

Housing, Health & Communities Committee	
Meeting Date	20 th January 2026
Report Title	Sport England Place Partnership Programme
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing & Communities
Lead Officer	Sarah–Jane Radley, Community & Partnerships Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To note the update provided on Swale being accepted as a Place Partnership by Sport England. 2. To agree that the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee and the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods to sit on the Board of the Swale Place Partnership with delegated authority to contribute towards the delivery of the project. 3. To delegate authority to the Head of Environment and Leisure to use a relevant procurement framework to appoint consultants for the feasibility work for Sheerness Pool.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out information regarding the Sport England Place Partnership Programme, and what this means for Swale given the announcement that it has been successful in becoming a Place Partnership.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 Active Kent and Medway (AKM) is one of 43 Active Partnerships in England. The principal founders are Sport England and Kent County Council (KCC) via a Public Health Grant, whose strategies and priority outcomes set out the direction of its work and activity.
- 2.2 AKM's vision is 'more people, more active, more often' with a mission to 'change and improve lives through sport and physical activity'. In order to achieve this, AKM aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity with a focus on encouraging the least active of Kent and Medway's 1.9 million residents to become more active. This is achieved through the promotion of the associated personal and public health benefits and targeting resources where data demonstrates need is greatest, especially at those from under-represented groups including women, older people, people living with a disability or long-term

health condition, ethnically diverse communities and people from lower socio-economic groups.

- 2.3 AKM engages with partners and networks across the county including those in health, adult social care, community safety, housing, and transport as well as governing bodies of sport, clubs, school sports networks, charities, leisure providers and local authorities, to provide opportunities for everyone to get involved in sport and physical activity for enjoyment as well as wider health and social outcomes.
- 2.4 In November 2023, Sport England announced it would be investing £250 million of lottery and exchequer funding into place-based work. This investment is focused on areas identified as having high levels of inactivity, social need, and health inequalities. The approach is part of a broader strategy to address disparities in physical activity levels and promote healthier lifestyles among communities.
- 2.5 The £250 million investment aims to support local communities by creating opportunities for physical activity and sport. £190 million has been ringfenced for work in 80 places across England identified as having the highest need. Each selected area is in the top 10% of the country for inactivity and deprivation, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions. This funding will be distributed through the Place Partnerships Programme.
- 2.6 Sport England's approach is place-based, meaning it focuses on the needs and assets of each individual community. By partnering with the local organisations, leaders, and Active Partnerships like Active Kent & Medway, the programme aims to address the barriers of physical activity and create tailored solutions. This includes leveraging local resources such as parks, community centres, and sports clubs to foster active lifestyles, as well as working with communities themselves to create sustainable solutions.
- 2.7 The Place Partnership Programme aims to offer significant benefit across a wide range of policy areas from health and education to community safety and employment. Engaging a wide range of partners at a local level will be critical to its success and this is a current area of focus for Active Kent & Medway as it builds local place partnerships.
- 2.8 AKM have successfully secured initial investment for four places in Kent, these include Thanet in its entirety, Gravesham (the wards of Westcourt and North Northfleet), Medway and Swale.
- 2.9 As highlighted on Moving Communities, the top three most deprived wards in Swale are Sheppey East, Sheerness and Murston. The Place Needs Classification identifies Isle of Sheppey (Sheerness East/West, Queenborough, Minster North), Sittingbourne Central and Milton Regis in the top 20%. Moving Communities also shows that areas of St Annes/Priory Wards in Faversham are

within the top 25%. The development award stage will determine whether a geographical or thematic approach will be taken long term.

- 2.10 Initial 'development award' for the first 12 months of work has been secured through Active Kent & Medway.
- 2.11 The initial development awards are a pre-cursor to a full award and designed to facilitate the setting up of local place partnership boards and some early test and learn projects in each place in order to find out where further money could be invested.
- 2.12 Including the development award, indicatively there will be up to £1.6 million of investment available to each place between now and March 2028. There will also be an opportunity to bid for capital funding and there is up to £80 million available across the 80 planned place partnerships.
- 2.13 Swale has been granted a development award of £378,207 between 2025 – 2028 to develop test and learn activities that aim to explore behavioural change to increase activity in the most deprived areas of the borough (see 2.9). Details of this programme will emerge once the Board has been set up.
- 2.14 Agreeing to be a Place Partnership Programme means that capital money from Sport England can be accessed. Swale Borough Council has been awarded £40,000 for some initial feasibility work on the future of Sheerness Pool. Having secured the full refurbishment of the Healthy Living Centre (HLC) in Sheerness (the dry-side leisure centre, GP surgery and home for Sheppey Matters), the focus now shifts to the swimming pool, as this has been identified in the Built Facility Strategy as the next priority for investment that Sport England have supported.
- 2.15 Options to be looked at would be a refurbishment of the current building or a replacement pool attached to the HLC. Feasibility would look at planning considerations, the size of swimming pool required and what other facilities would encourage more physical activity from residents.
- 2.16 The feasibility will require input from leisure specialists, architects and costs consultants in order to develop a business case that would put Swale in a better place to bid for the available capital funding. The intention is to procure this via one of the available leisure frameworks.
- 2.17 The feasibility work will put the council in a better position to bid for further funding to contribute to any improvement works to the pool. Further work will be required to secure the funding for the full cost of the delivery of works to Sheerness Pool.
- 2.18 AKM have recruited a Swale Place Program Manager who will oversee the setup of the Place Partnership Board and implement the localised governance

structure. They will also develop a place theory of change to define shared purpose and clarify and agree clear inputs, outputs and outcomes.

- 2.19 In addition to the Place Program Manager there will be a part time Project Officer to provide administrative duties who will also be employed by AKM and two full time Community Connector roles, employed and deployed within place. Further work is required to define this element.
- 2.20 Appendix I shows the overarching plan for the development of the project.
- 2.21 As a place leader, it is important that the council plays a key role in the Place Partnership, working collaboratively with other local organisations and stakeholders to develop a local vision and delivery plan for the funding. It is felt that the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee and the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods can act as that conduit. It is anticipated that the Community & Partnerships Manager will also be working at an operational level to support the Place Partnership Manager and Community Connector roles where appropriate.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 To note the update provided on Swale being accepted as a Place Partnership by Sport England.
- 3.2 To agree that the Chair of the Housing, Health & Communities Committee and the Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods to sit on the Board of the Swale Place Partnership with delegated authority to contribute towards the delivery of the project.
- 3.3 To delegate authority to the Head of Environment and Leisure to use a relevant procurement framework to appoint consultants for the feasibility work for Sheerness Pool.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 It is not recommended to do nothing, as this will result in a lack of input from SBC for the development and future delivery of the project which could potentially reduce opportunity and impact for Swale residents and services.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation on the development and future delivery of the project will be imbedded into the work of the Place Programme Board and any related delivery groups that are established through the work of the project. Consultation with local residents, businesses, organisations, and services will be a key delivery driver of the Community Connector roles, who will be rooted in the community.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This project aligns to several corporate priorities including: • Community – Supports local groups and organisations to strengthen and grow • Health & Housing – Improving wellbeing and increasing participation in physical activity • Economy – supporting skills and employment in the borough
Financial, Resource and Property	Member and Officer representation to the Place Partnership Board and representation for local delivery groups as required – operational business, no additional resources required. Swale Development Award total allocation: £378,207.00 £296,028.00 available 2025-2027. £82,179.00 available 2027-28. Capital feasibility - £40,000.00 SBC currently makes a funding contribution to Active Kent and Medway of £3000.00 annually.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	This project aims to reduce crime and disorder by engaging local communities in a variety of projects.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	This project aims to improve health and wellbeing by engaging local communities in a variety of projects.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	Place Partnership Board expected to undertake required EQIA and relevant responsibilities as part of the funding arrangements.

Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage
Local Government Reorganisation	Place Partnership Board will oversee the project throughout its lifespan - SBC Officer representation should remain post LGR.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Swale Plan on a page

8 Background Papers

Active Kent website [Place Partnerships in Kent - ActiveKent](#)

Sport England:

Place Partnerships [Our work in places | Sport England](#)

Place Universal Offer [Our work in places | Sport England](#)

Moving Communities Data: [Moving Communities | Sport England](#)