
Extraordinary Economy and Property Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 14 January 2026 from 7.00 pm - 7.35 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Chair), Lloyd Bowen (Substitute for Councillor Mark Tucker), Hayden Brawn, Shelley Cheesman, Alex Eyre, Mark Last (Substitute for Councillor Ann Cavanagh), Peter Marchington, Kieran Mishchuk, Richard Palmer, Carrie Pollard, Terry Thompson and Ashley Wise (Vice-Chair).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Kieren Mansfield, David Johnson and Jo Millard.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Simon Clark, Angela Harrison, Peter MacDonald and Dolley Wooster.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ann Cavanagh, Lee-Anne Moore, Sarah Stephen and Mark Tucker.

601 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

602 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

603 **Forward Decisions Plan**

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager advised Members that the Oare Gunpowder Works item that was originally scheduled to be discussed at this meeting, would now be considered at the Economy and Property Committee meeting on 29 January 2026.

Resolved:

(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.

604 **Transfer of Public Conveniences - Central Car Park, Faversham**

The Chair informed Members that, as advised the previous day, this item was withdrawn from the Agenda following recent developments in Faversham Town Council's position regarding the proposed transfer of the Central Car Park toilets.

605 **Sheerness Allotments (Medway Road and Richmond Street/Nursery Close), Sheerness - Asset Transfer**

The Interim Property Services Manager provided a brief overview, advising that the plots had been owned by Swale Borough Council (SBC) for a considerable time and were currently leased to the Sheppey Horticultural Society, comprising approximately 90 individual plots. He explained that, under Paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 29, Part II of the Local Government Act 1972, functions under the Allotments Acts—including the provision, management, and maintenance of allotments—should not be exercisable by the Borough Council, and the responsibility therefore was with Sheerness Town Council.

He added that the proposal was intended as a tidying-up exercise to ensure compliance with the legislation.

The Strategic Programmes and Assets Manager said that, as required under the Council's Disposal Policy, Ward Members had been consulted on the transfer. One of the Ward Members queried whether consideration had been given to transferring the site to the Allotment Society who currently managed it. The Green Spaces Manager had advised that, because two groups operated under one society, it would be preferable to retain responsibility with the public body charged with managing the allotments. The Ward Member accepted the response, but suggested that the Committee might wish to consider including a restrictive covenant to ensure the site was retained as allotments in the future, providing reassurance to the local community.

Councillor Monique Bonney proposed the following amendment to Recommendation (1):

"To include a restrictive covenant for the ongoing use of the site as allotments"

This was seconded by Councillor Ashley Wise and on being put to the vote, was agreed.

Members were invited to speak and raised points including:

- Could it be ensured that the society retained the management of the allotments?;
- there were two societies and both had a good relationship with Sheerness Town Council;
- suggested that any residual funding from the transfer be used for the benefit of the community;
- there were many benefits of the allotments to the community; and
- sought clarity on the operation of the clawback clause.

In response, the Interim Property Services Manager advised that the current leaseholder, Sheppey Horticultural Society, would transfer and the lease would remain unaffected. He added that there was statutory protection under the Allotments Act, and any disposal for purposes other than allotments would require consent from the Secretary of State, but a restricted title to allotment use could be added to Land Registry. The Interim Property Services Manager further advised that in the highly unlikely situation that the Secretary of State agreed to any change, compensation would be awarded and the beneficiary would be SBC.

Resolved:

(1) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Place to negotiate and agree terms of the transfer of the freehold interest in Sheerness Allotments (Medway Road and Richmond Street/Nursery Close, as shown on Appendix I of the report), to Sheerness Town Council, to include a restrictive covenant for the ongoing use as an allotment.

(2) That delegated authority to enact the transfer be granted to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services.

606 Transfer of Thistle Hill Community Centre and Playing Field (Excluding Play Area), Minster on Sea

The Interim Property Services Manager presented the report, which proposed transferring Thistle Hill Community Centre and Playing Field (excluding the play area) to Minster Parish Council, with delegated authority to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to implement the decision. He outlined the history of site, advising that in 2011 the Community Centre was leased on a 125 year term to the Thistle Hill Community Trust to operate as a community hub. The Interim Property Services Manager explained that the trust had expressed interest in relinquishing its lease, and Minster Parish Council wished to take it on. However, to expedite and simplify the transfer, it was considered preferable for SBC not to be involved in the transactions.

Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- It was an important asset for Minster but a lot of work was needed on the building, including to fix complex issues with the roof;
- Minster Parish Council were grateful for SBC allowing the transfer;
- why was the Play Area excluded?;
- work was required to fix the building, and welcomed the initiative which would give greater certainty to the needs of the growing community;
- a proper handover process was needed;
- could the requirement to remain as a community asset be included in the transfer?; and
- the contract for the Parish Council must allow them to manage the building as it saw fit.

The Interim Property Services Manager advised that Minster Parish Council requested that the Play Area be excluded from the transfer and it would remain SBC's responsibility. Referring to paragraph 2.9 of the report, he said the requirement to remain as a community asset was already included as a restricted covenant and clawback provision.

Resolved:

(1) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Place to negotiate and agree terms of the transfer of the freehold interest in Thistle Hill Community Centre and part of Thistle Hill Playing Field (excluding the play area as shown at Appendix I of the report), to Minster on Sea Parish Council, within a 12 month period.

(2) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to complete the transfer.

607 Procurement of Professional Property Support

The Strategic Programme and Asset Manager introduced the report which sought the Committee's approval to continue the ongoing appointment of Tile Hill Interim and Executive Management through the LGRP Framework to provide interim professional support for the Council's estate management function. He described the complex

employment market and the difficulties in securing RICS Chartered Surveyors, particularly for Local Authorities, due in part to the uncertainty around the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Strategic Programme and Asset Manager said he would continue to pursue permanent recruitment.

Members were invited to speak and raised points including:

- Sought clarification on why the report was not exempt as it included current contract prices which potential competitors could view;
- supported the proposals;
- it was important to have good advice at the right time and this could save the Council time and money in the longer term; and
- should the term of the contract be extended to the proposed date of implementation of LGR?

The Strategic Programme and Asset Manager said detailed terms of the contract were not included in the report and market prices and day rates were understood and monitored by agencies. He explained that the contract date was set to ensure SBC knew which authorities they would be working with, allowing engagement with those authorities to identify available resources and opportunities for sharing.

Resolved:

(1) That the ongoing appointment of the Tile Hill Interim and Executive Management through the LGRP Framework to provide interim professional support for the Council's estate management function be approved.

(2) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Place to extend the contract for a period up to 31 March 2027, pending the recruitment of a permanent, suitably qualified member of staff.

Chair

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