

Council – 19 October 2023

Schedule of written responses to public questions not answered at the meeting

7 Public questions

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**Full Council 19 October 2023 – Schedule of written responses to
Public questions not answered at the meeting**

Agenda Reference	Question	Response
7B	<p>Jessica McCann, of Hoo, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“I am concerned at the lack of rail links in Hoo. Our nearest station is 5 miles away and we are forced to drive. Yet money is spent on cycling lanes. In an area where there are no shops or infrastructure for the locals, cycle lanes will not help transport in Hoo. We need better bus routes in the morning. It takes someone 35 minutes on the bus to get to the nearest station.</p> <p>If you think this is acceptable, please explain why?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Jessica.</p> <p>The recent highway improvements on Four Elms Hill were funded by a government grant for cycling. Medway has 81 miles of cycle routes, and we look to promote cycling by improving facilities whenever we can, particularly where there are challenges in terms of congestion and air quality. We also acknowledge the importance of buses, and we are working with our operators to improve services across Medway. This includes looking at how bus services connect with other modes of travel at key interchanges, including Strood Station, and improving journey times by tackling congestion hotspots. We have received some Government funding for supporting and enhancing our bus services. Work on this is underway, and we are also developing some initiatives that we hope will attract new passengers onto our bus network.</p>
7C	<p>Lindsey Burke, of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services, Councillor Price, the following:</p> <p>“As Medway Council has now entered a SEND Safety Valve Agreement with the Conservative Government, I hope they can reassure parents of SEND children in Medway how they are making sure they are fully compliant with their legal obligations to children and young people with SEND over the five-</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>In 2020-21, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced the Safety Valve Intervention Programme (SVIP) to support local authorities with the very highest percentage Dedicated Schools Grant deficits.</p> <p>The SVIP is a substantial plan that reforms the high needs system and associated spending to rapidly place it on a sustainable footing and manage its spending within the funding envelope provided by the DfE, whilst delivering the sufficiency and quality of provision required to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those</p>

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	<p>year safety valve agreement.</p> <p>Will they explain what this arrangement is in more detail to help us understand better what the safety valve intervention programme means for children and young people’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) unlike the current Government’s smoke screen?”</p>	<p>unable to attend school for reasons of exclusion or a health need.</p> <p>The SV plan focuses on 4 main areas of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriately manage the demand for EHCPs, ensuring that requests are timely and appropriate and supported by education and health professionals. • Increase the proportion of children and young people with SEND who receive high quality education and achieve their potential in mainstream schools. • Ensure the use of appropriate and cost-effective provision and services. Including ensuring our internal systems are efficient and effective in meeting our statutory duties. • Ensure there is sufficient appropriate provision available for all children and young people with SEN, in Medway. <p>The Council is committed to ensure the EHC Assessments and Plans are completed within our statutory timeframes, and I am confident that there is a robust plan in place to reduce the current backlog. We expect to be caught-up with our backlog as soon as is practically possible but certainly by April 2024.</p> <p>The work of this plan dovetails with the joint area SEND strategy.</p>

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7D	<p>Peter Harrison, of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“‘Have your say’ would seem to be another complete waste of time, as the Council listen and take absolutely no notice of the general consensus of the majority of Medway residents.</p> <p>For example, regarding the red route through Rainham, sixty percent of respondents don't think it is needed, yet, the Council is still going ahead at a cost of £805,000 (the total cost for the introduction of the five schemes across Medway).</p> <p>So, I do wonder what is the point of 'Have your say', I believe that Medway is turning into a communist council, not a democratic council.</p> <p>Why are you not listening to the residents of Medway?”</p>	<p>Peter, thank you for your question. I appreciate your concerns over the need to consult and listen, however I can assure you we are keen to consult with our community in every way we can. For example, just in the few months since forming the new administration for Medway we have consulted over plans for the new country parks at Temple Marsh in Strood and Deangate on the Hoo peninsula. We are also consulting on the Design Code for Chatham Centre and the new Medway Local Plan. I would strongly encourage everyone to take part in these, and the response so far on the Local Plan has been fantastic.</p> <p>With regard to the red routes, I am a little surprised to see the report being challenged, as again this was a request to the Council for us to carry out the statutory consultation, as we are required to do. The first informal engagement with residents in Rainham showed that within a 1KM radius of the A2 in the centre of Rainham, 126 people were opposed to the scheme while 247 said they were in favour and 598 people said that Rainham had congestion issues on the A2.</p> <p>Bearing in mind the population of Rainham is about 9,000 people and there are around 24,000 vehicles using the A2 through Rainham every day, this statutory consultation is really important, and to have it called in by the Conservative Group is somewhat confusing.</p> <p>I would add that the centre of Rainham has serious air quality issues, as recognised by its status as an Air Quality Management Area by the Government. The red routes</p>

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		<p>scheme would be part of our wider strategy to reduce congestion and air pollution in Medway as a whole for the benefit of the local economy, the environment and most especially the health and wellbeing of our residents. But as I have stressed we are now in the consultation phase for this.</p> <p>We are listening to local people and, since receiving the democratic mandate of the people in Medway in May this year, we are now carrying out much wider community engagement than ever.</p>
7E	<p>Tracey Wilson, of Strood, asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:</p> <p>“If you cannot even run a proper facility for shoppers to go to the toilet (In relation to the unusable automatic public convenience (APC) in Newark Yard, Strood – and which has recently been set fire to), how on earth are you supposed to be running Medway?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, over the last two weeks prior to the vandalism, a range of options have been presented to either replace or refurbish the Automatic Public Convenience in Newark Yard, Strood.</p> <p>The vandalism has now caused the immediate need to remove the remains of the toilet facility for Health and Safety reasons, and whilst this is unfortunate, we will still be looking at the options to replace this facility and bring it quickly back into use for the local community.</p> <p>Medway Council are currently working with the APC provider to arrange a safe removal of the vandalised APC and make the area safe for the public. This will give us the platform to be able to install a new public toilet facility that will also have appropriate signage. In the short term, we are exploring options to ensure there is a public toilet offering in Strood but it is a key priority to ensure a solution is put in place quickly to ensure the public have the facilities required in Strood town centre.</p>

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7J	<p>Carl Dunks, of Rainham, asked the Deputy Leader, Councillor Murray, the following:</p> <p>“Can there be a wholesale review of mental health in the Medway Towns? As with my Tourette’s, Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), there is no help whatsoever and a lack of knowledge about the condition as well.”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. It is really important that people with neurodiverse conditions such as Tourette’s syndrome and autism receive the care and support they need. Whilst progress is being made by our local NHS Services to deliver the national strategy for Autistic Children and Young People published in 2021, more does need to be done to increase awareness about these particular conditions, in adults in particular.</p> <p>I am aware that the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board are currently focussed on delivering the national ambition to improve outcomes for people with neurodiverse conditions. They are also commissioning an improved range of community based services as an alternative to hospital treatment, for example the Kent and Medway Complex Autism Service (KAMCAS). There is also a specific Dynamic Support Database. This system enables the NHS to risk assess and align, multi-agency support to people living in the community in crisis.</p> <p>There are a range of support options available for those waiting for assessment and/or medication. These include, workshops, coaching, peer support, advocacy services and access to a mobile app designed to support patients. You may also be aware of the Medway Neurological Network. This local community group provides a range of support options for people with neurodiverse condition.</p> <p>In terms of a wider review of mental health issues, this is a very complex issue. The Kent and Medway ICB</p>

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		<p>are currently working with people with lived experience to develop an all age neurodevelopmental strategy. The Council will continue to work with the ICB, residents and the voluntary and community sector to advocate for services to meet the needs of the Medway population.</p>
7K	<p>Question 7K – Alan Wells, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“The Environment Agency's report TE2100 has stated that flash floods and flooding are projected to rise considerably by 2050.</p> <p>Land on some parts of the Hoo Peninsula falls within flood zone 3 which has a high probability of flooding. Flood defences have been built to protect and reduce flooding, but do not completely stop the chance of flooding because they can be overtopped or fail.</p> <p>Flood defence upgrades can deliver social value and multiple benefits. In some places in the outer estuary, they will need to be in place earlier. This is because planning for defence raising will need to start before 2030.</p> <p>In relation to North Kent Marshes Policy Unit: Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100), on what needs to be done to manage flood</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. The Council is working with relevant stakeholders such as the Thames Tidal Council, The Environment Agency, the Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) and the Association of Drainage Authorities to fully assess and understand the flood risk within Medway.</p> <p>We are also working with the Thames RFCC on updating and reviewing their strategies to ensure that any flood defence improvements can be suitably assessed and implemented. Additionally, we are working with the Environment Agency to review their MEASS (Medway Estuary and Swale strategy) which looks at the existing flood defences within the Medway Estuary and makes recommendations, based on modelling, on flood defence improvements within Medway.</p> <p>Finally, we have recently updated our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which recognises those areas that are currently at high risk of flooding. This document will be updated every five years to ensure that if there are any changes to flood risk this can be accounted for. Finally, with the development of the Local Plan the Lead Local Flood Authority is working with the Planning Policy team to ensure that</p>

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	<p>risk and adapt to rising sea levels. The North Kent Marshes Policy Unit consists of two large areas north and west of the village of Cliffe. It extends from Gravesend to St Mary's Marshes and includes Cliffe.</p> <p>The areas at risk of flooding include freshwater grazing marshes and designated freshwater habitats. There are also designated intertidal habitats along much of the estuary frontage. The marshes also contain valuable historic, military and industrial features, such as: Shornemeade Fort, Cliffe Fort and Cliffe Gunpowder Works. TE2100 states that there is currently no riverside strategy for this area.</p> <p>The Council will need to produce strategies either as a standalone document or part of a Local Plan, and be in place by 2030. In some places in the outer estuary, they will need to be in place earlier. This is because planning for defence raising will need to start before 2030. Decisions taken by the Council in the 2020s will determine the quality of public space along the river for generations.</p> <p>What strategies will the Council put in place to manage flood risks, for future flood defence</p>	<p>there is greater emphasis on reducing flood risk.</p> <p>We would suggest that all residents sign up to the MET Office Warning system to ensure that they receive sufficient warnings for weather events and for any resident that lives close to the River Medway to also sign up for the Environment Agency Flood Warning system which provides alerts for Flood Alerts and warning for residents to prepare.</p> <p>To summarise, Medway Council is working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that flood risks, both current and future, are suitably addressed within policy.</p>

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	<p>requirements, so that communities and businesses are more aware of flood risk and able to adapt, respond and recover from flooding? This is particularly important in areas where flood risk will increase over time with climate change.”</p>	
70	<p>Kate Belmonte, of Gillingham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“In 2021 I was part of the Pump Lane Steering Group who successfully fought against AC Goatham’s application to destroy 126 acres of prime agricultural land in Rainham.</p> <p>Medway Council has now published a new Land Availability Assessment report as part of its Local Plan consultation process. I note that within the report it recommends that the land, which was saved from development, should proceed to Stage 2 of the assessment process.</p> <p>Medway Council spent tens of thousands of tax payers’ money to protect this land, are they now happy to concrete over the orchards?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question and your interest in our work on the new Local Plan. I would like to clarify the status of the sites included in the Land Availability Assessment. This report represents an early stage in the process of identifying and assessing potential development sites. The Council follows government guidance in including a wide range of sites in the scoping for potential future development options.</p> <p>At present the sites only reflect those being put forward by developers and land promoters. The current report does not indicate preferred or suitable sites. The Council will be assessing each site against a range of criteria, including landscape and transport impacts, and will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. It is only when this further assessment work is completed that the Council will identify those sites that are considered suitable for allocating for sustainable development in the new Local Plan.</p> <p>The current consultation on the Local Plan gives residents an opportunity to make comments in relation to potential areas for development across Medway. We would welcome your comments.</p>

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