



COUNCIL PLAN
Quarter 1
Monitoring report

Achieving our Vision – Delivering Our Priorities Overview

This report sets out how the council has performed in the first quarter of this year (April to June 2009) against its priorities and the outcomes it is committed to achieving over the next 1 to 3 years.

Our Priorities

Priority 1: A clean and green environment

What we aim to do:

Our commitment to the environment includes keeping the streets clean, recycling more rubbish and reducing carbon emissions. We will protect our existing green spaces in urban and rural areas, whilst continuing to invest to create parks that can be enjoyed by all. This will create an environment where people have opportunities to take more exercise to improve their health and wellbeing. We seek to plan and deliver our services in a sustainable way to protect the environment for current and future generations.

How well are we doing?

Outlined below is performance against the 4 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'clean and green environment' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as positive progress has been made to sustain our capacity to deliver an improved environment. Performance on 3 key measures of success can be reported this quarter, with a further 4 still awaiting data and 3 with no applicable updates for this quarter. All available indicators are rated green this quarter.

Outcome: Manage, protect, conserve and invest in our open spaces to create parks that can be enjoyed by all

We have achieved our third green flag for a park in Medway – Hillyfields Community Park, and at reassessment have retained the green flags for Riverside Country Park and the Vines. Green Flag is the national standard for parks management and securing three awards demonstrates that the quality of park management is improving in Medway.

During the quarter we have completed refurbishment and improvement to the play area at Copperfields that has included the installation of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The second phase of the improvement programme for Copperfield is scheduled to start in January 2010 and will involve access and entrance way improvements.

To support the programme of improvement, public consultation has been completed on Phase 1 of the delivery plan for the playbuilder scheme and it has been approved by the funder Play England. We are currently preparing contracts to deliver all phase 1 Playbuilder site improvements by the end of March 2010 that will result in the refurbishment and provision of new play equipment. Phase 1 playbuilder sites are Beechings Way, Capstone lower and upper playgrounds, Cherry Trees, Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Darnley Road, High Halstow, Parkwood Green, Rainham Recreation Ground and Rookery Fields. These 11 sites account for 12% of Medway's play areas. Phase 1 sites were selected based on quality audits of existing play provision and public consultation for the Wildlife, Countryside & Open Spaces Strategy.

Consultation has also been completed on plans for new play facilities at Cozenton Park, Jacksons Recreation Ground and Riverside Country Park funded through the Big Lottery Fund. All three designs were informed through planning design workshops to maximise play value of the three schemes and ensure that specific play needs were built into the preferred designs. Contracts for these works and those funded by members capital priorities programme at Wignore Park and

Albermarle Road, are being prepared for tender and are scheduled to be completed by November 2009. Cozenton Wheelpark is scheduled to be completed by May 2010.

Disappointingly, our £2.4m bid to Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish Gillingham Park has been unsuccessful. The £20m "Parks for People" fund was oversubscribed with bids submitted totalling £83m. A revised scheme is being drawn up based on the scheme submitted for Heritage Lottery Funding that went through an extensive consultation programme and a bid for Council capital funds will be considered by cabinet during the second quarter.

Outcome: Manage Medway's waste sustainably and reduce waste sent to landfill.

Early provisional data suggests a recycling rate of 38% for the first quarter, a slight increase on the same quarter of 2008/9 of 36%, indicating we are on track to meet our recycling and waste minimisation targets. For April and May, 64kg and 61kg of household waste was collected per household, ahead of our LAA target of 68kg per month. This sustains the reduction we saw in 08/9, due to the impact of the recession with less replacement and disposal of large household items. We are aiming to sustain the reduction even as the economic effect lessens and in the last quarter we have introduced a new furniture reuse initiative. Last year the change in recycling markets meant that for a significant part of the year recycling of timber was not possible, but new processor has now been identified and is in place. Tonnage figures for both these projects will be available from next quarter to show their impact on reducing landfill. In quarter 1, the Waste Minimisation team have carried out public roadshows on waste minimisation and recycling including at the Countryside Experience, Armed Forces Day, Parkwood Fun Day, as well as 3 roadshows for recycle week and 4 Compost Awareness Week reaching 6,000 and 8,000 people respectively.

Other initiatives include supporting the development of Medway Scrapstore due to open in September, and the Recycle Now competition. The Scrapstore is being set up by the Early Years Foundation located at Bligh School. The waste services team is supporting the development and promotion of this initiative. For a small charge (to cover running costs), the Scrapstore will enable schools to access art and craft materials that would otherwise be too expensive to buy new and would have been thrown away by local businesses. The Scrapstore is due to open in September 2009. This year's Recycle Now competition, launched in the national recycle now week at the end of June, was run in conjunction with Rainham School for Girls. Students were tasked with designing anything from unwanted materials, including bits of wood, old CDs, clothes, plastics bottles, carrier bags etc. Entrants included elegant dresses from scrap materials, a solar powered toy car and a solar powered turbine that produced enough energy to light a bulb.

Although the council has concerns about the reliability of place survey data, the results in relation to refuse collection and doorstep recycling (services which were used by all those who answered the survey) were positive; they showed satisfaction rates of 82.4% and 79.3% which is comfortably above the south-east average of 76.8% and 68.2% respectively. In terms of local tips and household waste recycling centres council satisfaction stood at 76.5% compared to the 72.6% south-east average.

During the quarter we have continued to work on the reletting of the waste contract. In July cabinet decided to award the 7 year refuse collection contract, including recycling and street cleaning, subject to certain formalities. The contract is due to start in November and will include, for the first time, the collection of kitchen and garden waste which is expected to increase recycling rates. A communications campaign is being planned for quarter 3 to raise awareness of these new arrangements and further boost recycling. The contract for the management of the household waste and recycling centres is also being relet with a target to recycle 60% by 2012. The award of the contract for the disposal of residual waste was deferred by cabinet.

Outcome: improving the local street scene

A wide range of council services and the council's contractor Veolia contribute to improving the condition of Medway's street scene and local people's satisfaction with it.

The latest available results (08/9) show that the condition of the streets in terms of littering, graffiti, flyposting and flytipping has improved and is performing well with only 6% of roads falling below acceptable standard on inspection. The first four months inspections were completed at the end of July and will be reported in the next quarter. The number of service requests has remained consistent over the first quarters of 2008/9 and 2009/10. We will be carrying out a residents opinion poll later in the year which will allow us to explore customer satisfaction further – results available for quarter 3 monitoring, and have this quarter introduced a graffiti service customer satisfaction survey – first results will be available in quarter 2.

In the last quarter we have continued our emphasis on enforcement on both public and private land as we believe conditions in both areas affect perception of the area overall. Safer communities officers issued 28 fixed penalty notices – an increase on the previous quarter. 91 areas of private land were cleared as a result of enforcement action.

We also respond to clean up Medway promptly if areas fall below standard. The safer communities service has been reorganised into three areas with an officer responsible for each ward. They proactively undertake regular road walks covering all of their patch in a 4 month period, to identify issues of concern. These areas are then prioritised for close observation to identify the cause and appropriate action taken. We have cleared 581 instances of graffiti this quarter, often in partnership with the Probation Service's community payback scheme.

We are continuing to work on the relet of the street cleaning contract. The new contract which comes into operation from November will include a greater proportion of Medway's streets being cleaned after refuse collection, wheeled bins for waste which should reduce household waste on the streets, and a new rapid response team which will be directed by the council to deal with areas of unmanaged and unowned land.

Outcome: reduce the carbon footprint and foster sustainable development in Medway

As a council we are already performing strongly as we have the lowest carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the south east. This quarter we have focused on taking this work forward through the Energy Saving Trust which will help us continue to deliver this high level of performance. Work will begin in quarter 3 to develop a community engagement project in partnership with the Sunlight Centre to support residents in reducing their energy bills, helping them cut costs at a time when they need it most, whilst reducing their carbon footprint. However, the volume of work undertaken by this project is dependent on additional LAA Exemplar funding. Performance for all council areas on reducing carbon emissions in the local area is calculated centrally by department for Energy and Climate Change who provide data with a two year time lag. So that this indicator can be more accurately performance managed, we have successfully bid for one of 10 free licenses for VantagePoint software from the Energy Saving Trust.

Quarter 1 has focused on collecting baseline data to monitor the council's carbon footprint for submission to government in July, and will allow us to assess potential accreditation to the Carbon Trust Standard. This will give the Council national recognition and a competitive edge when government introduces the Carbon Reduction Commitment, a carbon trading scheme for private and public sector organizations. In September the newly appointed energy manager comes into post to lead the reduction of the Council's energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Summary

Highlights:

- Award of 3 green flags to Medway's parks
- Sustaining increases in recycling to 38% (provisional) and reductions in waste going to landfill
- Lowest carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the South East

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Progress to relet the waste disposal contract is still ongoing
- £2.4m bid to Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish Gillingham Park has been unsuccessful.

Priority 2: Safer Communities

We want people to be safe in Medway, and as important, to feel safe. Medway residents' perceptions of safety lag behind the actual levels of crime and disorder and we want to change that so people feel safe and confident. The council has an important contribution to make, working in partnership with the police, to reduce crime and the causes of crime, and increase confidence and pride in the area. We will continue to work in partnership with the police, focussing on tackling serious violence, reducing antisocial behaviour and reducing domestic violence. We want to build safe, strong and cohesive communities.

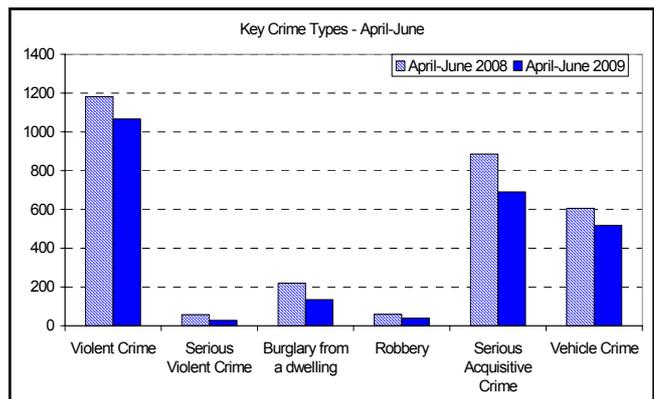
How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 5 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'safer communities' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as green as both crime and antisocial behaviour are showing a decline. Proxy measures also show a decrease in the fear of crime and an increase in public confidence. Performance on 8 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 6 (75%) are on track (rated green), 1 (13%) are off target but we believe are capable of reaching target within the year (rated amber), and 1 (13%) are off target and require significant improvement – these are rated red. However, there are a large number of indicators in this section from the place survey for which no update is available since the survey is only undertaken once every two years, and no proxy measures exist.

The police are reporting that levels of crime in Medway have dropped for the first quarter in comparison with the same period last year by 16.6%, exceeding the reduction for all of Kent which stands at 12%. This includes:

- violent crime down by 9.7%
- serious violent crime down by 51.7%
- burglary from dwellings down by 38.6%,
- robbery down by 33%,
- serious acquisitive crime down by 22%,
- vehicle crime down by 14.5%,

The reduction in serious violent crime and serious acquisitive crime are particularly encouraging as these are partnership local area agreement priorities. Medway is now on track to achieving its target reductions.



Outcome: build strong communities by improving community cohesion

The Place Survey results gave a figure of 70.4% of people believing people from different backgrounds get on well together, a 1% reduction from 2006/7 when the previous survey was undertaken, which compares with the local area agreement target of 75.4% by 2010/11. 40% of respondents believe people in the area treat each other with respect up from 34% in 2006/7.

During the quarter the Equality and Community Cohesion group which is facilitated by the council, has reviewed the impact cultural activities can have on community cohesion and the impact of the credit crunch on community cohesion. This has had a direct impact on the Cultural Strategy due to be completed this year which now includes plans to use the information from consultation to enhance our cultural offer, establish a 'what's on' website detailing all culture and leisure activities in one place, work closer with students and universities, make use of the investment in our town centres, and promote better use of the river. The group also identified the need for the Economic Development Strategy to clarify how it can support the needs of all groups in Medway. This formed an integral part of the public consultation period responses and will be taken into consideration when revising the Economic Development Strategy in September. Attendance at the group continues to be positive, but there has been a capacity issue in terms of supporting the group. The recent employment of the Community Safety Partnership press officer should have a positive impact, enabling a consistent approach to the promotion of the partnerships activities and will

further enable us to provide additional strategic support for the group. One of the actions identified by the group was the need for a Medway Welcome Pack to signpost existing and new residents to services in Medway. The pack has been compiled and is awaiting design.

Progress on the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality is mixed. The Place Survey gave a figure of 23.4%, a slight increase from the 2006/7 figure, but compares to the LAA target of 27.1% by 2010/11. During the quarter an event was hosted in partnership between the Council and NHS Medway to gain a better understanding of the issues raised by disabled people. This information will be used to improve service delivery to disabled residents and will contribute to the council's single equality scheme to be produced in quarter 3.

Outcome: reduce antisocial behaviour, criminal damage and youth crime

Anti social behaviour incidents in hotspot locations in the first quarter has dropped by 22% in comparison with the same period last year. Criminal damage has dropped by 12.5%. The combined drop for anti social behaviour and criminal damage in hotspot locations for the first quarter is 20.1%, comparing favourably with an 11.4% drop for the Kent area as a whole.

Good progress continues in respect of the rate of re offending for young people with the yearly target expected to be met for 2008/09. The position in respect of the current quarter will not be known until September 09, but the indications are promising at this stage. ISSP - the preventative programme working with young people at risk of offending - has shown some remarkable results in that since January 09 the successful completion rate for those on the scheme is currently at 87.5% against an expected national average of 60% and a current Kent position of 59%. However there is no clear picture available yet in respect of re-offending rates for this cohort as the tracking period is still running. Young people coming into contact with ISSP have dropped in line with custody during the quarter to only two.

A multi agency conference was held this quarter to bring practitioners together to look at effective ways of reducing anti social behaviour. This conference has highlighted the need for more focused consultation across the demographics of individual ward areas in medway. To that end two consultation events are booked for October and March and are branded as We Asked, You said and You Said, We Did. Both events will involve representatives from all 22 ward areas and will help shape future partnership activity.

The multi agency partnership office hosted at the police station, which brings together council and police staff is developing well. Weekly meetings are held to identify emerging issues. In the last quarter, 4 task and finish groups have been set up to deal with problem issues in Canal Road, Victoria Gardens, Acorn Wharf and Great Lines. Progress will be reported next quarter and is measured through the performance management group, which meets monthly and is jointly chaired by the Council and police.

The reduction in alcohol related anti social behaviour in the first two alcohol control zones in Rochester and Gillingham noted in 08/9 has been sustained in the first quarter of 09/10. A new zone has been introduced in Gillingham, which has contributed to a 70% reduction in all crime, compared to 07/08 and a 45% reduction in anti social behaviour.

Outcome: reduce repeat occurrences of violent crime, such as repeat offenders, location and victims

The council is working with partners to reduce violent crime in the night time economy. By the end of 2008/9, the number of incidents in night time economy hotspots had fallen by 26.4%. A key development in the last quarter has been the launch of the SOS bus in May 2009. The vehicle, together with the smaller Sprinter support vehicle, is currently deployed on a Friday evening only. This is until a sufficient pool of volunteers is available to support Saturday evening deployment, expected to begin in September.

The SOS bus operates with between 4 - 6 volunteers and a minimum of 2 Red Cross personnel. There have been 9 Friday deployments with 45 recorded visits, ranging from requests for advice on homelessness, re hydration, 'safe haven' usage, drug and alcohol issues and social services advice. In addition, there have been 11 Red Cross recorded incidents ranging from assaults, effects of alcohol, minor injuries (non violent or drink related) and general medical advice. There have been many un recorded visits to the bus, such as those seeking information and advice.

The support vehicle has been useful in terms of promoting the services of the facility to numerous venues within the night time economy. In addition, the support vehicle, crewed by volunteers and Red Cross personnel have been deployed to four specific in response to requests from these locations for medical assistance.

The day time programme has recently commenced with the SOS Bus deployed through out the National Drugs and Alcohol Awareness week, to the Under Siege event at Rochester Castle, and a Black and Ethnic Minorities Forum (Medway Council). The school holidays has seen the commencement of a youth programme, including providing advice on drink and drugs, relationships, sexual health concerns, with visitors given the opportunity to interact with staff from a number of organisations. This is operating across the rural area of Medway concentrating on Hoo, Chattenden and the other villages. Over the coming months there are plans to use the bus to support health care provision, advice and support, to those areas and groups across Medway that are sometimes difficult to reach.

Tackling so called 'repeat business' violent crime is one of the Community Safety Partnership's priorities, and includes domestic violence. A total of 351 offences in the first quarter of 2008/9 dropped to 307 offences in the first quarter of 2009/10. Alongside this the proportion of repeat incidents (incidents in which the victim has been a victim of an incident previously) remains stable at around 42% and the proportion of repeat victims shows an increase from 22% at the end of 2008/9 to 36%, but not dissimilar from the figure of 32% seen in the same quarter of the previous year. The council, through its safer communities service and social care, plays its part in the multi agency Kent and Medway domestic violence forum and multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) both of which continue to operate to deliver this priority. Whilst, in its infancy, the MARAC deals with those victims of domestic violence classified as at high risk. The MARAC has a target of no more than 28% repeat victims in this category and the first quarter saw a repeat victim rate through MARAC of 9%. It has introduced a risk assessment tool which is being used across agencies including children's care duty teams, and social workers have received training. In addition a One Stop domestic violence advice centre is run from the Sunlight Centre.

Outcome: reduce substance misuse including alcohol

The council's role in relation to substance misuse is three fold – awareness and education to seek to prevent misuse, supporting those who misuse drugs and alcohol through effective treatment, and regulating inappropriate supply of alcohol in particular to young people through effective licensing and trading standards. To reduce the accessibility of alcohol to young people the Trading Standards team have carried out 23 test purchase operations against an annual target of 35, 4 of which have resulted in further investigation.

On 1st April Medway began to operate its own Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). Since 1998 the function of a DAAT had been undertaken on Medway's behalf by Kent County Council, and during this time all treatment services were commissioned, designed monitored and managed by Kent. Medway Drug & Alcohol Action Team (MDAAT) now undertakes the responsibility of delivering the National Drug Strategy in Medway. The existing drug and alcohol treatment services' contracts have initially been extended to the March 2010 to enable MDAAT to undertake a comprehensive local needs assessment and to re-design services accordingly. From October 2009 MDAAT will re-tender all services to ensure that they meet those needs, and offer high quality outcome focussed services. This will be a gradual change process to minimise service disruption and will also enable us to move services from historical locations that have caused significant negative impact to the local community.

There are a number of services in Medway to treat or intervene in drug & alcohol use for both adults and young people. These include substitute prescribing for heroin users, counselling, structured day programme, specific young people's substance misuse service, open access, needle exchange and outreach services as well as two alcohol specific services, assessment for and provision of residential detoxification and rehabilitation based on clinical need. Medway also has a Drug Intervention Programme that is specifically to target drug using criminal offenders.

Targets and priorities for the Drug & Alcohol Action Team are set by the National Treatment Agency and the Home Office, funding is allocated by these agencies based on performance. Should MDAAT not achieve those targets funding will be reduced. Latest figures from the end of the financial year 2008/9 indicate Medway had already exceed its 2009/10 targets, with 769 recorded as being in effective treatment compared to the target of 727.

Outcome: reduce the fear of crime and improve public confidence

This is a key priority for the Community Safety Partnership as feelings of safety and confidence lag behind the improvements achieved in reducing levels of crime and anti social behaviour. Although the place survey results in this area were disappointing – 25% of respondents believed that anti social behaviour is a problem and 23% of people feel that local public services are dealing effectively with the problems, we have very different evidence from the quarterly Kent Crime and Victim Survey. Latest available data to end March 09 shows that 72% of respondents feel that the police and council are working together to deal with anti social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their local area, against a target of 77% for 09/10. The survey also shows 9.8% of people perceiving anti social behaviour to be a problem, down from 21% the previous year.

To support work to bring the fear of crime in line with actual crime rates, in the last quarter a PR/media officer for the Community Safety Partnership has been employed – managed by the Council's Communications Manager on behalf of the partnership. A reassurance communications strategy has been agreed, with planning underway for a reassurance campaign to be launched in September. Ward based leaflets are being prepared, and a ward based event planned for October. The community safety TV contract is currently being relet and the next phase of filming being done. PACT (partners and community together groups) continue to be important ways of reassuring communities. 51 were attended by safer communities office staff in the last quarter.

Summary

Highlights:

- Reductions in crime level across most categories of crime
- Antisocial behaviour down by 22%.
- Successful launch of the Medway Drug and Alcohol Action Team (MDAAT)

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Perceptions of safety continue to lag behind crime rates – new postholder and strategy now in place

Priority 3: Children and Young People having the best start in life

What we aim to do:

We want children and young people in Medway who are:

- safe and cared for,
- succeed in learning and
- thrive.

This will be championed by a confident and competent workforce and we will have arrangements in place to ensure:

- effective safeguarding
- integrated services and support
- timely and targeted interventions

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 4 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'children and young people best start in life' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber' because the workload within social care as a result of the Baby Peter case is still increasing. Performance on 16 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 7 (44%) are on track (rated green), 4 (25%) are off target but we believe are capable of reaching target within the year (rated amber), and 5 (29%) are off target and require significant improvement – these are rated red. We are still awaiting information on one indicator.

Outcome: Children and young people are safe and cared for

Our work in this area seeks to ensure that our safeguarding practice exceeds minimum requirements, responds to changes in national policy and is supported by effective quality assurance. We are committed to safeguarding all vulnerable children, this includes offering tailored services for disabled children. Our Sure Start centre programme is an important part of our response to ensure all families, but particularly those most in need, have easy access to family support services.

In the last quarter we have continued to see a significant increase in child protection workload which has followed on from publicity around the Baby Peter case in Haringey in November. Calls to social care duty teams have increased and the upward trend continues. The number of initial and core assessments carried out to assess children's needs has increased slightly too. The biggest increase is in children identified as being at sufficient risk to warrant a child protection conference. The number of conferences held has continued to increase as has the number of children now subject to child protection plans. Looking at the 12 month period to end March 09 there were 176 children in Medway subject to child protection plans, at end June this figure had increased to 201. Over the same timeframe the number of looked after children had increased from 310 to 321.

The increased workload has stretched the capacity of social work teams and the independent reviewing officer service who chair looked after children's reviews and child protection conferences. Performance on initial assessments (an LAA target) has been sustained at 79% in the first quarter. However, completion of the in depth core assessments has dropped to 68% from the year end figure of 83%. Reviews of looked after children's cases were completed on time in 93% of cases – the same as our year end performance but short of the target of 96%. This equates to 9 reviews going out of time in the last quarter largely due to staff sickness and lack of capacity within the services to cover. The figure for child protection conferences is the indicator rated red. Our performance for child protection conferences at the end of June was 94%, behind the 100% target, representing two conferences held out of time for two sibling groups. This was due to scheduling errors, with one conference only one day late. The safety of these children was

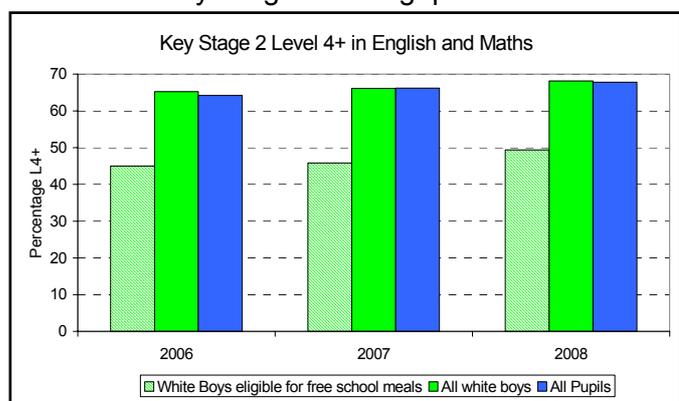
not compromised in any way. Staff have been reminded of the correct procedures to ensure such errors are not repeated.

During the last quarter the Medway Safeguarding Children Board has agreed its 2009/10 business plan, and the outline for its new quality assurance framework to improve the way it assesses the effectiveness of multi agency safeguarding practice. An audit of safeguarding practice is currently being carried out by all agencies and is due to be completed by October. In response to Lord Laming's report on child protection arrangements in England, the council has carried out an assessment into our readiness to respond to his recommendations. The potential resource implications are currently being assessed. In addition, this work is being supported by the Child Protection Task Group under the Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Outcome: Children and Young people succeed in learning

A key focus for Medway is narrowing the gap in attainment for pupils of different backgrounds. We have continued to support schools with the implementation of an electronic pupil tracking system, which allows pupil progress to be tracked, and those at risk of underperforming to be identified early and remedial action taken.

Strategies are in place via both universal and targeted support from the Key Skills team to address issues in those schools with the greatest difference between boys' and girls' achievement and to raise achievement in underperforming schools. This year's attainment results will be reported in quarter 2. A key group for concern in terms of underachievement is white boys, especially for those from less affluent backgrounds, particularly in subjects such as English. However, there has been a concentration on motivating and engaging boys through associated subjects such as drama to improve their performance in English. Latest attainment figures are displayed in the chart below for the proportion of boys of a white ethnic background eligible for free school meals achieving level 4 and above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2. The gap in attainment has decreased from 20.3% to 18.8% in the last year alone, with both showing a steady increase. This reflects the work schools have done in recent years to target children who are thought to be able to achieve level four in one subject but are at risk of not doing so in the other. For 2010 and beyond, we are targeting the resources the government are allocating in 2009/10 for one to one tuition on children who are looked after by the local authority or entitled to free school meals to improve outcomes further.



We have continued to deliver a programme of targeted and intensive support and challenge to schools and settings within the Early Years and Foundation Stage. Targeted programmes of early literacy and language have been aimed at children living in the most disadvantaged areas. The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage as judged by Ofsted inspections continues to improve, with the proportion judged as good or better currently at 52%. However, the number of registered childminders with good or better judgements remains below the national and regional average at 48%.

The Our Medway project has been part of the cultural and heritage curriculum in Medway schools for three years. It is now evolving into "Our Medway 2012", a specially designed four year programme leading up to the Olympics involving a variety of services within the local authority such as sports development team and health. The project engages Medway primary school pupils in sport, the Olympics and healthy lifestyles and develop their understanding of how Medway is being transformed, as well as cultural aspects of the Olympics. At the end of 2008/9, 56 schools were signed up with around 15,000 pupils, and the project is on track to involve all 87 primary schools by the end of the year. Pupils have been involved in project work, which will be shown at

an exhibition in July at the Guildhall museum. This project was the first in the country to be awarded the national Inspire quality mark for education from London 2012 organisers.

At secondary school level the council is maintaining its drive to sustain the four year improving trend in GCSE results to the 2008 high of 66% achieving five or more A*-C GCSE grades. Using 2007 data, the government's National Challenge programme identified 7 Medway secondary schools as being at risk of failing to achieve at least 30% of pupil achieving 5 or more A*C grades at GCSE (or equivalent) including English and mathematics by 2011. Targeted support has already reduced this to 5 schools. We have appointed specialist National Challenge Advisers in each of the remaining five schools to support them to achieve or remain above this target. We have negotiated additional budget from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) following their acceptance of our National Challenge Strategy, to support these appointments and fund further initiatives within these schools. The National Challenge Board is now operational – with National Strategy monitoring improvement in all our National Challenge schools. These initiatives are expected to further reduce the number of schools in the National Challenge programme to 3 or less. A further two schools have been targeted for support under the governments "Gaining Ground" (Coasting) scheme.

School Improvement Partners continue to support schools not in the National Challenge programme, and the programme has consistently been judged as 'good' by the National Strategies advisers from the DCSF. An evaluation has also been conducted of the first year of the programme with headteachers, who have been overwhelmingly positive of the programme, with only a few minor changes being made.

The Academy programme in Medway is progressing to schedule. The Strood Academy now has a Principal and Senior Vice Principal designate in position, and plans are well advanced for a successful opening in September 2009. In parallel the closure of Chapter and Temple schools is running smoothly with regular project meetings taking place, including meetings with the two headteachers and principal designate. The two further academies, planned for 2010 opening, are also moving to schedule. The two principal designate posts having just been advertised – though yet to be appointed. Project meetings are now in place for these two further academies.

Building Schools for the Future is the governments programme to significantly invest in secondary school buildings. A Revised Building Schools for the Future ranking has been published, with Medway 19th of 70 in terms of prioritisation for first phase projects. We have now been invited to submit our Readiness to Deliver report, which is under development to be submitted in the last quarter of 2009. The Primary Strategy for Change has now been accepted by DCSF with some minor areas for clarification and funding for 2009/10 has now been released. A Primary Re-organisation report was considered by Cabinet in May and recommendations to undertake consultation on a number of proposals for both closure and amalgamation to reduce surplus places and raise standards were agreed. This consultation is now being progressed.

At the end of the academic year there have been only 8 permanent exclusions, as compared to 43 at the same time last year. In order to achieve this, the Inclusion Team and the Onside (therapeutic) team at Silverbank have worked to identify pupils at risk, have challenged schools to support pupils and have developed individualised packages of support to enable managed moves to succeed. Youth workers from the Youth Service have been linked into a further 2 secondary schools with a focus on supporting young people with behaviour challenges. Although the focus for persistent absence is with secondary schools, we have had 37 schools in the primary sector identified as causing concern. Both Education Welfare Officers and School Improvement Partners will be emphasising the need for schools to take every possible step to improve the levels of attendance of particular children.

At the end of quarter 1, 53% of statements of Special Education Need (SEN) were completed within 26 weeks, a drop from 58% at the end of 2008/9. In part the low performance is due to pressure on very specialist provision but also because statements are not being finalised until parents are completely happy with the provision being offered even though the child may be

placed in and attending mainstream. Plans are in place to address the timescales. In addition, a 5 year strategy for improving provision within the Medway area has been developed. Medway is one of the pilot authorities for the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaHMS) project, which aims to develop a holistic whole school approach to promoting children's mental wellbeing at ages 5-13. The project is on track with the Nurture Group teacher recruited, trained and the building ready. The TaHMS co-ordinator had been recruited and commenced the engagement of schools.

Outcome: Children and young people thrive

Evidence shows that young people who have children at a young age will find their future more challenging, as will their babies. Medway Council is committed to working with NHS Medway and local providers to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies. The 3 Teenage Pregnancy prevention workers are now in post and working well with their target schools. All high-risk schools have specialist, dedicated advice and support and the youth service now has a sexual health worker and is participating in the c-card scheme meaning those young people not in school can access this through youth projects. There has been a 21% increase in participation in the c-card scheme in the first quarter alone, against a 50% target for the year. Staff are attending training in the use of HYP HOP, an accredited training package that will form the basis of the Sex and Relationship Education element of the curriculum. Nine young people this quarter have participated in the cyber baby project which raises awareness of reality of caring for a baby with high risk teens. Staff continue to deliver Speakeasy training to parents to help them tackle sexual health issues with their children, and to date 8 groups with approximately 65 parents have completed the course. The Step4ward scheme continues to ensure that young parents continue their education and personal development, with 8 groups operational, up from 2 at this time last year. A quantitative assessment of the current provision is being analysed and tailored support has been designed and delivered.

Performance data is derived from the Office for National Statistics, and has a time lag to preserve the confidentiality of clients, but the latest provisional data for March 2008 from the Office for National Statistics shows a quarterly rate of 49.9 conceptions per 1000 population, a reduction from the September 2007 high of 52.7 per 1000. The 2010/11 target of 23.1 per 1000 still remains very challenging and is the focus of multi agency work between the council and NHS.

Progress has been made by Emotional Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group in relation to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The CAMHS Strategy has been developed and agreed, and some actions from the fundamental review have been taken forward. In particular, plans have been put in place for a single point of referral from September 2009, and there have been reductions in waiting times for assessment and treatment. The average waiting time for an assessment has reduced from 18 weeks to 7 weeks over the last 12 months and for treatment has reduced from 21 weeks to 10 weeks over the same period. General progress in implementing the Fundamental Review has however been slow, and further agreement with the provider is required to move things more quickly in the desired direction. Regular monthly monitoring by the Department for Children, Schools and Families of our improvement in terms of child health following the 2008 APA inadequate assessment in this area has confirmed that we are making good progress.

Medway Youth Service aims to support the delivery of outcomes for children and young people by giving young people somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to. This also support the reduction in young people involved in antisocial behaviour by offering diversionary activities. This quarter the summer activities programme has been prepared and will be delivered in the next quarter. Participation continues to be a key strand within the youth service work, allowing young people to be involved in decisions which affect them. The Medway Youth Parliament organised and hosted their 10th Anniversary this quarter and have planned the Triangle awards. Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Community Fund are being used by young people. 18 applications have been received for the £78,000 fund and the young people who make up the panel have been trained and will make decisions in the next quarter. Mixitonline has been redesigned and relaunched in time for the Summer and now includes a new searchable online directory so that young people can find activities and events suitable for them.

We remain ahead of the National Healthy Schools Standard target, at 76% compared to a target of 65%. A further 20% of Medway schools are participating in the award, giving a total of 96% of schools involved in the scheme. The free swimming initiative aimed at those under 16 years of age continues to be a success. Participation has increased by 111% overall compared to the same period last year, with an increase of 138% at Splashes Leisure Pool and a significant increase of 745% at the Strand Leisure Park, where the usage is primarily dictated by the weather. We have maintained provision of the SHOKK Youth Gym within Medway Park by temporarily installing it into a squash court until the new gym facility has been completed

The Connexions service delivered by the Medway Youth Trust has continued to show a reduction in the level of young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET). Performance at the end of June improved to 8.4%, down from 9.3% at the end of 2008/9, but against a target for the end of the year of 5.8%. The youth service have been working alongside Connexions and have set up NEET surgeries in Chatham in accessible locations. The proportion of young people leaving care who are in employment education or training is strong at 71% against a target of 39%. Whilst the proportion of young offenders in employment education or training has fallen, a provisional result of 79% ahead of a target of 78% still remains a significant achievement. The current difficulty in respect of economic conditions and the fact that our principal providers of post 16 training have meet their contractual targets for placements will have an impact upon in these indicators within the next quarter.

Outcome: Effective multi agency partnerships delivering improved outcomes for children

In this quarter the Children's Trust was launched, and the Children and Young Peoples' Plan (CYPP) gained all approvals following wide consultation. The next priority is now to develop a commissioning framework to drive forward CYPP priorities. Progress has been made on the transformation of services for those in the transition from children's to adult's services, particularly in defining and improving protocols for transition which take account of service user's views. Medway Young Commissioners, which allows the commissioning process to take account of young people's view, is up and running, but during quarter 1 the focus was on training the group.

Summary

Highlights:

- Reduction in NEETS from 9.3% to 8.4% despite economic climate.
- Ahead of target for Healthy Schools
- High take up of free swimming for under 16s
- The number of permanent exclusions has reduced from 43 in the previous academic year to just 8 this year.
- The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve, as judged by Ofsted inspections, with the proportion judged as good or better at 52%.
- The council is maintaining its drive to sustain the four year improving trend in GCSE results to the 2008 high of 66% achieving five or more A*-C GCSE grades.

Areas requiring development / key risks

- An increase in the volume of contacts to children's social care is impacting performance against the more in depth core assessments.
- Administration of SEN statements behind timescales.

Priority 4: Older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence

What we aim to do:

We aim to encourage and support healthy lifestyles and choice for all. We also aim to improve the quality of life for our residents. We have a key role to play in helping older and vulnerable people maintain their independence.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 5 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as progress is being made on the actions in this area. Performance on 3 key measures of success can be reported this quarter, all of which were rated amber, as they remain slightly behind target, and four are derived from the Place Survey, which is undertaken biennially.

Outcome: Transform our services so that social care is personalised and self directed to meet the needs of individuals

Within the personalization agenda, the first quarter of 2009 has started with taking stock of and refocusing energy on driving forward the requirements of the Putting People First concordat and Transformation agenda. This includes:

- Delivery of an event to promote mainstream day activities for people with learning disabilities affected by ongoing service changes
- Development of a personal assessment questionnaire
- Revision of the formula based Resource Allocation Tool and production of documentation to enable outcome focused Support Planning
- Delivery of Support Planning Training to Social Care staff
- Commissioning of a promotional DVD for Putting People First and specifically self-directed support

Delivery of the Council's Fair Access to Care project (FACS) has continued. The project ensures that our resources are directed to support the most vulnerable clients in greatest need. The project also continues to fund voluntary sector providers to provide support to clients who's level of need means they are not eligible for council services. At the end of the first quarter there were about 800 cases awaiting moderation and due to concentrated efforts of Service and Team Managers all of these cases have been processed. This concludes Phase 1 of the FACS project. Phase 2 focuses on routine application of FACS for all new referrals and re-assessments.

The Government's Green Paper on the national overhaul of social care was published on 14 July 2009. The Council is in the final stage of completing its Older People's Strategy and Plan, and will incorporate headline proposals from the Green Paper into this strategy. Due to the complexity of the proposals outlined in the Green Paper, Adults Social Care will work closely with colleagues from Finance and the corporate centre to finalise the Older People's Strategy. The final strategy will be submitted Cabinet in October 2009.

Although figures for the number of clients receiving self directed support cannot be finalised until the year end due to the variety of data sources, the council monitors take-up of direct payments as a proxy measure. At the end of 2008/9, 285 service users were in receipt of direct payments, which has risen to 361 at the end of June. However, there is still some way to go to achieve the year end target of 640.

Outcome: Work in partnership with NHS Medway (the PCT) where appropriate to provide a seamless service to individuals

The Non Executive Directors of the PCT and Cabinet of Medway Council have met to develop a concordat for the two organisations for closer working and integration. Section 75 agreements are being drafted to support:

- Voluntary sector commissioning with the PCT
- Medway Council's contribution to the Kent and Medway Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS)
- Kent and Medway DAATS

The Joint Working Partnership with the Pension Service was reviewed and approved in June 2009. This partnership has enabled over £1.9 million to be put back in the pockets of residents. Research by the Department of Work and Pensions has demonstrated that this money tends to be spent locally given that the recipients are older people.

For the year to date, there have been 328 delayed transfers of care from hospital. However only 24 (7%) were attributable to the Council, the remaining being attributable to the NHS. The percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living has declined slightly from 85.2% at the end of the year to 81.2%. However, this is significantly better than the 60% seen in the same quarter of the previous year, and better than the national average of 74.3%. The proportion of vulnerable people *supported* to achieve independent living is higher, at 93.1%, although still behind the target of 97.2% for the year end.

Outcome: For those with disabilities to attain economic wellbeing

The cross-directorate and multi-agency Getting A Life Project has been cited as national best practice in the new June 2009 cross-government employment strategy for people with a learning disability entitled 'Valuing Employment Now'. There has been numerous project activity in this period including the Getting A Life project facilitating (in partnership with the Medway Aiming High work stream) a four-day person centred review training course for practitioners and families and an Inclusion Web training course (a tool for organisations to support monitoring social inclusion) that was run by the National Development Team for Social Inclusion. Both of these courses successfully brought together delegates from schools, colleges, self-advocates, and Council directorates. The project will have a profound impact on 30 young people aged 14 - 25 years and their families in Medway. Learning from this project and themes emerging will inform strategic commissioning of the council. Feedback from participants has also been overwhelmingly positive.

Outcome: Maintain the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults who need to receive care in a way that removes their liberty

Implementation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) took place on 1 April 2009. This is being carried out in partnership with Kent County Council, NHS Medway, NHS West Kent and NHS Eastern & Coastal Kent. The purpose of this partnership is to fulfil the council's statutory responsibilities arising from the amendments to the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Re-commissioning and mobilisation of the Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy Service has been undertaken in partnership with Kent County Council, specifically to achieve new statutory responsibilities relating to the availability of Relevant Persons Representatives for persons lacking capacity.

Outcome: Improve the health of Medway's residents and promote healthy lifestyles

There are a number of initiatives in place which require integrated working between Adult Social Care and Medway PCT to assist with keeping people healthy and minimising the impact of disease. A new Choosing Health Strategic Programme Group is being established to engage partners in delivering the Choosing Health agenda, which will be chaired by the Director of Public Health and include members from Medway Council, all NHS providers and the voluntary sector. The Group will also lead the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Medway.

Weight management and education being delivered by Tipping-the-balance clinic where initial evaluation of the teams work is showing encouraging results. Likewise, the Medway Stop Smoking service is above target for the number of participants quitting after 4 weeks and was the top performing service in south east coast region for 2008/09. A tobacco control coordinator has been recruited who will develop a Medway specific multi agency tobacco control alliance and social marketing research is underway to inform the target of those working in routine or manual employment.

We are looking for additional ways to support Medway's residents in living healthy lifestyles. Preparations are underway to launch our Health Checks programme later in 2009/10, which will offer a check for risk of heart disease and other vascular disease once every five years for all those aged 40-74. Our "2010" campaign will launch on 1 January 2010, to spread the key messages that "anyone can find time to be healthier" and that "being healthy can be simple." Feedback from the public suggests that it is difficult to find out where and how they can get access health promotion services. We are therefore examining the potential provision of a "Health Hub" in a high street setting, to be a one stop shop for health promotion activities, such as stop smoking and weight management. Further promotional events are also being explored against this specific council priority, as are resource requirements to deliver support in additional languages to meet requirements of our diverse community.

Current progress in public health suggests that key frontline services are not yet being adversely affected as a result of resources diverted away to deal with the 'flu pandemic. The only areas showing signs of disruption are strategic planning and reporting services, which have been diverted to the development of resilience plans to deal with the pandemic.

The Free Swimming initiative continues to be a success. Swimming participation for adults has increased by 141% compared to the same quarter last year, with Free swimming showing an increase quarter on quarter. We expect the increase to be maintained, with particular benefit for those who would not usually be able to afford swimming, and those feeling the impact of the economic situation, as well as the clear health benefits. A swimming strategy is in the process of being written by the Sports Development / 2012 Team in conjunction with the ASA, to include free swimming. A survey has been completed this quarter to determine where our free swimming customers are travelling from and indicated that over 90% of those using the scheme were from Medway, around 5% from Swale & Maidstone, and around 1.5% from Gravesham. This is a clear indication that the free swimming initiative is benefiting the residents of Medway and travel from other authorities is less than anticipated

Latest interim figures from the Sport England Active People survey suggest participation in sport amongst adults is at 16.2% - this is two per cent below the baseline 18.2% figure used to set the 23.2% LAA target. This is based on a small sample of 500 adults using telephone surveys. To gain a more accurate picture, Medway has commissioned its own survey based on 2,000 adults interviewed through a range of street surveys and telephone surveys. The research has been conducted and the results are being prepared ready for analysis information will be available for the Council Plan update for quarter two.

Partnership working has resulted in a number of Fitness Classes at Strood Leisure Centre being funded by Adult Education to increase learner numbers. Performance has been maintained but we expect this to increase over the next quarter with the employment of 2 participation officers, one covering indoor and one covering outdoor activities. Both officers started in June 2009 and are developing their work programmes, ready for implementation from August 2009. Their work is a combination of an increased number of direct delivery projects allied to effective promotion and marketing, using the new Medway Gets Active website which will go live in August 2009.

Summary

Highlights:

- Swimming for adults increased by 141% on previous year, with the vast majority of users being from Medway
- Concentrated effort by staff has cleared the 800 cases awaiting moderation under Fair Access to Care, completing phase 1.
- The cross-directorate and multi-agency Getting A Life Project has been cited as national best practice by central government for employing people with a learning disability

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Drop in the Active People survey sports participation results have dropped by 2%, but there are concerns over the reliability of this data.

Priority 5: People travelling easily and safely in Medway

What we aim to do:

We have a key role in supporting the development of a transport system that underpins the planned physical and economic regeneration of Medway. Our focus is on delivering improved public transport services, tackling congestion, and encouraging alternatives to the car. We will achieve this by delivering the actions identified in the Local Transport Plan, and reviewing our transport strategies through the annual monitoring report process.

How well are we doing?

Outlined below is performance against the 2 outcomes set out in the council plan under the "people travelling easily and safely" priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as progress is being made on key actions. Performance on 3 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 2 are on track (rated green), 1 are off target but we believe are capable of reaching target within the year (rated amber). A further 3 indicators are awaiting information from partner organisations.

In addition to this high level suite of measures which we use to track progress, additional indicators are used to monitor progress of the local transport plan. Of the 23 targets in the plan, we are achieving 22. The only target not being met is to reduce the number of air quality management areas (AQMA's) by 3. Monitoring indicates that removal of three AQMA's may not be achieved in the life of the plan to 2011. This is partly due to certain national trends in air pollution chemistry that are making it harder to meet the UK air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide. However, we are producing an Air Quality Action Plan which will contribute to tackling air quality issues that result from traffic and the Urban Traffic Management and Control system currently being developed will contribute to air quality.

Outcome: limit the growth of traffic and tackle congestion, responding to the travel demands resulting from regeneration

Progress has been sustained on the Chatham road network improvement programme. During the last quarter contractors were appointed for the flyover demolition and bus route construction, the temporary bus route has been completed and the flyover closed to general traffic and demolition work commenced. Early indications show that traffic has continued to flow well, with very few complaints received. The work is on schedule for December, intended to open up Chatham for further regeneration and better manage traffic so that journey times will remain consistent even with the potential of traffic growth to rise up to 2.2% per annum. The recording system for accurately tracking traffic flows and average journey times in Chatham that uses automatic number plate recognition technology is currently being developed and is due to become operational next quarter, concentrating on the strategic routes in bound to Chatham:- A2 from both Strood and Rainham, Gravesend A289, Maidstone A229 and A278 Hoath Way. The Urban Traffic Management system that we intend to install by 2012 to help us optimise traffic flows, is at scoping phase. The scoping and costing report will be completed in quarter 2.

During the first quarter, design of the bus facility has been progressing and the planning application was submitted in March, with a decision expected in August. The planning application includes the whole of the area of the Paddock and Military Road, providing details of the new landscaped area, including the extension to the Paddock and the public square outside the Pentagon Centre

Phase 2 improvements to the A228 are being progressed– key to opening up major economic regeneration sites on the Hoo peninsular as well as improving road safety. The planning application for the roundabout at Fenn Corner which is due to be completed this year, has been prepared. Submission was delayed due to issues with land acquisition which have now been resolved.

To encourage alternatives to use of the car, we have continued to work effectively with Arriva to improve the experience of travelling by bus. We have approved an additional 10 bus stops for construction and have started procurement of the real time passenger information system in partnership with Kent County Council. It has been agreed with Arriva that bus usage and punctuality information will be available from quarter 2, however this information will be one quarter in arrears. Looking ahead we have worked with Arriva to prepare a £272K bid for Kickstart funding to 2013 to add bus route links on service 116 to Chatham Maritime enhancing the service for students and shoppers attending Universities, Dockside Outlet Centre and Tourist attractions in the Chatham Maritime area.

Quarter 1 also saw the launch of a new walking bus at Kingfisher primary school, and bikeability training at several primary schools. There are now 40 walking buses involving 700 pupils. During Walk to School Week in May a practical exercise of "Coning Off" was delivered at three primary schools, where areas immediately outside schools were coned off to highlight the no parking zones and encourage walking to school. All feedback from these exercises was positive, and has encouraged parents to address congestion outside these schools. To date 86.4% of schools (102 out of 118) have travel plans in place.

The Roads Maintenance programme, which was developed for implementation from April onwards is based on structural surveys with the roads in worst condition receiving the highest priority for remedial works. Works will be completed during July to October. The council has taken out a £4million loan to invest in better roads and pavements.

Outcome: keep people safe on our roads and reduce the number killed and seriously injured in road crashes

The road safety team has carried out a variety of awareness raising initiatives about road safety during quarter one. This included the "Don't get smashed this summer" drink driving initiative in partnership with Medway Police, Safety In Action week at Kitchener Barracks, as well as a transitional package for pupils transferring to secondary school. In addition, partnership work has been developed with the Drama Department of Rainham Mark school to develop a theatre in education to primary schools using secondary school pupils as performers. Preparatory work has also been undertaken to deliver further performances of our award winning Licence to Kill theatre in education workshops, which brings the emotional turmoil of a road traffic crash to 17-19 year olds to encourage safer driving.

The road safety team also deliver road safety audits across the area in a risk based approach, to ensure roads are designed to improve road safety. 28 audits have been undertaken, and includes major projects such as the Quality Public Transport Corridor and regeneration projects such as the Sir John Hawkins flyover and Lodge Hill at Chattenden. Engineering are currently progressing 9 local safety schemes, 12 safer routes to school schemes, 29 member led schemes and 5 enforcement schemes. We continue to work with partners such as the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership and emergency services for delivering and enforcing road safety initiatives, including focus at accident hotspots.

Summary

Highlights:

- The A228 project progressing to plan, as is the second phase of the re-configuration of the Chatham Road network with demolition having already commenced.
- 22 out of 23 local transport plan targets are on track.

Areas requiring development

- Air quality management targets may not be met due to national developments

Priority 6: Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration

What we aim to do:

We remain committed to developing the area so that all residents, businesses and visitors can benefit from regeneration, with social and economic regeneration and protection of heritage and the environment accompanying physical change.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 5 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'everyone benefiting from regeneration priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as significant progress has been made against regeneration projects, and Medway is bucking the trend of recession in terms of housing, skill and employment, the recession remains a risk to performance. Performance on 11 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 6 (55%) are on track (rated green), 1 (9%) are off target but we believe are capable of reaching target within the year (rated amber), and 4 (36%) are off target and require significant improvement – these are rated red. A further 2 are dependent on the Place survey, and one is awaiting further information.

During February 2009 we were subject to a Regeneration Inspection by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission published the results of the inspection in May. On a scale from zero to three stars the Audit Commission inspection team gave Medway Council a 'good', two-star rating with promising prospects from improvement.

The Audit Commission report concluded that: "The council's work to regenerate the area is good with promising prospects for improvement. An ambitious agenda has been set to tackle the significant challenges the local area and its communities have faced following the closure of the Royal Naval dockyard and decline of manufacturing in the area. The council's approach with its partners effectively tackles the things which matter most to local people and focuses well on delivering a balance of social, physical and economic improvements."

To help Medway Council continue to improve, inspectors made a number of recommendations. These include:

- Improve people's understanding of what the Council wants to achieve through its regeneration of the area, and what the benefits are for local people.
- Manage the Council's performance better by measuring the impact of its plans and comparing its performance with others more widely.
- Work more closely with others to ensure a consistent and sustainable approach to regenerating more deprived areas.

We have developed an action plan to address the recommendations within the inspection report and Cabinet in July endorsed the actions.

Outcome: Decent homes and living environments for all

Our aim is to provide decent homes and living environments for all by maximising the supply of suitable and affordable homes whilst improving their quality and efficiency. We have exceeded the South East Plan target figure of 815 Net additional homes by completing 914 for 2008/09, the highest figure since 1989/90. It shows that sustained regeneration efforts since 2004 are bearing fruit, and bucking the trend being experienced around the country where house building levels have collapsed as a result of the recession. Provisional survey results suggest a reasonably healthy level of construction suggesting that our performance in 2009/10 may not be as good as last year but is still likely to exceed performance elsewhere in the country.

Final figures are still awaited from the Homes and Communities Agency on the provision of affordable housing for schemes for the year to date but information indicates that the down turn in

the housing market is having a definite effect, and number of large schemes that had been planned to deliver additional units this year have not progressed such as those secured through section 106 agreements. However, by working actively with affordable housing providers we have been able to identify alternative options to ensure delivery of affordable housing can continue. In summary, progress is being made and despite the downturn we expect to meet our national indicator for affordable housing.

Despite the current challenging economic climate we have been effective in reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation from 151 at end of March to 142 at the end of June. Medway's baseline was 629 in 2004 and therefore the government target for a 50% reduction by 2010 was 315, meaning we have already exceeded the target. There is now a dedicated officer who visits households who move into temporary accommodation within two weeks to ensure the property is safe and secure and that any issues surrounding support, debt advice and maximisation of their income to sustain their temporary tenancy are addressed.

A total of £100,000 Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant money has been received for preventing and tackling homelessness via a number of initiatives. In addition CLG provided resources to tackle the prevention agenda further by providing £85,000 to provide loans to tackle the current recession impact on households and worklessness, £20,000 Debt Court Desk (Medway and Swale). In addition £10,000 for rough sleepers and sofa surfers has been received as a result of a successful bids. Local prevention performance indicators for homelessness have been drafted within a prevention framework, which is currently being consulted upon with the homeless forum, made up of key partners including external organisations and based around CLG good practice.

Officers have worked closely with private landlords to ensure that 38 properties have had category one hazards removed and a further 63 category one hazards removed from owner occupied property. This has resulted in these properties being safer for households to live in. Work has continued to licence Houses in Multiple Occupation that resulted in 95% being licensed by 30 June 2009. Officers continue to meet the target to reduce the number of properties that are vacant for more than 6 months to 1.5% against the target of 1.6%.

Looking to the future development of Medway, Cabinet has approved the Local Development Framework Core Strategy 'Issues and Options' document for consultation. The consultation period is 24 July to 18 September 2009. A first stage of public consultation has been completed by Land Securities regarding the proposed 5,000 homes at the Lodge Hill at Chattenden development. Additional specialist development control planning officer is being recruited to support the development.

Outcome: Medway as a 21st century riverside city and destination of choice

The economic downturn continues to slow progress at Rochester Riverside due to the risk-averse nature of developers and financial institutions. Officers continue to work with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and developers to bring forward development opportunities which have been hindered by the economic climate.

Most recently officers have been working with Crest Nicholson and Hyde Housing Group since the announcement of the HCA 'Kickstart' funding which is designed to get developments underway, and an expression of interest submission was made in June. Local Authorities are not permitted to apply under the KHD and therefore Crest Nicholson has submitted the application with Medway Council and SEEDA providing letters of support. The application seeks 'gap funding' of £4.5m to enable the delivery of 83 affordable extra care apartments and 118 private units consisting of 38 houses and 80 apartments. An announcement of short listed schemes is expected from the HCA by late July.

Following the appointment of RHWL Architects Ltd in March, a concept hotel and commercial quarter masterplan for Rochester Riverside was completed in June. This will illustrate a proposed

173-bedroom hotel and associated parking with conference facilities along with a commercial area and public realm. The engineering aspects and costs will then be reviewed and a financial appraisal completed to assess if the scheme is financially viable and marketable.

Work continues to develop our town centres; noticeably this quarter the Chatham flyover is now closed and temporary bus routes and traffic flow measures are in place, and demolition has begun. A brief is now being prepared for the next stage of masterplanning for Chatham work proposed for the High Street / Best Street and Gun Wharf areas. Burns & Nice have been appointed to produce a Public Realm Design Code. As part of their commission they will also produce the detailed design for priority areas within the phase 2-road scheme, such as the pedestrian crossing where the High Street will cross the new bus route at Sir John Hawkins Way.

Community Infrastructure Funding has been secured for improvements at and around Gillingham station. Network Rail and South Eastern trains have also allocated funding for station improvements and the total sum identified is around £3million. Medway and Network Rail have been working in partnership to bring forward options for the Station building and forecourt area. It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted by Network Rail later this year, following consultation.

Outcome: Quality jobs for local people

From a medium to long term perspective over the last year there are clear indications that project in place to reduce the impact of the economic recession are having an impact from a job creation and business investment point of view. Much of the successful business investment dovetails with sites and town centre zones that are being regenerated physically. Over the period 2008-2009, 394 new business investments were made in Medway creating over 1,780 jobs whilst during the same year there were over 1,050 jobs lost through recorded redundancies. Most of the jobs created have been in the retail and wholesale, leisure and tourism, business services and construction & property sectors.

The number of higher value professional and management occupations in Medway has increased in Medway from 47,400 in 2007 to 50,400 in 2008, which means that 41.1% of the total jobs in Medway's economy are at this higher value level compared to 37.7% in 2007.

Over the last quarter, there have been signs that the increase in unemployment has slowed up and that the economic picture from a local labour market point of view has started to level off compared to the much steeper declines in previous quarters. The number of people claiming Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) over the period April to June 2009 rose by just 3.9%. This compares to a 34% increase in the previous quarter and a 24% increase in the quarter before that. Year on year, there has been a 91.3% increase in JSA claimants compared to this time last year, compared to 101.2% for the neighbouring Kent area and 119.3% for the South East region as a whole. Unemployment stands at 4.3% of the working population compared to 4.2% at the last quarter. The latest figures for June show a drop in unemployment of 129 people.

The number of job vacancies remains relatively low - 395 at Job Centre Plus for June - and has fallen slightly from 409 in the last quarter. However the figure for June has seen an increase compared to April (362) and May (352). This compares with over 1,100 vacancies a year ago.

The Innovation Centre Phase Two has been operational for the first time this quarter and we have already secured ten tenants for the 48 available business units, which represents 31 jobs created or protected. We currently have 79% occupancy of the two managed workspaces (Hopewell Drive / Pier Road) operated directly by the Council, which represents 41 out of 52 available units. The current survival rate of these businesses is 100% which is above our target of 90%. Within Phase 1 of the building, known as 'the Base,' 16 offices are occupied, with a further two due to move in during August. In addition there are a 5 virtual office users and 1 hotdesk user.

A programme of counter-recessionary measures has been launched following endorsement by cabinet July. This includes an apprenticeships scheme, a graduate work placement scheme and the expansion of our Partners for Growth scheme to support business growth. It also includes the recently launched the new Business Start up scheme, to enable 25 new business start-ups over the course of the rest of the financial year. The scheme will be fully operation in early September. Our aim is to appoint a Creative Industries Business Support Officer in the third quarter.

Our support for existing businesses continues. Our target is to support eighty businesses in accessing loans, new accommodation, business support or advice. We have reached a total of twenty businesses receiving support in this quarter and so are on track to achieve our target for the year. We have to date in this quarter progressed six enquiries from businesses and awarded one Partners for Growth loan to a local company.

Outcome: Realising everyone's potential

In terms of the medium to long term picture, data suggests excellent progress in terms of workforce skills development during 2008. The total proportion of the local workforce with a Level 1 qualification is now 83.6% which is actually higher than the regional average. This represents a 2.6 percentage point growth since 2007 compared to 0.9% growth at regional level. At the other end of the scale, 22.8% of the local workforce now have a Level 4 (degree level) qualifications compared to the regional average of 31.5%. The difference has closed to 8.7 percentage points in 2008 compared to 10.1 percentage points in 2007.

During this quarter, we have been working with voluntary and community sector partners to secure over £300,000 funding for new community learning programmes. This will deliver training in security, Till Skills, Information, Advice and Guidance, administration and ICT to hundreds of local people. In addition we are working closely with Medway Adult Community Learning Service to secure further external funding. Thanks to £43,000 European Social Fund, we have set up a skills training programme "Routeways to work", providing training programmes to up to 100 local unemployed people. This training includes construction, ICT and skills for life training and 22 unemployed people have so far accessed the training.

The Employ Medway programme will be operational from August 2009 with the opening of the Employ Medway Advice Centre. The first quarter activity has focused on recruiting the employ Medway Team of seven individuals, preparing the marketing promotion material, project managing the refurbishment of the advice centre ready for opening in August and setting up of partnership arrangements with local employment support providers.

We have been able to sustain the REIGNITE project employment support services to the unemployed residing in five target disadvantaged neighbourhoods, through jointly financing the project with the Diocese of Rochester. A further 180 local beneficiaries have benefited as a direct consequence. We are currently negotiating with Skills Training UK Ltd with a view to Medway Council and the local REIGNITE partnership consortium entering into a sub-contract with them to deliver the Flexible New Deal service on their behalf in the Medway area. This 5 year sub-contract would start in October and enable REIGNITE to deliver tailored support services to long term unemployed people, and securing the long term future of the service.

We have secured £280,000 European Social Fund (ESF) resources for the Eco-Advantage programme which will benefit a target number of 60 local businesses, assisting them to adapt their workforce and businesses to benefit from the challenges posed by global climate change. Through Employ Medway programme we are aiming to assist businesses to access training funds to assist in workforce development.

Recently we have launched a Council funded apprenticeships scheme to improve the number of private sector apprenticeships in support of companies and our aim is to set up a target of 20 new apprenticeships. We are also aiming to enable 20 new graduate work placements. These

schemes will be operational in the. 8 university graduate placements started in the first quarter of this year.

Medway Adult Learning Service was rated as Grade 3 overall (satisfactory) by an inspection in January by Ofsted. Following this inspection, the curriculum continues to be reviewed to ensure the service has a clear niche in the skills market and can deliver a high quality programme. The use of community learning centres is also being reviewed for cost effectiveness to ensure the service can achieve its target of 30% of training being delivered in the community. The service is also working with schools teams to identify new opportunities for working with parents, such as Family Literacy as part of the extended schools programme. Learning and Skills Council demand-led funding continues to present an issue, with only 75% of 16-18 age funding expected to be achieved by the end of the year. Whilst steps have been taken to boost participation in this age group, this is largely due to competition with colleges and school sixth forms.

Outcome: Culture & leisure for all

Medway aims to ensure we offer a range of culture and leisure activities and facilities which is widely accessible to all and which continues to develop Medway as a tourist destination. This will be achieved through the adoption of our Cultural Strategy, which is currently under consultation and will be presented to Cabinet in October

Eastgate House has held several exhibitions and activities this quarter which has seen an increase of 52% visitors compared to the same quarter last year. Plans for Eastgate House are being remodelled following notification that our original Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid was unsuccessful. A revised scheme will be prepared in the coming months for a two phase approach – the gardens as Phase 1 (2010/11) and the House as Phase 2 (2012/13) and will be resubmitted to HLF.

Following a consultation period, the Rochester Castle Conservation Plan has been finalised and is due to be adopted by Cabinet in August. A project scheme to conserve and develop an education space in “Tower 2” at Rochester Castle has been formulated for funding bids to go forward in 2010. Visits to Rochester Castle were 17% up on the quarter. Visits to Upnor Castle were 28% up on the same quarter in 2008. This is an impressive increase but needs to be qualified as spring 2008 was a particularly poor quarter for the castle.

Preparations for the Guildhall museum’s national accreditation inspection (due autumn 2009) have been completed. We achieved a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £50,000 for the “Opening the Doors” project which is a capital project to develop a new public entrance and orientation gallery, and these funds will be match funded by EU funding. In addition to the onsite schools facilitation at the museum, the Education Officer has taken his outreach service to over 600 local school pupils this quarter.

This quarter has seen the delivery of a range of festivals from our extensive programme. The Sweeps Festival and Summer Dickens Festival had increased attendance levels on all days and satisfaction levels remain above 90%. The FUSE arts festival took place in June ensuring that our cultural offer is genuinely accessible to the residents of Medway. A series of events, performances and workshops were held across Medway in high streets, open spaces and in our heritage buildings. The opening night, held on Chatham Riverside, was attended by approximately 2,000 people. This is a marked increase in attendance compared to previous years demonstrating that FUSE is now firmly established as part of Medway’s Cultural scene. Medway also held BBC Blast in Chatham involving a creative village on the Globe Lane site this was attended by 1,700 young people from twelve schools participating in 60 workshops ranging from film, sound production, music, dance to performing arts. Feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

The castle concerts were launched and sales have been strong given the current financial climate. 76% of sales during the first quarter conducted on line delivering a lower cost per transaction and responding to customer demand. Satisfaction figures will be reported in quarter 2.

The Council played a crucial partnership role in the delivery of the National Armed Forces Day at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham. 30,000 people attended the event at the Dockyard (full capacity). Several dignitaries including the Prime Minister and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester attended the event. Significant national media coverage was received for the event helping to 'Put Medway on the Map'.

The draft World Heritage bid document for Chatham Dockyard and its Defences was launched for public consultation on 9 June. Consultation is open until 4 August. Over 160 members of the 570-strong Chatham World Heritage Partnership attended the launch, with over 60 providing comment to date. The bid will be considered by cabinet in October. The council's bid for European Union funding for the Maritime Heritage Project was successful in June. Approximately £550,000 of funding will be drawn down to develop Medway's maritime heritage over the next three years.

Medway Park development continues on time and within budget with progress in a number of key areas. The running track is nearing completion, the judo centre is completed, work has commenced on the new health and fitness suite and new twelve-court sports hall. The official opening will form part of the modern pentathlon world cup in April 2010.

Due to the economic climate hotel development projects have been delayed. Planning consents for hotel developments at Corporation Street Rochester, Roman Way Strood, Akzo Nobel, Gillingham as well as Colonial House, Quayside, Chatham, and outline consent is in place for a hotel on Rochester Riverside. We are awaiting information on when site works will commence (expected early 2010).

The number of physical visits to libraries during the first quarter of this year is 1015 per 1000 population, marginally behind the figure of 1032 for the same period in the previous year. The proportion of the population who are active borrowers is 19.6%, which represents an increase from 19% at the end of 2008/9. Work to expand the reach of libraries continues. During quarter 1 the procurement process for the new adults mobile library was agreed, and implementation started with the new vehicle being on the road by April 2010. In addition, the development plan for the children's mobile library continues with one extra school, and further classes at schools already visited being signed up for the new term in September. A comprehensive summer programme has been developed, which includes the childrens mobile library, together with the Summer Reading Challenge, which encourages primary age children to read six books over the summer, and rewards them with a medal if they achieve this challenge. In addition the Rochester Prison library has also been finished. We are investing significantly in new book stock, together with a new stock management system which will allow us to track trends in reading preferences and buy books accordingly. We are also investing in more public access computers, a key growth area in recent years. To support this the libraries team are developing a focus on outreach to develop 'new business', including action plans to engage both adults and young readers. We are also including an annual programme of themed monthly displays at each library, which began with Armed Forces Day in June. This will be supported by wider distribution of the 2009/10 comprehensive library events programme, and an improved marketing programme to ensure our residents are aware of the increased choice within our libraries. All of these initiatives are expected to increase visitor numbers and active borrowers by the end of the year.

A variety of activities have occurred during the first quarter to make libraries centres of the community and cultural hubs - a key part of our approach to increasing footfall and maximising the benefit of our libraries. During the first quarter, plans for closer working with adult community learning services have been agreed, particularly for basic skills courses. This will include attending library events to advertise courses, delivering ICT classes within libraries and more effective use of space at Rochester library. Partnership is also being developed at Cuxton library, to use library space provide an outreach services for Bligh Children's centre. Medway's Older People's Partnership will start to use libraries to offer advice and guidance during July.

Summary

Highlights:

- Regeneration Inspection gave Medway a two star rating.
- Net additional homes is in excess of South East Plan targets.
- Number of active borrowers at libraries up from 19% in 2008/9 to 19.6%
- Medway has secured significant additional funding from a variety of sources to improve skills and training for Medway residents, including potentially securing the future of the REIGNITE project
- An additional 4000 people have gained level 1 qualifications and the proportion of local workforce with level 1 qualifications now exceeds the regional average at 83.6%.

Areas requiring development

- The economic recession presents the greatest challenge for regeneration, particularly in terms of income for planning, leisure and heritage areas. In terms of employment, economy and skills, a number of counter-recession initiatives are in place including a package of measures to support businesses.

Our Core Values

1. Putting our customers at the centre of everything we do

What we aim to do:

We aim to deliver the services our customers need and want, in the way that they want. Central to achieving this will be improving how we communicate with our customers and listening to their views.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 2 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'putting the customer at the centre of everything we do' core value. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber' as performance on complaints is behind target, but satisfaction with Customer First remains high. Performance on 7 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 2 (29%) are on track (rated green), 1 (14%) are off target but we believe are capable of reaching target within the year (rated amber), and 4 (57%) are off target and require significant improvement – these are rated red. A further two are dependent on the biennial Place Survey.

Outcome: Continue to deliver our services in a fair and equal manner, recognising the diversity of our local population

The recent Place Survey shows a slight rise in satisfaction with the area, which the council and partners are keen to increase further. Central to increasing that satisfaction is making sure people have fair access to council services. Officers work to make sure that people can access our services and that staff are treated fairly. In the last quarter 59 people (including staff and partners) have attended impact assessment sessions looking at how to make sure services are accessible. Recent independent inspections have noted that there are good examples of equality and diversity issues being addressed across the council but have also identified that outcomes from the work undertaken need to be more explicit. We need to strengthen our monitoring, so we can be very clear about the difference that is being made. During the next quarter the focus is on delivering the council's Single Equality Scheme, which will address issues beyond disability, race and gender. To facilitate this we have increased capacity by employing another experienced equality and diversity worker, on a part-time basis, to undertake the necessary consultation for the project. An initial draft will be developed in October. We are also conducting a self assessment against the new Equality Framework for local government, in preparation to be peer assessed for the 'achieving level' of the framework in the new year.

As part of our ongoing consultation a useful event was hosted in partnership between NHS Medway and the Council to consider the issues raised by disabled people. This information will be used to improve service delivery to disabled residents. The council has successfully retained the national Positive About Disability (Two Ticks) Scheme kitemark following our annual review. In addition the Regeneration Communities and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee have set a dedicated Task Group to review Council policy on disabled parking bays.

Services continue to review the way they provide services to increase accessibility, some examples include

- Readers group and afternoon sessions for a group of adults with learning disabilities started at Chatham and Walderslade Village libraries
- Job club for hard of hearing meeting at Gillingham Library
- Working with MACLS on ESOL and reluctant readers' projects

Allowing residents to have a say in key decisions and how the council is run is a key element of our resident engagement strategy. During the first quarter, the Council tendered for and chose the Modern.gov system to harmonise the two separate databases currently in use in Medway for

publication of reports and decisions. This will make a significant improvement to public access to this information via the Councils website. Web pages for democratic services will be re-launched alongside these.

Outcome: Continue to improve the customer experience and deliver value for money.

The council wants customers to receive the best possible service as efficiently as possible. This has led to significant step changes in our delivery of online information, marketing and social media, and in particular websites. Work continued on the new Medway What's On website – a single online place for all council events to be promoted – this will launch in July 2009. The council's work integrating social media into its communications continues to be recognised nationally as one of the best examples of use of social media in the local public sector. The marketing and PR manager has spoken at several national conferences, and the council's approach to social media has been recognised in the Local Government Chronicle. However, activity in the first quarter has focussed on the planning phase of strategic projects to be developed in the year, and on largely reactive media work which has been time consuming – including Hoo school, ofsted reports, primary change programme, meals on wheels service charges and swine flu.

The Customer First service received over 200,000 contacts during the first quarter, with 79% by phone and 17% at our five contactpoints. Satisfaction with the service provided by customer service staff remained positive, with 95% of respondents saying staff were helpful, 96% saying they were both patient and friendly and 91% indicated that staff were knowledgeable. NI 14 is showing we are ahead of our target in terms of minimising avoidable contacts for customers and improving their experience of contacting the council, with 24.7% of contact being of low or no value to the customer, against a target of 28%. The proportion of people seen on a 'one and done' basis for housing queries has improved during the first quarter, from 53% in April to 60.8% in June, although still short of the 65% target.

Rochester ContactPoint has now been successfully moved to Rochester library, improving access to council services. A key risk for the next quarter will be the management of customer numbers at Chatham Contactpoint at times of high demand. This is likely to become more challenging given the economic situation and consequent increase in number of customers.

The council is also keen to understand customer experience of using services. An important element of that is learning from the complaints we receive. Figures for both stage 1 and stage 2 complaints show that we are not currently responding within the timescales at 85% and 76% compared to targets of 96% and 90% respectively. Furthermore, 27 complaints were received at Ombudsman level, which compares to 17 in the first quarter of 2008/9. The system which distributes Stage 1 complaints received to the relevant service suffered technical problems with that system over Q1 delayed the issue of some complaints for reply, adversely affecting performance. These issues have been investigated and system fixes are now being tested, and performance is expected to recover later in the year. Stage 2 complaints are the most complex received by the council and although Q1 performance was adversely affected by staff absence over April things improved over May and June with 84% of the complaints received being answered against the very challenging target.

The council is, however, responding well and answering 99.2% of emails within 5 working days against a target of 99%, and just slightly below target in responding to letters within 10 days, achieving 93.3% against a target of 95%. An improvement has been seen on Schools Admission Appeals compared to the previous year – the main tranche of secondary school admission appeals has been heard during this quarter with successful implementation of the new Code of Conduct and other improvements agreed with the Ombudsman in the light of complaints in 2008.

A number of initiatives are being progressed to improve the customer experience. The new telephony system, together with proposed workforce planning solution, will present new opportunities to automate processes and will allow us to adapt response at times of high demand. There are a few

outstanding issues with the system to be resolved, but these have been taken up with the supplier for immediate resolution. During quarter 1 we agreed to be included in the Kent Customer Service Network's mystery shopper programme, which will give first hand feedback and quality assurance on the customer's experience of Customer First. In addition, preparations for re-accreditation against the ISO 9000 quality mark have been undertaken for quarter 3. Business process mapping is underway as a first step to Customer First being the first point of contact for library service calls.

Improving electronic delivery of services is important to allowing customers to access the council's services in the way that they want. Funding has been secured to invest in a new content management system and to design and relaunch the council's website against an indicative date of July 2010. In addition partnership work is being lead by the pan Kent Gateway programme, which has begun the feasibility of establishing a virtual contact centre across East Kent.

Revenues and Benefits

Current performance against the time taken to process housing and council tax benefit claims stands at 32.9 days for June, and 29.2 days for the quarter, up from 17.3 days for 2008/9. This breaks down as 50.2 days for new claims and 24.2 days for changes of circumstances. The increase in time taken for new claims is due to a significant increase in applications, with the final quarter of 2008/9 receiving 22.6% more, and the first quarter of 2009/10 receiving 10.2% more, when compared to the first quarter of 2008/9. The increase in applicants can be associated with the current economic climate. Additional grant funding from Department for Work and Pensions has been secured to recruit four new staff to manage the extra workload, although these will not start until August, so improvement may not be seen until the second half of the year. In addition the service has implemented Inform, a call management system to handle the volume of calls. A survey of customer satisfaction with the new system has been conducted to ensure it provides a good service to the customer and results should be known during quarter 2, and recommendations will be fed back into the system

Summary

Highlights:

- Customer satisfaction with the Customer First call centre remains high at over 90%
- The council has been recognised as a leading example of its use of social media.

Areas requiring development

- Time taken to process benefits claimants increased to 32.9 days due to an influx of new applicants.
- Performance in response timescales for complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 is below target, and an increase in complaints progressing to Ombudsman level has been seen.

Giving Value for Money

What we aim to do:

Providing high-quality, value-for-money services is central to the council's work. Managing our finances well is essential if we are to achieve that. We are proud that council tax levels are among the lowest nationally and that we want to continue to be independently judged as providing good value for money and as having good budget setting and monitoring systems.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the x outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'value for money core value. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber' as we are achieving our efficiency targets, but the increase in contact to the benefits service has meant an increase in the time taken to process claims. Performance on 4 key measures of success can be reported this quarter – 2 (40%) are on track (rated green), and 2 (50%) are off target and require significant improvement – these are rated red. A further two are dependent on the biennial place survey.

Outcome: Improve efficiency and deliver value for money for our residents

During the first quarter self assessments against Use of Resources and Comprehensive Area Assessment frameworks have been completed. However, we are yet to receive feedback from external auditors on the likely outcome of these assessments.

Partnership

Maximising the effectiveness of partnership working to facilitate effective joined up service delivery is essential to improve outcomes for Medway's residents. During the first quarter, The Local Strategic Partnership has agreed the timetable for development of the new community strategy 2010-26, to be developed in parallel with the LDF. Resources have been secured to recruit a project manager to coordinate this work. In addition the LSP has hosted a number of events to increase the capacity of the partnerships to deliver their outcomes and LAA targets. Topics included community engagement and consultation, collaborating on shared delivery of multiple targets and the sharing of data and performance information.

Finance

At total of £334,850 has been secured from 3 bids in additional external funding this quarter through bids for grant funding streams, with a further 15 bids awaiting decision by the funders. This includes £280,000 for Eco-Advantage, which is a counter-recessionary initiative increase individuals employability by giving them eco-skills, and £50,000 of funding to support the Guildhall museum. Grant funding secured during the first quarter is typically lower than the rest of the year as grants can take over 6 months to process. In addition, funding is being diverted away from lottery funders to the Olympics, making bidding increasingly competitive.

Gross capital receipts in 2008/09 were £4,054,834. During the first quarter of 2009/10 gross receipts amounted to £160,500, against an annual target of £4m. The predicted outturn for 2009/10 is currently £4,466,000, but is reliant on a small number of large receipts. A Property Rationalisation Board has been established, to support the property rationalisation agenda and deliver efficiencies through the utilisation of our properties. However, the current economic situation has impacted disposals, with the national 25% drop in house prices and 50% drop in the value of residential development sites, with potential consequent impact on the council's disposals programme and regeneration programme.

The economic situation has seen an impact on council tax collection rates with 26.9% of collected compared to 27.6% in the same quarter of the previous year. Analysis is underway to see if this

collection is being delayed as a result of more generous payment terms being agreed with residents to help them cope with the impacts of recession. Conversely, however, non domestic rates (NNDR) collection is up slightly on the previous year, at 29.9% compared to 29.5%. However, NNDR is known to be susceptible to significant variances as a result of a few large assessments of commercial properties.

The economic downturn has also affected the budget position of the Development, Economy and Transport division. Fee income relating to planning applications and building regulation applications is generally less than previous years, with applications dropping from 2558 to 1568 when comparing 2009 to 2006, and application volumes are unpredictable. Reduced sales income at theatres is becoming noticeable, but to mitigate this box office functions have been extended to the Visitor Information Centre to improve customer access. Likewise the anticipated loss of income in Leisure services has materialised as forecast, with building works at the Medway Park development contributing to a 36% loss of income at that site. However visits to Rochester Castle is up 17% on the quarter, though spend per head is fractionally below 2008. Similarly visits to Upnor castle were also up 28%, and at Temple Manor almost double the previous quarter.

The procurement team is currently reviewing current procurement processes to ensure process support the delivery of value for money. Work streams include revising guidance to ensure they capture best practice and support stakeholders, updating contract rules and tender documentation to reflect latest practice, revising the gateway process and producing a procurement strategy.

Embedding a performance culture in Medway Council is essential to securing ongoing improvement and finding efficiencies. The council has continued to roll out Covalent performance management software to support the delivery of timely and quality information to support decision making. Following the delivery of end of year performance information in Covalent, the project remains on track and has been trialled within the Housing Services. It has contributed significantly to the production of this report. Quality and accurate data is critical to the success of this project and to this end during quarter 1 awareness raising initiatives such as promotion during staff induction, and an article in the Headlines newsletter have been conducted. During quarter 2 the quality assurance of source database systems will continue.

Workforce

Developing our workforce is key to our drive to improve efficiency. Quarter 1 saw the successful launch of i-share across the public Sector within Kent and Medway. This initiative will allow all public sector staff to find and book onto training courses run by authorities within Kent and Medway, increasing choice and reducing costs. It will also allow us to benchmark the quality and cost of training with other public sector bodies in Kent. The One Children's Workforce Summary report was submitted on time to the Children's Workforce Development Council ensuring continued funding to support local workforce planning within the Children's Trust.

The average number of days sickness per employee was 8.17 days for the year against a target of 7 days. An action plan is being developed for service managers to help them reduce sickness absence.

The council is using its own role as an employer to help young people beat the recession and find employment. The council currently has 35 apprenticeship placements available, 18 of which have been filled, with the remainder currently being advertised. 98 work experience placements have been made in the first quarter, with bookings strong for the remainder of the year.

Value for money & efficiency

The council continuously reviews its services to find greater efficiencies and share services with other organisations to save money. The final year end outturn for 2008/9 was £6.7million, which, whilst still subject to audit, exceeded our target of £6.5 million. The council is developing a robust and structured approach to continuously improving value for money, and a four step approach was

agreed with senior managers during this quarter, for which the first stage will be tendered in quarter 2. This section highlights some of the key improvements in value for money this quarter.

During quarter 1 the communications team negotiated a pre-buy agreement with Heart FM (formerly Invicta). The use of a centrally held and planned marketing budget allowed the forecast of likely expenditure on radio, and this allowed the negotiation of a 50% discount on this expenditure. The communications team will continue to identify similar pre-buy arrangements for other media types.

The council's energy bills is in excess of £3.5million and during the first quarter an Energy Manager has successfully been recruited to start in September. This officer will identify invest to save projects using either the Council's SALIX invest-to-save scheme or to use revenue savings to potentially borrow capital to fund a programme of works that will result in ongoing revenue savings and also reduce the councils carbon footprint on many of its assets.

Delivering reliable ICT infrastructure to essential to support smooth service delivery. A key area of work this quarter has been the implementation of the new server suite at Gun Wharf, relocated from the old Civic Centre. In addition staff have been relocating from the old Civic Centre into the Annex. However, as a result of this decommissioning work, day-to-day development requests are being delayed due to the volume of work. Development requests are being prioritised to ensure services remain unaffected. Work continues between Medway and Kent County Council ICT services, enabling Medway premises to be used to house servers for KCC, sharing services for greater efficiency on both sides.

Various improvements have been made to develop the efficiency with which creditors are paid. For example, the RAISE social care system and Integra finance system have been integrated, allowing social care invoices to be generated via Integra. A review of the process for delivering direct payment for social care through RAISE is now underway. An interface with libraries is under development in respect of payments to suppliers of books, and will be tested during the second quarter. However, outstanding issues following the upgrade of the Integra finance system have delayed the introduction of a new cheque production system.

A three year working arrangement with Swale Council to share a Fraud Manager commenced in April and is currently working well. The Audit and Fraud team are continuing to explore joint working options with the Department for Work And Pensions and Job Centre Plus to develop a single investigations team for Kent.

The Registration Service has introduced a self-funded, via advertising, promotional brochure. The brochure promotes our approved premises, including Medway Council's own licensed venues. The brochure is specifically directed towards Medway marriages and is being used at wedding fairs around the county and in Medway.

Priority highlights and areas for remedial action

Summary

Highlights:

- Efficiency savings currently achieving £6.7 million against a target of £6.5 million
- A number of efficiencies were identified during the first quarter, including the recruitment of an Energy Manager, a shared Fraud Manager and a 50% discount on radio advertising.

Areas requiring development

- ICT under pressure due to server moves and civic centre decommissioning
- Current economic climate is affected property disposals with the value of some properties being 50% less than a year ago
- Sickness currently at 8.17 against target of 7 days.
- Council tax collection rates down on the previous year.