Meeting of Medway Council

Members of Medway Council are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council for the business as set out in the agenda below

Date: Thursday, 18 July 2019
Time: 7.00pm
Venue: St George's Centre, Pembroke Road, Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4UH

Agenda

1 Apologies for absence

2 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests (Pages 11 - 12)

Members are invited to disclose any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct. Guidance on this is set out in agenda item 2.

3 Record of meeting (Pages 13 - 62)

To approve the record of the meetings held on 25 April 2019 and 22 May 2019.

4 Mayor’s announcements

5 Leader’s announcements

6 Petitions

7 Public questions (Pages 63 - 70)

This report sets out the public questions received for this meeting.
A) Councillor Johnson will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

In view of the central importance of rural schools to the long-term prosperity and resilience of rural communities, and in view of the loss of community resources such as the support given to families through children’s centres, would the Portfolio Holder agree that the proposal by the Leigh Academy Trust to amalgamate Stoke and Allhallows Primary Schools is potentially damaging to the prospects and wellbeing of young people and the viability of this community?

B) Councillor Cooper will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

At a recent Council meeting it was admitted by the administration that the closure of Sure Start Children’s Centres in Medway had resulted in a reduction of 100,000 visits by Medway families.

Which of the services provided by the Children’s Centres have seen a reduction in use and what has been the impact on families of the loss of these vital services?

C) Councillor McDonald will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Medway cab drivers were given an assurance at the Full Council meeting in April 2019 that the Council would seek independent legal advice to challenge Uber’s assertion that Medway can be regarded as part of Greater London permitting their drivers to operate here. There is now a Council proposal to use Cornerstone Chambers who employ a QC who has acted for Uber.

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that this decision reneges on the promise to seek independent advice and jeopardises the success of the Medway drivers’ challenge?
D) **Councillor Andy Stamp** will ask the **Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer**, the following:

Residents were recently shocked to find out that from 1 August Medway Council would no longer be providing free car parking for users of the Medway Park leisure centre. This is despite Medway Conservatives’ recent manifesto commitment to freeze car parking charges until 2021.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm if their manifesto promise has in fact been broken, or whether he has done a U-turn and has now decided to keep parking free for Medway Park users after all?

E) **Councillor Prenter** will ask the **Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin**, the following:

Following the increasingly regular incursions by Travellers on Beechings Playing Fields in Twydall ward and indeed other parts of Medway, is the Portfolio Holder prepared to investigate a more sustainable approach to prevention like that taken by other Authorities such as Merton Council who have successfully pursued an innovative approach which prevents public nuisance and saves money in the longer term?

F) **Councillor Chrissy Stamp** will ask the **Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer**, the following:

Medway residents will be alarmed at the findings of the recent BBC War on Plastic series which uncovered evidence suggesting that multiple local authorities have been dumping unrecyclable plastic waste in Malaysia.

Will the Portfolio Holder publish Veolia’s system of traceability and ensure that they and any future recycling and household waste contractors dispose of their unrecyclable waste responsibly?

G) **Councillor Osborne** will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett**, the following:

At a recent Audit Committee the recent Governance Statement for our organisation stated that last year the budget reported a £2m loss (outturn) and that this was managed internally by an off-budget contribution from a pilot scheme that is not repeated in this budget year.

Given scenario testing had occurred by the budget build can the Leader explain why he confirmed this pilot scheme as off budget sheet and whether or not, taking into account the contribution, his budget was actually balanced taking into account budgeted revenues and expenditure?
Councillor Hubbard will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

Former Chief Inspector at Ofsted Sir Michael Wilshaw has said that government is “misleading” the public with its claim of giving schools record levels of money, warning that progress made in boosting standards is in jeopardy unless funding goes into schools.

Indeed, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that school funding has slumped by 8% since 2010; 99 Medway schools have suffered cuts to their funding with an average projected loss of £222 per pupil.

Is the Portfolio Holder happy to see this loss of vital support to schools and to the young people of Medway?

Councillor Adeoye will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

My council case work indicates that arrangements for young service users in the care of Children’s Social Services transitioning to adulthood and requiring continued care of Children’s Services up on to age 25 are poor and difficult for families to navigate.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me whether she is prepared to review Transition and make improvements?

Councillor Mahil will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

The previous Portfolio Holder attempted to reassure worried parents of Abbey Court Special School that there was sufficient accommodation for their children despite strong evidence to the contrary.

Given that those children will be shortly be starting in year seven, what arrangement has been made and for how long will this be sustainable?
K) Councillor Howcroft-Scott will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

Residents in Luton and Wayfield who live around the Russell House site are very worried about MHS proposals to convert this facility into a Foyer development for vulnerable young people. Russell House is in an area of high crime and anti-social behaviour and concerns were expressed at a recent PACT meeting when an undertaking was made by MHS to carry out an impact assessment for the local community regarding the development plans. To date nothing has happened.

Will the Portfolio Holder for Housing support local people in ensuring that the impact assessment is carried out and mitigating actions put in place before any development takes place?

L) Councillor Curry will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

Earlier this year the Council agreed to declare war on climate change. This shows a strong commitment by us all to stop the actions that lead to the decline in the quality of our environment including air quality, polluting chemicals and loss of biodiversity.

Sadly, across the whole of Medway we have seen an increased use of glyphosate based herbicides in many of our greenspaces and parks.

These herbicides are being used to control weeds, which are simply wildflowers, around the base of sign posts and along verges, and they have also been sprayed around trees.

Across the country we have seen a sharp decline in so many species of invertebrates, including bees and butterflies. There has also been severe declines in the species that feed on them including amphibians and birds. By their very nature herbicides are poisons used to kill plants and their impact through the food chain on all species is not fully understood, but there are obvious links.

The main reason for the use of these chemicals in our parks and gardens is to tidy up weeds, which are the wildflowers so important to our local biodiversity.

Does the Council agree that the time has come to stop using harmful chemicals in the places where our children play, where we walk our pets and which we value so much for our environment?
M) Councillor Browne will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

The proposed development of 1,250 new houses off Pump Lane will have a serious impact on services in Twydall. Residents understand the need for more housing but want assurances that there will be additional infrastructure to support the new homes and are worried about possible loss of green space.

Can the Portfolio Holder assure me that the Pump Lane development will only go ahead if the required infrastructure is in place?

N) Councillor Khan will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, the following:

There has been a lot of national controversy recently regarding Crematoriums charging extra money from mourners if they go over their allotted time at the service - some by as little as 14 seconds.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me whether mourners are subject to additional charges at Medway Crematorium?

O) Councillor Bowler will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

The streets of Rochester East ward are looking increasingly untidy with weeds growing out of gutters, pavements and public alleyways. My complaints have resulted in assurances that weed killer has been sprayed but then the dead vegetation is not cleared away.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me why the contractor is allowed to give such a poor service to council tax payers and what he is prepared to do to improve the service?

P) Councillor Murray will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

Why is Medway Council discriminating against residents, especially some older people and those on low incomes, who do not have mobile phones by failing to provide alternative arrangements for paying parking fees when machines which accept cash are broken?

Q) Councillor Pendergast will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

With Deangate Ridge back on the agenda, when it comes to considering any right to bid, what view does the Leader of the Council take of the failure of those running Deangate Community Partnership (DCP), which includes those holding or having held public office, to provide full disclosure of committee minutes, bank statements, financial records and other documents so the members of DCP can see exactly what happened to the money they donated?
R) Councillor Sands will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

After the decision to close Deangate Ridge Golf Club because of its apparent loss making, one year on and we find the security cost for this closed leisure facility is £2,730 per week (£142,000pa) with the still undocumented business rates and ground maintenance costs to be included. These costs were not considered thoroughly in the business case study in conjunction with the loss of the community amenity that Deangate so obviously provided.

Was the decision to close Deangate preconceived by Members in an attempt to provide residential development land to meet the allocation of new homes and officers asked to build a business case to support this decision?

11 Pentagon Centre Update and Mountbatten House

This report provides an update on the acquisition of the Pentagon Centre and informs Council of Cabinet’s decision to take the necessary steps to acquire the sub-lease of Mountbatten House and asks Council to approve the virement of up to £3M and the addition of this scheme to the Capital Programme.

12 Innovation Park Medway Delivery and Investment Plan

This report recommends the Council to approve the capital, resourcing and revenue requirements, as set out in section 8 and Appendix 5 of the Delivery and Investment Plan and to approve the addition of £14.5 million to the Capital Programme for the landmark building scheme as set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report.

13 Deangate Ridge

This report asks Council to agree to funding of up to £150,000, from revenue reserves for the redevelopment of the site, to enable surveys and a high-level capacity study to be completed in order to ascertain the level of development that is achievable on the Deangate Ridge site.

14 Proposed Changes to the Rules for the Nomination of Mayor and Deputy Mayor

This report presents proposed changes to Council Rule 20 in the Constitution which relates to the procedure for the nomination of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
15 Motions

A) Councillor Maple has submitted the following:

Council welcomes the proposal of a bank holiday to recognise the 75th anniversary for VE Day on Friday 8th May.

Council notes with concern the disruption to much loved events like Sweeps festival due to the proposal to not have a bank holiday on Monday 4th May.

Council requests that the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to call on government to hold bank holidays on both 4th and 8th May 2020.

B) Councillor Pendergast has submitted the following:

Following events concerning Stoke Primary School, this Council requests the Cabinet to commit to keeping rural and village schools open for the benefit of the local communities in so far as its powers allow.

16 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This report summarises the content of an exempt appendix which, in the opinion of the proper officer, will contain exempt information within one of the categories in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is a matter for the Council to determine whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this document.

For further information please contact Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services on Telephone: 01634 332760 or Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

Neil Davies
Chief Executive

Date: 10 July 2019

Reporting on the meeting: Members of the press and public are entitled to report on this meeting except where the public are excluded, as permitted by law. Reporting includes filming and recording of the proceedings and use of the internet and social media such as tweeting and blogging to report the proceedings. Guidance for people wishing to exercise this right is available on the Council’s website and in the public seating area at the meeting.
Please note that Wi-Fi can be accessed at the St. George’s Centre as follows:
Name = CAN-St Georges Centre, Password = StGeorge01

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