Policy and Resources Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 17 June 2026 from 7.00 pm - 8.25 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lloyd Bowen (Vice-Chair), Hayden Brawn (Substitute for Councillor Mark Last), Charles Gibson, Tim Gibson (Chair), Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Elliott Jayes, Ben J Martin, Julien Speed, Mike Whiting, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lisa Fillery, Robin Harris, Ian Harrison, Joanne Johnson, Tim Neal, Claire Stanbury and Carly Stoddart.

OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Kirsty-Leigh Parker.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney and Mark Last.

95 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

96 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Meetings held on 17 December 2025 (Minute Nos. 586 – 590), 13 January 2026 (Minute Nos. 596 – 600), and the Ordinary Meetings held on 11 March 2026 (Minute Nos. 795 – 804) and 13 May 2026 (Minute Nos. 14-15 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records

97 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

98 **Matters Arising**

99 **Forward Decisions Plan**

100 **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Results of Public Consultation and Adoption.**

The Planning Manager introduced the report which set out the outcome of the public consultation exercise undertaken between 30 March and 29 April 2026, during which 12 responses had been received.
Members were invited to ask questions and provide comments.
Points raised by Members included:

- Concern regarding the increasing number and concentration of HMOs in parts of the Borough, particularly in Sheerness.
- The relationship between HMOs and the lack of one- and two-bedroom accommodation within the Borough's housing mix.
- The impact of HMOs on parking, waste, infrastructure and local amenity.
- The importance of providing clear guidance for town and parish councils when commenting on planning applications.
- General support for the SPD as a useful tool in managing HMO development and thanked officers for the work undertaken.

In response, officed advised:
- The SPD would not introduce new planning policy but would provide guidance on how existing Local Plan policies are applied.
- The document would be used to guide decision-making on planning applications, including issues such as concentration, parking and waste.
- The SPD would not prevent HMOs, but would seek to ensure they were provided in appropriate locations and to an acceptable standard.
- Further clarification and engagement with parish and town councils could be undertaken outside of the meeting if required.

Resolved:
(1) That the responses to the consultation be noted; and
(2) That Full Council be recommended to adopt the HMO SPD.

101 **PlanX Software - approach to Service Charge**

The Digital Improvement Manager introduced the report and outlined that the Council had received grant funding to purchase a subscription to the PlanX digital planning platform, which would enable a range of online planning services to be delivered through the Council's website.

Members were advised that the platform would provide both guidance services and fee-based services, such as pre-application advice and submission of amendments, and would allow customers to access planning information in one place with improved efficiency and accuracy.

It was further outlined that the proposed service charge would apply to fee-based services, contribute towards the ongoing cost of the platform, and support the aim of making the system self-funding over time, with the recommended approach being to apply the charge in addition to existing fees rather than adjusting the current fee structure.

Points raised by Members included:
- Clarification regarding where customer data would be stored and whether there were any data protection implications.
- Whether neighbouring authorities were also applying similar service charges.

In response, officers advised that:
- All data generated through the platform would remain under the control of the Council.
- Information regarding other authorities' approaches was limited, so was unsure whether they were applying the service charge or not.

Resolved:
(1) That the Committee recommend to Full Council that the service charge be applied as set out in the report.

102 **Financial Management Report - Outturn 2025/26**

The Head of Finance and Procurement introduced the report and outlined the final outturn position for 2025/26, advising that the overall financial position had improved compared to that originally budgeted, with a reduced requirement to draw on reserves.

It was explained that whilst there had been overspends within Housing and Community Services, primarily due to increasing demand and costs associated with temporary accommodation, and within Planning due to income and staffing pressures, these had been offset by underspends within corporate budgets.

Members were further advised that the position reflected careful financial management across the year and that work would continue to address underlying service pressures through future budget-setting processes.

Points raised by Members included:

- Concern regarding the overspend in Housing and Community Services, particularly in relation to temporary accommodation costs.
- The continuing overspend in Planning and the challenges in recruitment and income generation.
- Queries regarding the use of reserves and whether the current position was sustainable.

In response, the officers advised that:

- The final position required a reduced use of reserves compared with that originally budgeted, resulting in a more favourable outcome.
- The housing overspend was largely due to increased demand and cost pressures in temporary accommodation.
- The planning overspend reflected both staffing pressures and lower than anticipated income.
- A significant underspend in corporate budgets had offset service overspends and reduced the overall call on reserves.
- Work was ongoing to address underlying pressures through budget setting and service improvements.

Resolved:

(1) That the outturn position be noted;
(2) That the level of reserves be noted; and
(3) That capital expenditure and slippage be noted.

103 **Contract for Insurance coverage and associated costs**

The Head of Finance and Procurement introduced the report and outlined the current position in respect of the Council’s insurance contracts, advising that these had been procured on a multi-year basis with options to extend.

It was explained that the contracts had performed well to date and delivered value for money, and that the report sought approval to take up the next available extension and delegate authority for a further extension if appropriate.

Members were also advised that this approach would provide flexibility in light of uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation, whilst ensuring continuity of cover, with provision included to retender the contracts on a similar basis should that be required

Points raised by Members included:

- The implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on contract

timelines.
- Whether further extensions beyond those proposed would be possible.
- The flexibility available should anticipated LGR timelines change.

In response, the Head of Finance and Procurement advised that:
- The contract structure allowed for a maximum of two one-year extensions and no further extension was available under procurement rules.
- If circumstances changed, alternative arrangements could be explored, including procurement in collaboration with other authorities.
- Delegation of authority for the second extension would allow flexibility once there was greater clarity regarding LGR timelines.

Resolved:
(1) That the first extension be approved;
(2) That authority be delegated for the second extension; and
(3) That the contract be retendered on the same basis if required.

104 **Performance Management March 2026 and Quarter 4 / year-end 2025/26**

The Information Governance Manager introduced the report and outlined the performance position for Quarter 4 and the year-end, advising that overall performance remained strong, with all indicators reported as green for the quarterly indicators.

It was explained that the report also set out proposed changes to performance indicators for 2026/27 to ensure they remained relevant and meaningful, and that performance monitoring continued to be used as a management tool to identify areas for review and improvement.

Members were further advised that additional narrative and context would continue to be provided alongside performance data to support interpretation of results.

Points raised by Members included:
- Recognition of the overall strong performance, with all quarterly indicators reported as green.
- Queries regarding specific indicators, including waste collection performance, planning appeals and sickness absence trends.
- Requests for greater clarity and contextual narrative in some indicators, particularly around missed bins and communal collections.
- Queries regarding safeguarding training completion rates.

In response, officers advised that:
- Performance indicators were used as a tool to identify areas for review rather than simply to measure success or failure.
- Some indicators reflected cumulative data or reporting methodology rather than a deterioration in performance.
- Missed bin indicators were being aligned with industry standards to improve accuracy of reporting.
- Safeguarding training compliance issues were generally due to timing factors (e.g. leave or deadlines) rather than non-compliance, with processes in place to ensure completion.

Resolved:
(1) That the performance report be noted; and
(2) That the proposed changes to performance indicators for 2026/27 be

agreed.

105 **URGENT Item - Member appointments to joint arrangements**

The Director of Resources introduced the report, apologised for the late paper, and outlined that the purpose of the item was to seek agreement to the Council's member representation for the 2026/27 municipal year on the Mid Kent Services Board and the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee.

It was further outlined that the proposed approach was to reappoint the existing Members who had undertaken these roles in 2025/26, namely Councillors Tim Gibson and Alex Eyre to the Mid Kent Services Board, and Councillors Tim Gibson and Claire Martin to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee.

Points raised by Members included:
- Support for the proposed reappointments.
- Concerns regarding the transparency and accountability of the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership, with Members noting that agendas, minutes and feedback from meetings were not routinely shared with the Committee.
- A request that greater visibility be provided to Members in respect of the partnership's work.
- Queries regarding the timing of appointments and whether these could be made when meetings were scheduled to take place.

In response, officers advised that:
- The work of Mid Kent Services was reported through the Council's existing budget and performance reporting arrangements.
- Meetings of the partnership did not take place frequently and were primarily focussed on budget and performance matters.
- There was no intention to withhold information and relevant information could be shared with Members where appropriate.
- Future reporting mechanisms could be considered, including providing updates to the Committee where necessary, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation.

Resolved:
(1) That Councillors Tim Gibson and Alex Eyre be reappointed to the Mid Kent Services Board for the 2026/27 municipal year; and
(2) That Councillors Tim Gibson and Claire Martin be reappointed to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Chair

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