

Strategic Working Group Minutes

Monday 14th April 2025

Present: Cllrs Rowlands, C Martin, Saunders

Apologies: Cllr Eyre

1. Asset Transfer Criteria

A discussion took place on the proposed asset transfer criteria, including whether an item had to tick every box or if over 50% would be sufficient. It was agreed it was a good general checklist and to use it for expressions of interest. Financial information useful to provide a costed business plan. It will be useful to have this information ready to act quickly on potential asset transfers. A number of amendments were agreed.

2. Survey

It was noted that people were starting to think about local government reorganisation. A discussion took place about the four options, the need to engage with neighbouring parishes, gathering evidence and the questions for the next survey.

It was agreed that the council should have a workshop to agree whether they wish to express a view on their preferred model option(s). Hold a separate meeting with parish councils and develop a paper similar to Tenterden Town Council.

3. Budget Update

Items noted for the 25/26 budget included the increase in business rates for 12 Market Place, which had doubled and the annual insurance was 6% higher than the budget.

4. Assets already under consideration

The details regarding transfer of free car parks was noted, with Faversham having the following – Front Brents, Flood Lane, Ospringe, the Rec, Oare Gunpowder Works.

5. Date of Next Meeting

12 May 2.30pm

| | Criteria | General Requirements | What It Looks Like |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | Strategic Alignment | Must align with the council's Strategic Plan and community priorities. | Clear link to council strategies, eg contributing to environmental goals or improving local amenities. |
| 2 | Financial Viability | Full cost assessment, including acquisition, maintenance, and impact on precept. Explore external funding options. | Breakdown of costs, funding sources, and long-term financial sustainability. Costed business plan. |
| 3 | Community Demand, Need or Benefit | Evidence of demand from residents, popular support, need, evidence of need - leading to improved service delivery or local control. | Resident surveys, petitions, or gaps in service provision identified. |
| 4 | Legal and Governance Considerations | Due diligence on legal responsibilities, liabilities, and statutory obligations. Formal agreements with Swale BC/Kent CC. | Legal advice, contracts, and documented agreements ensuring compliance. |
| 5 | Operational Capacity and Financial Control | The council must have the necessary resources, staff, or partnerships to manage effectively, efficiently and economically | Staffing levels, recruitment, partnerships with external agencies, and operational plans. |
| 6 | Sustainability and Long-Term Management | Asset/service must be maintainable in the long term, considering environmental impact. | Lifecycle planning, eco-friendly considerations, and maintenance schedules. |
| 7 | Risk Management | Identification and mitigation of financial, operational, and reputational risks. | Risk register, mitigation strategies, and contingency planning. |
| 8 | Decision-Making and Transparency | Review by the Strategic Working Group, recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee for approval by Full Council, and public consultation. | Documented meeting minutes, public engagement reports, and decision timelines. |