

Public Questions

Question A – Tim Johnston, of Rochester, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, the following:

There has been a rise in shops dedicated to vaping as well as other shops - even takeaways - selling vape products. This is a problem for public health as well as a blight on the high street, particularly in conservation areas such as Rochester High Street.

What powers are already available to close vape shops or restrict the display and advertisement of vapes in Medway?

Question B – Chris Webb, of Rochester, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:

Lloyds Bank branch in Strood is closing on 4 April. Lloyds' Chatham branch will then be its only branch serving Medway, which currently has a population of approximately 280,000. The Strood branch closure will result in severe inconvenience and loss of an essential face to face, in person service, particularly to those customers without the internet who currently rely on this branch for their banking needs.

Will the Council make strong representations to Lloyds Bank, at a senior level, to oppose this unjustified closure?

Question C – Paul Khera, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

How does the Labour administration in Medway plan to safeguard Chatham Docks as a functional industrial facility, emphasising the need to protect long-term employment opportunities for local residents and preserving the historical significance of one of the last working docks in Chatham, particularly in the face of potential future redevelopment proposals for housing projects?

Question D – Michael Evans, of Rochester, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Medway Foodbank is troubled by the absence of confirmation in the Government's Autumn Statement there will be a continuation of the Household Support Fund beyond March 2024. The fund plays a vital role providing emergency support to vulnerable Medway households with expenses such as food, school uniforms and utilities, which is all the more important during the Cost-of-Living crisis. We expect to see a spike in foodbank use if it is discontinued.

Will Medway Council seek an urgent assurance from the Department for Work and Pensions that the Household Support Fund will remain in place beyond 31 March 2024?

Question E – Andrew James, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

The response to the initial consultation on the Red Route proposal for Rainham has resulted in the creation of three additional loading bays, two of which are at the front tip of existing bus stops (one outside Poulton's and one outside Lukehurst's) and the third occupying the full width of one lane outside the Nationwide Building Society. All of these proposed design changes appear, from a resident's perspective, to have a negative rather than positive impact on public transport and emergency service transit (travelling east), and in the case of the Nationwide loading bay, an increased danger to cyclists who are now being forced into the middle lane.

How have these negative impacts been accounted for in the planning of the proposed design changes?

Question F – Mary Smith, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Price, the following:

I note, with pleasure, the Council's stated intention to start helping with the housing of unaccompanied child asylum seekers. Please will the Council now publish a timetable for starting to accept these very vulnerable children?

Question G – Yasmin Khan, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council Councillor Maple, the following:

On the evening of 19 December, at a Medway Palestine Solidarity Campaign protest outside the St George's Centre, four police officers, and at least five contract security staff who were paid on an overtime basis, had been drafted in to provide "security".

I am unaware of this level of security or policing at any Council meeting in the past or indeed at any other Medway Palestine Solidarity Campaign protest.

The police in attendance confirmed that they were not aware of any issues of concern in relation to anyone involved in a demonstration organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Medway.

I am stunned at Medway Labour's clearly biased perception of pro-Palestinian protestors and found the level of police and security there insulting, particularly given that our campaign is centred around ending violence and calling for peace.

Equally, it is an appalling waste of strained public funds and police time.

In relation to 19 December, at a time when critical budgets are strained, how does Medway Labour justify such security measures, requiring both expenditure on out of hours security staff and use of police time, when our police forces are already under pressure?

Question H – Jeremy Spyby-Stearson, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

A recent public demonstration saw £618.23 of public money spent on extra security, with questions raised about the cost, or impact, of the police who also attended.

Can you please confirm if you believe that it is an appropriate use of public resources to over-police members of the public exercising their public function in a peaceful manner? Demonstration we might add where the local police themselves have reported no concerns about.

Question I – Sanjeela Ahmed, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

As the conflict in Gaza rages on, I can't help but feel compelled to reinforce the campaign made by the Medway branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Please confirm what assurances you have sought from BAE Systems that parts built in Medway, by the people of Medway, are not being used against the people of Palestine.

Question J – Onyx Rist, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

The bus services that run near or on Otterham Quay Lane do not meet demand, specifically due to new developments (which are a positive thing, as I live in one). I realise the new Administration has inherited a debt from the previous Administration that means the Council probably can't fund bus services but could the Council have a conversation with commercial bus operators, such as Arriva, about running the 132 service to divert down Station Road, Wakeley Road and Otterham Quay Lane on early mornings, evenings and at weekends to help out elderly or vulnerable residents who might not be able to walk to Mierscourt Road when the Chalkwell or Nu-Venture services do not run?

Question K – Bryan Fowler, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:

What resources, including financial contributions, have you been able to secure from the London Borough of Newham or from other sources such as Central Government, to facilitate the housing of people in Anchorage House, Chatham?

Question L – Carl Dunks, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:

I have noticed an acute lack of investment in Rainham from Medway Council, why is there a lack of opportunity for people such as myself for employment?

Question M – Alan Stockey, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Since this Council took office, you could assume that it has declared a Road Traffic and Congestion Emergency, putting their foot on the gas in their first 100-day plan to penalise inconsiderate motorists and illegal parking to tackle congestion, with only assumed benefits.

They have, by their actions, made clear the level of commitment needed to substantiate a declared emergency, i.e. hire a strategic lead of Front Line Services, hire consultants and commit millions on new technology and services. In contrast, to the declared Climate Emergency, a Climate Emergency UK Scorecard score of 39%, and making zero progress in publishing or reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions, the Council has decided not to replace the head of the Climate Response Team.

What is this Administration planning to do in the next 100 days to show it remains committed to its declared Climate Emergency and inspire the community to take actions that it, to date, has not?"

Question N – Mathew Broadley, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:

I am alarmed to see some recent questionable announcements regarding housing in Medway.

Since the last Council meeting, we have seen plans from the Labour-led Medway Council to sell off two car parks. At the same time the Council-owned Medway Development Company has published the preliminary proposal for the Strood Waterfront, providing zero Council housing.

I note that Gravesham Labour has delivered hundreds of new council homes across multiple sites, yet the Strood Waterfront, being delivered by the Council-owned Medway Development Company, is expected to deliver no social housing as part of this development in a prime location.

Can the Portfolio Holder explain why Medway Labour has failed to ensure that council housing is being delivered as part of the Strood Waterfront proposal, in order to reassure residents who voted Labour that campaign promises to deliver essential council housing will not be a casualty of Labour's campaign to "balance the books"?

Question O – Trish Marchant, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Mahil, the following:

Medway Labour has been a keen contributor and supporter of cultural events across the Medway Towns for many years, from Christmas lights to various festivals and celebrations.

Following the controversy of the Council withdrawing funding from the towns' Christmas lights at short notice will Councillor Mahil confirm what other events, that Medway Labour and the Council have supported historically, will now be subject to cuts or withdrawal of funding, by this Labour Council, in 2024/25?

Question P – Nicholas Chan, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Thankfully, the Christmas household waste collection is now sorted. However, the households had faced a headache with their household waste for weeks when Medway Council had made repeated promises of weekly waste collection. Regrettably, as I went along streets like Delce Road and some patches like Henry Street and William Street after the Christmas and New Year holidays, I've seen uncollected household waste spilling over onto the streets. Uncollected household wastes are normally dealt with by contractors on the next day. But the saga surely has meant it cost residents more for the Council to clean up the streets.

This demonstrated that Council contracts need more comprehensive considerations other than going to the lowest bidder. A waste collection contract that fails to collect means unclean streets, a contract that emits more carbon footprint will cost more on public health in Medway.

As Medway Council prepares for a new dry waste recycling contract, will the Portfolio Holder lead and ensure that a new contract will be comprehensively beneficial to Medway residents?