chair of the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee, and Ward Members to remove charges during the appropriate hours** at Front Brents car park, Faversham to help alleviate school safety concerns. This was seconded by Councillor Bowen.

A visiting Ward Member spoke against the proposals and presented a petition to the Chair. He spoke in objection and raised points which included: the Little Oyster car park was a ‘community asset’ and the parking charges should not be enforced; what had been the cost to the taxpayer for the consultation?; the public consultation had been a ‘pointless’ exercise and the objections of local residents were being ‘sidelined’; considered bringing a motion to Full Council during consideration of fees and charges to have the parking fees removed at the Little Oyster car park; and if the car parking charges were inevitable then the current use of the car parks needed to be considered.

The Chair stated that all responses to the consultation had been considered. With regard to costs to the taxpayer in respect of the consultation, the Head of Environment and Leisure reported that the only cost was for the consultation advertisement in the

local newspaper, under £500 for the order cost, and officers had printed the posters for each of the car parks. There had been no additional costs to analyse the consultation responses.

Another visiting Ward member spoke against the proposals. He raised points which included: members of the Committee should vote against the recommendation, and the proposed amendments at paragraph 2.13 of the report; concerned that there had been no public consultation prior to the agreement to impose the parking charges; asked that the four car parks on the Isle of Sheppey be removed from the list; 4,000 residents had written objecting to the proposal, with nobody writing in support; the charges would have a detrimental impact on local businesses and schools; it would be detrimental to the local tourism economy; would detrimentally impact road safety due to increased congestion; and in the first two years of the proposals the Council would spend £84,000 and achieve a £56,000 income, so with a £28,000 loss it was not 'best value' to run these car parks.

In response, the Head of Environment and Leisure stated that due to the existing off-street parking orders free car parks still needed to be inspected and maintained, so a lot of the costs already existed, and by applying the charges the Council would be able to recoup some of those costs. The income targets set out in the report were an 'estimate', and would be reviewed over time.

The Monitoring Officer advised members of the Committee that if they voted against the recommendation, then the Off-Street Parking Order would proceed without the amendments, which had been included following the consultation responses. The Chief Executive stated that the consultation was on the Off-Street Parking Order, and not whether the Council should introduce parking charges. She added that in the event that a motion or decision for Members was submitted, officers would ensure that details of any relevant petitions that had been submitted in respect of the off-street parking order would be included within any future report to Members.

The Chair referred Members back to the earlier amendment which had been seconded. Councillor Hunt, the proposer of the amendment, proposed the recommendation set out at page 47 of the report. Following advice from the Monitoring Officer he withdrew that proposal.

Councillor Elliott Jayes asked the proposer and seconder of the original amendment if they would consider including the following amendment to amendment a) (bold) that the charges be removed from **7 am** – 9.30 am at Halfway car park. The proposer and seconder of the original amendments agreed to the amendment. The proposer of the original amendment requested that amendment a) include the following further amendment: "...Remove charges for the period 7 am – 9.30 am and 2.30 pm – **4 pm** at Halfway car park, Minster....".

On being put to the vote the amendment to the amendment was agreed.

A Ward Member spoke against the proposals and considered that local residents had been 'let-down' and so he would abstain from voting on the proposals.

The Chair invited further comments from Members and these included:

- This would encourage parking in local roads;

- needed to explore and 'push' parking permit schemes;
- should look at more seasonal parking;
- would result in some residents becoming more isolated;
- the car parks were poorly maintained and the Council was not spending a lot of money on their upkeep;
- cashless payments had not been considered at the previous meeting;
- the report was not financially driven but 'ideologically' driven;
- Minster Parish Council had still not heard back from the Council about their request to 'take-on' Little Oyster Car park; and
- the item should be deferred and have been considered by the working group.

Councillor Jayes proposed the following motion: That the item be deferred to allow the working group to review the Off-Street Parking Order Consultation. This was seconded by Councillor Ashley Shiel.

The Monitoring Officer stated that deferring the amendments to the parking order was not practicable and would mean that following the Committee's previous decision to impose the parking charges, the Head of Environment and Leisure would use his delegated powers to make the parking order without any amendments.

The Head of Environment and Leisure considered that officers had responded to the key points raised through the consultation and had based the recommendations accordingly. He asked the proposer of the motion to defer, to clarify what the working group would be considering beyond what was in the report. The Member stated that the working group would work to provide a cross-party motion moving forwards.

In response to comments regarding the report, the Chair stated that the officer had put a lot of work into the proposals and it was understandable that it would be a contentious issue.

The seconder of the motion to defer spoke in support of the motion, and stated that he was confused on what had been amended. The Member considered the consultation had been carried out in the wrong order and understood why members of the public were also confused. He said the Council needed to withdraw the implication of the parking order until the legal frameworks with QTC and the borough council regarding the ownership of the Library car park, Queenborough had been clarified.

On being put to the vote the motion to defer was lost.

At the request of the Chair, the Head of Environment and Leisure provided a visual presentation of the land registry documents with regard to the library car park, Queenborough. He stated that of the four designated areas: one was in KCC ownership; three were showing SBC as the proprietor and that KCC and Queenborough Community Association Limited had rights of passage, both vehicular and pedestrian across the titles, and to bring utility services into the building.

The Chair stated that she would provide an update at the next meeting under 'Chair's Briefing', to confirm that the information provided by the Land Registry had been shared with QTC and there was a clear understanding regarding the land ownership at the library car park, Queenborough.

Councillor Elliott Jayes proposed the following amendment to amendment b): That Halfway Road, Halfway and the Library Car Park, Queenborough be included. That the Council only charges £1 per hour for the next three years, and that charging stopped at 6 pm at all six car parks.

Following advice from the Head of Environment and Leisure that the Policy and Resources Committee were responsible for the amounts charged, the proposer of the amendment to the amendment b) amended the amendment to the amendment to (bold): To implement seasonal charges at Little Oyster car park, Minster, Park Road car park, **Queenborough, Halfway car park, Halfway and the library car park, Queenborough** operating from 1 March to 30 September each year to ensure that peak season availability is controlled, but the car park is available for resident use through the quieter periods of the year, **with charging stopping at 6 pm at all six car parks**. This was seconded by Councillor Shiel.

The Chief Executive stated that stopping charging at 6 pm had not been a request made as part of the consultation and what would be the budget implications of imposing it. The proposer of the amendment to the amendment considered it would make it more 'palatable' to residents and more successful.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For: Cheesman, Jayes, Marchington, MacDonald and Shiel. Total = 5

Against: Hunt, Jackson, Bowen, P Stephen, Thompson and Wooster. Total = 6

Abstain: Eyre, Miller and S Stephen. Total = 3

The amendment to amendment b) was lost.

Councillor Hunt proposed the recommendation, as amended, and this was seconded by Councillor Thompson.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For: Cheesman, Eyre, Hunt, Jackson, Marchington, Miller, Bowen, P Stephen, Thompson and Wooster. Total = 10

Against: Jayes, MacDonald and Shiel. Total = 3

Abstain: S Stephen. Total = 1

Resolved:

(1) That the Off-Street Parking Order be approved, as minuted, and delegated authority be given to officers to proceed to 'Has Made order' for variation no. 10.

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers.

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

- With regard to the heat maps, were parking operatives ‘walking’ around these areas?;
- were cash and cashless payment options available in all of the Council’s car parks;
- could a ‘tiered’ system of the type of cars that polluted be introduced?;
- could debit cards be used at parking machines?;
- needed to be aware of QR Codes on parking machines;
- the annual parking report should include any complaints made to the Council about parking;
- this should include details on where the finances for refurbishment of car parks; and
- the payment machine in the multi-storey car park, Sittingbourne was not giving any change.

In response, the Head of Environment and Leisure said that the heat maps were taken from the parking operatives handheld tablets and there were assurances and quality checks to ensure the operatives were actively patrolling. Sometimes that might mean they did not get out if they could clearly see no contraventions. Most of the Council’s car parks offered cash parking machines and cashless options, however in remote areas and areas of low-level usage the Council could offer cashless parking only, as set out in the Council’s car parking policy. He confirmed that debit cards could be used for payments, and the Council did not use QR Codes and any found by the parking operatives on the parking machines would be removed.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said he was aware that some authorities had tiered systems of more polluting vehicles and this could be considered by Members when they set the fees and charges. He said that the number of complaints to the Council could be included in future years. Threats to the Council’s parking operatives was still a problem. The Council offered really good support to any of their parking operatives following any incidents.

The Head of Environment and Leisure reported that he was aware of the issues with the machines and on 30 January 2026 all the payment machines in the multi-storey car park, Sittingbourne would be replaced. He would let Members know what ‘items not shown’ referred to on Appendix 2 (heat maps).

Councillor Thompson proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Alex Eyre.

Resolved:

(1) That the Annual Parking Report 2024-25 be published on the Council’s website.

The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report as set out in the agenda papers.

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

- Why was the contract for five+1 years, and not less?;
- closure times were currently given for the public conveniences at Barton's Point and Minster Leas, Minster. Could they be amended for the summer months to 9 pm or sunset as they were well used during those times?;
- the radar key scheme was only in operation on one of the conveniences at Barton's Point, it would ease access issues if it was in operation across all the public conveniences;
- a lot of investment was needed for the necessary improvements at some of the conveniences; and
- given the costs involved to parish and town councils, were any proposed asset transfers by them still possible?

In response, the Environmental Services Manager reported that officers went for the five+ year contract as they wanted it to offer value for residents and stimulate interest from bidders. Also, as previously requested by the Committee, there were two lots within the contract which allowed the flexibility to hand facilities over to other organisations. The remaining facilities that required a longer-term ownership had been put into the five+1 lot. Lot 2 contained the assets that could be transferred or possibly closed – but these would continue to be reviewed by this Committee.

The Environmental Services Manager said opening times were reviewed and adjusted to reflect previous comments received. These criteria needed to be clear for the contract specification. Times could be adjusted in the future through the contract variation process.

The Head of Environment and Leisure stated that there was the potential for investment at the Library toilets in Sittingbourne and further funding would be available for Members' consideration on how they should be invested in community assets. The Council could not opt-out of TUPE (Transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006), officers had been in discussions with some parish and town councils and it was a matter for negotiation.

The Chair agreed to write to the Chair of the Economy and Property Committee to ensure that TUPE was being considered as part of any asset transfer to Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Jayes proposed the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Charlie Miller.

Resolved:

- (1) That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer and Head of Legal to award the contract to the winning bid which was a 5+1 year contract.***

655 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 7.40 until 7.49 pm, and 9.30 pm until 9.40 pm.

656 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