
Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 8 July 2026 from 7.00 pm - 9.55 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Shelley Cheesman, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin (Substitute for Councillor Claire Martin), Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson and Dolley Wooster (Chair).

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Tara Noe, Ashley Shiel, Mike Whiting and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alister Andrews, Martyn Cassell, Steven Gale and Tim Neal.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Alex Eyre, James Hunt and Claire Martin.

194 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

195 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 May 2026 (Minute Nos. 18 – 19) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

196 **Declarations of Interest**

Members who were Town or Parish Councillors made a general declaration of interest with relation to the agenda item on the Public Conveniences Review.

197 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

198 **Chairs Briefing**

The Chair provided an update on work undertaken since the previous meeting.

The Chair reported that a spokesman meeting had not taken place prior to the committee cycle and said that the matter had been raised with Democratic Services to ensure the meetings remained an integral part of the committee process in future.

The Chair referred to a motion concerning water quality improvements in Milton Creek that had been referred from Full Council. Members were advised that the motion sought support for ongoing work being undertaken by local organisations to improve water quality and to support engagement with Southern Water. Councillor Paul Stephen outlined the background to the work, including a review undertaken by Raybel Charters which had identified water quality issues and potential improvement measures. He emphasised that the request was not for Council funding but for recognition, co-operation and support for external funding applications and engagement with relevant organisations.

Members welcomed the initiative and commented on the importance of addressing water quality issues affecting waterways throughout the Borough. Reference was made to pollution concerns affecting Milton Creek, Faversham Creek and Queenborough Creek, together with ongoing monitoring work being undertaken by local organisations and councils. Members supported extending any future support to similar projects elsewhere in the Borough where appropriate.

Resolved:

(1) That support be given to the work being undertaken to improve water quality in Milton Creek.

(2) That similar support be made available to comparable initiatives elsewhere in the Borough where appropriate.

The Chair further proposed that correspondence be sent to Southern Water inviting representatives to engage with the Council on issues relating to water quality, wastewater management and water supply. During discussion Members highlighted concerns regarding sewage discharges, water quality at local beaches and creeks, water infrastructure capacity, supply interruptions and low water pressure affecting residents in parts of the Borough. Members also requested that South East Water be included in any engagement due to issues affecting areas served by that company.

Members supported the proposal and suggested that a borough-wide Member briefing or other suitable forum be explored to enable representatives of the water companies to discuss these issues with Councillors.

The Chair also updated Members on attendance at meetings of the Green Grid, Kent and Medway Members Environment Board, SIG coastal erosion meetings and other partnership forums. The Chair highlighted work relating to fly-tipping, access to household recycling centres, coastal erosion, Blue Flag beaches, ACT Team initiatives and community environmental projects undertaken across the Borough since the previous meeting.

199 **Forward Decisions Plan**

Members discussed future work relating to climate change adaptation and resilience and commented on the importance of ensuring that the Council's response to climate change considered both mitigation and adaptation measures. Reference was made to the work of the Climate Change Working Group and ongoing work to develop the Council's understanding of climate-related risks affecting the Borough. Members noted that climate adaptation was becoming an increasingly important area of work given the impacts of flooding, coastal change, extreme weather events and pressures on infrastructure.

In response to questions from Members, officers provided an update on the work being undertaken through the Climate Change Working Group, including consideration of climate resilience issues and opportunities to strengthen the Council's approach to adaptation planning.

The Committee welcomed the work being undertaken and noted the plan.

Resolved:***(1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted.*****200 Barton's Point Coastal Park - Future Management**

The Green Spaces Officer introduced the report and outlined the work undertaken by the cross-party working group established to review the future management and development of Barton's Point Coastal Park. Members were advised that the recommendations sought to secure the long-term sustainability of the site, whilst maintaining its value as an important recreational, environmental and community asset.

Members welcomed the report and thanked officers, members of the working group and stakeholders who had contributed to the review. It was recognised that Barton's Point Coastal Park played an important role within the Isle of Sheppey area and offered significant opportunities for recreation, education, tourism and community engagement.

During discussion, Members made comments which included:

- Support for the recommendations and the long-term vision for the park;
- the importance of ensuring that the site continued to provide opportunities for a wide range of recreational and educational activities;
- recognition of the contribution made by local organisations and volunteers in supporting activities at the park;
- the potential for greater engagement with schools, youth groups and community organisations to promote environmental education and outdoor learning opportunities;
- opportunities to improve awareness of the facilities available at the site and encourage wider community use;
- support for exploring future funding opportunities, grant schemes and partnership working arrangements to assist with the ongoing development of the park;
- the importance of maintaining appropriate site management of the old bike track and governance arrangements as future proposals were progressed;
- support for continuing engagement with user groups and stakeholders who had a longstanding association with the park; and
- wide promotion of the expression of interest process.

Members also discussed opportunities relating to existing and former activities at the site. Reference was made to recreational facilities, water-based activities and other attractions which had historically operated at the park and a need to ensure water quality. Members considered that, where feasible, opportunities should continue to be explored to enhance visitor experiences and maximise appropriate use of the facilities available.

Particular reference was made to the miniature railway and the positive contribution it made to the visitor experience at the park. Members welcomed the continuing success of the attraction and acknowledged the work undertaken by volunteers involved in its operation.

Discussion also took place regarding water sports and outdoor activity provision. Members recognised the value of such activities in supporting participation, attracting visitors and encouraging greater use of the park. It was considered important that

opportunities to expand or support appropriate recreational activities continued to be explored as part of the future management of the site but within the environmental concerns.

Councillor Elliott Jayes proposed that the recommendations be amended to include the preparation of a memorandum of understanding with the Sea Cadets in recognition of their longstanding involvement with Barton's Point and their continued contribution to activities undertaken at the site. This was seconded by the Chair.

Members spoke in support of the proposal and considered that a formal agreement would strengthen future partnership working and provide clarity regarding ongoing arrangements.

In response to questions, officers provided clarification regarding stakeholder engagement, implementation of the recommendations and future management arrangements.

The amendment was accepted and, on being put to the vote, was agreed unanimously.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Bartons Point Working Group recommendations 1-8 contained in section 2.6 of the report be agreed.***
- (2) That Officers progress the EOI's as recommended by the Working Group 1-2 contained in section 2.6 of the report.***
- (3) That a memorandum of understanding be developed with the Sea Cadets as part of the future management arrangements for Barton's Point Coastal Park.***

201 Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Service Update

The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report, which set out the performance of the waste collection and street cleansing service during 2025/26. Members were advised that the report demonstrated improvements across a number of key performance indicators, including recycling performance, food waste participation, missed collections and customer satisfaction. The Committee also received an update on service developments, contamination reduction initiatives and social value activity delivered through the contract.

Members welcomed the positive performance reported and thanked officers and the contractor for the improvements achieved during the year. During discussion, comments included:

- Support for the continued increase in food waste collections and recycling participation across the Borough;
- recognition of the reduction in missed collections and complaints received from residents;
- discussion regarding communal bin collections and opportunities to improve recycling performance within communal housing developments;
- the effectiveness of contamination reduction initiatives and education campaigns aimed at improving recycling quality;
- the provision and management of litter bins across the Borough, including the need to monitor usage levels and ensure bins were provided in appropriate

locations;

- the use of QR code reporting systems and opportunities to improve public reporting of environmental issues;
- the removal of fly-posting and the Council's wider approach to tackling environmental crime and fly-tipping. This was referred from the Economy and Property Committee to improve high street environment;
- bulky waste collection services and the importance of maintaining accessible disposal options for residents;
- social value initiatives delivered through the contract and the benefits provided to local communities and any other examples taken from other Suez contracts;
- street cleansing standards in both urban and rural areas of the Borough;
- support available for assisted collections and residents who required additional help accessing waste services; and
- request for officers to add year-by-year comparisons in future reports.

In response to questions, officers provided clarification on a range of operational matters, including performance monitoring, collection arrangements in specific circumstances, litter bin provision and ongoing work to improve systems for reporting issues and service delivery across the Borough.

Members welcomed the overall performance of the service and the progress made during the year.

Resolved:

(1) That the Annual Performance Report for the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Service 2025/26 be noted.

202 Public Conveniences Review and Community Toilet Scheme Update

The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report and outlined the current position regarding public convenience provision across the Borough. Members were advised of the financial pressures associated with maintaining the existing facilities, progress made in exploring opportunities for asset transfers, and the potential development of a community toilet scheme. The report sought views on future provision and options for delivering savings whilst maintaining access to facilities for residents and visitors.

Members acknowledged the importance of public conveniences to residents, visitors and the local economy and welcomed the opportunity to consider the matter in detail. During discussion, comments included:

- The vital role public conveniences played in supporting tourism, particularly in coastal towns and other visitor destinations across the Borough;
- the importance of ensuring adequate provision for older people, families with young children and those with medical conditions or disabilities;
- concerns that further closures could have a detrimental impact on the accessibility and attractiveness of town centres, parks and visitor locations;
- supported continuing discussions with town and parish councils regarding potential asset transfers where local interest existed;
- recognition that any community toilet scheme should supplement, rather than replace, appropriate public convenience provision;

- the need to maintain engagement with local councils and stakeholders to identify sustainable long-term solutions;
- concerns regarding the practical implications of reducing provision before alternative arrangements were firmly established; and
- the importance of preserving facilities in areas experiencing high visitor numbers and seasonal demand.

Visiting Members addressed the Committee and spoke about the importance of public convenience provision within their wards. Reference was made to the contribution such facilities made to local tourism, community wellbeing and the visitor experience. Members also highlighted the value of retaining facilities whilst discussions continued with interested parties regarding future management arrangements.

During the debate, Members expressed a clear view that no further public convenience closures should be pursued at the present time. Whilst recognising the financial challenges outlined within the report, Members considered that the priority should be to continue engagement with town and parish councils and explore opportunities for transfer arrangements before any further reductions in provision were considered.

Members also requested that progress on discussions regarding asset transfers and future management options be reported back to the Committee to enable ongoing monitoring of the issue.

Members did not debate the criteria for the Community Toilet scheme recognising that there was no funding to support implementing this and limited interest from businesses to participate.

Following discussion, amended recommendations were proposed and agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the Committee did not support any further closures of public conveniences in Swale to create additional savings to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Plan or to fund the cost of a Community Toilet Scheme.

(2) That a further report be brought back to the Committee in the next financial year on the progress of discussions relating to the transfer of public convenience assets.

(3) That a recommendation be made to the Economy and Property Committee that discussions regarding asset transfers relating to public conveniences be refreshed.

Chair

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