
SHEPPEY COUNCILLORS AND RESIDENTS FORUM

MINUTES of the Meeting held in Leysdown Village Hall, James Court, Wing Road, Leysdown-on-Sea, Sheerness ME12 4RS on Thursday, 11 June 2026 from 7.00 pm - 9.23 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Hayden Brawn, Angela Harrison, Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Lee-Anne Moore (Chair), Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Ashley Shiel, Mike Whiting and Dolley Wooster.

NOMINATED PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parish/Town Councillors Wendy Benton, Mike Brown, Sarah Poole and Tracy Rogers (Eastchurch Parish Council (PC)), Louise Switters, Gaynor Bidgood, Geoff Partis and Sarah Poole (Leysdown PC), John Nurden (Minster-on-Sea PC), Jackie Constable and Sue Simpson (Queenborough Town Council (TC)) and Chris Reed (Sheerness TC).

OFFICERS PRESENT: Janet Dart, Rebecca Dart and Larissa Reed.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Robert Veale, Assistant Director of Education, Kent County Council.
Garry Ratcliffe, Chair of East Sheppey Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board.
Councillor Maxwell Harrison, Kent County Council Divisional Member for Sheppey.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Mark Tucker.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth, Elliott Jayes and Pete Neal.

69 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

70 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 February 2026 (Minute Nos 686 – 697) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lee-Anne Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest as she had a child affected by the school placement issues on the Isle of Sheppey.

72 UPDATE FROM KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ABOUT EDUCATION PROVISION ON THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY

The Chair introduced Robert Veale, the Assistant Director for Education at Kent County Council (KCC) who had been invited to give an update about education provision on the Isle of Sheppey. The Chair said that she and Councillor Dolley Wooster had been leading on bringing this item to the Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum.

Mr Veale introduced himself and explained that there were 4 Assistant Directors for Education in Kent and he covered the Borough of Swale and part of his role focused around people based planning. He said that he was not able to answer specific questions about individual children during the meeting, but would stay to the end of the meeting and would be able to take details of queries back to the appropriate officers at KCC.

He said that after the Oasis Academy had been placed into special measures, the decision was taken that the Isle of Sheppey needed two smaller schools. As KCC were not able to open new schools, two academies came forward and established the Leigh Academy, Minster, and East Kent College Secondary. As a result there were now two successful secondary schools on the Isle of Sheppey.

At that time, the planned admission numbers was 390 pupils, however, both Chief Executives of the individual academy trusts felt that to deliver higher quality education on the Isle of Sheppey, they would reduce that figure to 330. Since then KCC had been in negotiation with both academies to permanently expand the Leigh Academy by 60 pupils and East Kent College Secondary by 30 pupils. This process would take a long time and would not be achieved until September 2028. Pupil place pressure in September 2027 would mean that 5 extra forms would be needed. KCC were following up with individual schools to see how the extra places could be found. KCC could ask schools to expand but schools do not have to agree. If necessary the Department for Education (DfE) would be asked to intercede.

The following comments were raised:

- As KCC dealt with births deaths marriages, why were places not anticipated?;
- funding had been ring-fenced for a new primary school following the Queenborough and Rushenden redevelopment. As the new school was not needed, could that funding be reallocated to the secondary schools?;
- there was a huge amount of SEND (special education needs and disabilities) families on the island and at some point they have all felt lonely and isolated. Why were growing numbers of children falling out of the process when EHCPs (education, health and care plan) allow places of education to say they cannot meet the needs of these children all leading to children being not supported for their education for sometimes years at a time? This would not be acceptable for a mainstream child so why are KCC creating a two tier system where the most vulnerable are hardest hit?;
- could mobile classrooms be used to accommodate the extra forms?;
- some children had not attended school since the end of last year despite going through the appeals process. KCC had given them a place at the Abbey School, Faversham but the parents could not transport them there;
- parents were told to put all of the options down on the admissions form and they were still allocated the Abbey School, Faversham;
- why were proposed solutions to transport children to schools off the Isle of Sheppey not implemented by KCC?;
- what was the plan for children on the Isle of Sheppey for when the Sittingbourne School was full?; and

- with so many houses planned to be built on the Isle of Sheppey, what was KCC's plan to accommodate the increased number of children?

Mr Veale responded that in the long-term KCC would be facing falling birth-rates and were aware of the places required, but they only had certain levers to find additional places. Councillors and Members of Parliament could write to the DfE to lobby them to provide extra funding. The Government knows that nationally education system, especially around SEND, was broken. The Government were pushing a White Paper through with reforms and KCC had £20 million earmarked for specialist resource provisions. The education budget in Kent was under pressure due to buying places from the independent sector which took funding away from mainstream schools. KCC only had the money provided by Government. KCC did not have the powers to tell an academy they were going to put mobile classrooms on their grounds. There was a huge revenue costs to provide mobile classrooms. The system for ranking and placements was very complex. Some parents had not put any choice of school on their admission forms, more recently information sessions had been held on how to fill out the form correctly. The KCC Cabinet Member for Education was determined that there would not be a repeat what happened in 2025. All schools were going to have to work together to come up with the extra 5 forms of entry and the problems about placements in distant schools would need to be taken into account. A new secondary school in north west Sittingbourne was in the pipeline. There was Government formula used called the pupil product ratio which was used by KCC and developers to give an indicative number of pupils when new housing was planned, it included inward migration.

Mr Veale was arranging for Councillor Wooster to meet with education officers at KCC to discuss the issues parents were experiencing.

The Chair thanked Mr Veale for taking the time to come and talk to the Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum.

73 PRIDE IN PLACE UPDATE

Garry Ratcliffe, the Chair of East Sheppey Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board introduced himself and said that he hoped to get to know residents as the project continued. He talked about his background and his links to the Isle of Sheppey as well as his vision for the project. He said he felt privileged to have been selected as Chair of the Board. Mr Ratcliffe hoped that by working in partnership with other organisations, it would be possible to raise funds to extend the project beyond 10 years.

A plan needed to be in place by November 2026 and an Expression of Interest had gone out for people to join the Board. The Board needed to be appointed by the end of July, the criteria set by Government was that there should be a minimum of 8 people but he hoped to have between 10 and 12. He introduced Daniel Mays who was also on the Board. He said it would not be a political Board and every voice would be listened to.

Rapid work would then need to take place to develop and submit a plan. He and fellow Board members would be knocking on doors to get ideas and opinions. The

areas covered by the project included Leysdown, Warden, Eastchurch and a couple of roads in Minster.

Mr Ratcliffe concluded by saying that he was happy for people to contact him direct by email garryrat@me.com

74 SHEERNESS REVIVAL PROJECT UPDATE

The update report was noted.

A question was asked about the Minster Medical Practice consultation on their proposal not to move their GP services permanently back to the Healthy Living Centre and if this was a breach of contract. The Chief Executive responded that SBC were seeking legal advice about what the next steps should be.

75 PUBLIC FORUM

An item raised under this item on car parking in Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey, was discussed under the following item, car parking on the Isle of Sheppey.

76 CAR PARKING ON THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY

Simon Fowle said that the new parking charges introduced by SBC on the Isle of Sheppey were affecting businesses and community activities in Queenborough. He said that a petition had been signed by 4,000 people opposing the new charges and this number represented a significant number of businesses and residents. He said people were now avoiding visiting the Queenborough area due to the charges. He asked how SBC councillors proposed to put this right, how the council would support business that had made losses, how they would support affected community activities, and what evidence would be required to show that this policy was causing harm. The 4,000 signatures on the petition represented a clear message asking the council to listen and review the impact of the charges and to work with businesses and residents to find a solution that supported both the council's needs and that of affected businesses and residents. Mr Fowle requested that the councillors at the Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum write to the relevant service committee to ask for the charges to be revoked and show their support for the local community.

Councillor Mike Whiting said he fully supported Mr Fowle's request and said that he had met with businesses in the Halfway area who had raised similar concerns. In particular, staff working at businesses were impacted by the charges and people were now parking on streets and blocking driveways. Commuters in Queenborough were not able to use the SBC car park as there was a time limit so they were having to park on the street. Councillor Tom Nundy would be proposing a Motion at the next Full Council meeting calling for an urgent review of the new parking charges on the Isle of Sheppey. Potentially if businesses were being discouraged from opening in the affected areas, this could affect business rate income. Councillor Whiting had requested revenue figures for car parks across the Isle of Sheppey before the Full Council meeting.

Councillor Nundy said that taking the Motion to Full Council could not result in charges being reversed straight away as it had to go back to the Environmental

Services and Climate Change Committee first, but he would not stop fighting to get the charges reversed.

A request was made to find out what revenue had been generated from Isle of Sheppey car parks and how many fines had been issued. The Chief Executive said that she would request information on income received from car parking fees and fines.

Councillor Ashley Shiel proposed that the Chair of Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum write a letter in support of the Motion going to Full Council on 23 June 2026 calling for an urgent review of the new parking charges on the Isle of Sheppey due to how businesses, residents and road safety were being negatively impacted by the new car parking charges. Councillor Mike Whiting seconded the proposal and on being put to a member and public vote was agreed.

Resolved:

- 1) *That information on income received from car parking fees and fines from Isle of Sheppey car parks be obtained and fed back to the Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum.***
- 2) *That the Chair of Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum write a letter in support of the Motion going to Full Council on 23 June 2026 calling for an urgent review of the new parking charges on the Isle of Sheppey due to how businesses, residents and road safety were being negatively impacted by the new car parking charges.***

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

The update report was noted.

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

The update report was noted.

79 SWALE BUS PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Minutes of the Swale Bus Forum meeting on 21 April 2026 were noted.

The Sheppey Councillors & Residents Forum representative, Councillor Dolley Wooster, advised that the Swale Bus Forum's remit had been amended and would now be discussing Section 106 developer contributions. She also said that the Bus Forum were considering how to tackle bus shelter issues on the Isle of Sheppey.

A question was asked about if the Swale Joint Transportation Board was going to be discontinued. The Chief Executive said that the Board had been reviewed and it was felt that it should continue at this time.

Councillor Wooster was asked to feed the following issues back to the Bus Forum:

- More buses were needed across the Isle of Sheppey so that community services could be supported; and
- bus timetables in some bus shelters were out-of-date, could these be updated?

80 YOU SAID, WE DID (INCLUDING UPDATES ON MATTERS ARISING)

The you said, we did (including matters arising) report was noted.

Members requested that Southern Water be invited to a future meeting.

81 LOCAL ISSUES TO BE RAISED

Sheerness Town Councillor Chris Reed reminded SBC councillors that the Neptune Steps, Sheerness, issue still needed to be resolved.

82 CONFIRMATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO SERVICE COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR CONSIDERATION

No issues were raised.

Chair

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