# Extraordinary Council

**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Monday, 8 June 2026 from 8.00 pm - 8.39 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, Charles Gibson, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison (Deputy Mayor), Carole Jackson, Rich Lehmann, Peter MacDonald, Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Kieran Mishchuk, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Hannah Perkin, Carrie Pollard, Julien Speed, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Terry Thompson, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Steph Curtis, Robin Harris and Tim Neal, Sarah Porter and Larissa Reed.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Derek Carnell, Lloyd Chapman, Roger Clark, Alex Eyre, Kieran Golding, James Hunt, Elliott Jayes, Mark Last, Claire Martin, Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Ashley Shiel, Mark Tucker and Karen Watson.

## 59 Emergency Evacuation Procedure

The Deputy-Mayor in-the-Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

## 60 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

## 61 Local Government Reorganisation Structural Change Order Representation Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Tim Gibson, introduced the report which set out the Council's response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) request for representations on the Structural Change Order (SCO) relating to Local Government Reorganisation.

He proposed the amended recommendations following consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee, including amendments to the transitional governance model, joint committee membership, alignment of parish elections, and the preferred naming convention.

The recommendations were seconded by the Vice-Chair of Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor Lloyd Bowen, who reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to make comments and these included:

- Clarification was sought regarding the proposed membership of joint committees, with concern expressed that the drafting could lead to an excessively large committee if based on predecessor districts rather than assembly areas;
- concern that local government reorganisation represented a significant cost and diversion of officer time and resources away from service delivery and local priorities;
- the view that the programme created opportunity costs, including delays to

strategic projects and impacts on long-term council visions;
- concern regarding the limited information available to Members and the public at this stage of the process and difficulty in assessing the implications of the proposals;
- acknowledgement that, despite concerns, the Council was required to engage constructively with the process and respond to Government;
- a request that maps be included as part of the Council's submission to clearly illustrate the geographical options;
- concern regarding the potential duplication of services (e.g. social care, highways, education) under multiple unitary authorities; and
- support for aligning parish and town council elections with future unitary elections to improve efficiency and clarity.

Councillor Charles Gibson proposed an amendment and seconded by Councillor Rich Lehman to replace the preferred naming convention in Table 3 with the alternative locally-derived naming options set out in Table 4.

Members debated the amendment and comments included:
- Differing views on the preferred naming convention, with some Members supporting simple geographic descriptors (e.g. North, South, East, West Kent) for clarity, while others favoured locally distinctive names to reflect identity and history; and
- concern that naming should ultimately be determined by future authorities in consultation with residents.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

On returning to the substantive, further comments were invited and these included:
- The Council's response formed part of a wider consultation and would not determine the final outcome;
- the Government would ultimately decide the structure and naming of any new authorities; and
- the Council's role was to provide a clear and practical response to influence the implementation arrangements.

***Resolved:***

***(1) To approve that the transitional governance models for all geography options be 'New Council with Joint Committee'***

***(2) To approve the proposed membership of the Joint Committees as set out below:***

| Geography Proposal | Swale Representation | Membership of Joint Committee |
|---|---|---|
| 1A | Representation to be determined by each area assembly area | Leader (or representative) + one member per area assembly area<br><br>Leader (or representative) + one member for both County and existing Unitary |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3A | 2 members | Leader (or representative) + one member per predecessor district/borough;<br>same approach for county/unitary |
| 4B | 2 members | Leader (or representative) + one member per predecessor district/borough;<br>same approach for county/unitary |
| 4D | 3 members across multiple JCs | Specifically for Swale BC: Leader (or representative) on JC of area with greatest population (North Kent); One other on East Kent; One other on Mid Kent.<br>Other Districts and Boroughs to determine their own representation<br>Leader (or representative) + one other for predecessor county/unitary council |
| 5A | 3 members across multiple JCs | Leader on JC of area with greatest population (North Kent) plus one other<br>One other on East Kent.<br>Other Districts and Boroughs to determine their own representation<br>Leader (or representative) + one other for predecessor county/unitary council |

***(3) To approve that the Chair and Deputy Chair of each Joint Committee be appointed by the relevant Joint Committee at its inaugural meeting.***
***(4) To approve that the proposed Joint Committees should not be subject to political balance requirements.***
***(5) To approve that each Joint Committee agree, at its inaugural meeting, the Returning Officer for the first election to its relevant Shadow Authority.***
***(6) To approve the proposed membership of the Implementation Team, with the Kent County Council Chief Executive appointed as Senior Responsible Officer for the overall programme, the Medway Council Chief Executive appointed as Deputy Senior Responsible Officer, and the Unitary Senior Responsible Officers appointed from the existing pool of borough and district Chief Executives.***
***(7) To approve that parish and town council elections should be aligned with elections to the new unitary authorities, with the first term aligning with elections to the new authorities for 5 years.***
***(8) To approve the preferred naming convention for the new councils as outlined in Table 3 in section 2.15 of this report, with the new authorities to work with residents to agree any changes in names of each new council.***
***(9) To note that no further modelling has been undertaken on councillor numbers for the proposed geographic models under consideration.***
***(10) That delegation be granted to the chief executive to submit the council's response to MHCLG and, in consultation with the Leader, make any minor amendments as required.***

Deputy Mayor

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