

Council – 19 July 2018

Schedule of Written Responses to Public Questions and Members’ Questions

Item

7 Public questions

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Date: 25 July 2018

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Full Council 19 July 2018 – Schedule of Written Responses to public and Members’ questions

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	<p>Public questions not answered at the meeting</p>	
7A	<p>Robbie Lammas of Lordswood submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“In 2017, Labour’s manifesto detailed a commitment to a ‘land value tax’, more commonly known as a Garden Tax. I am concerned over the implications that such a tax could have for residents throughout Medway, especially those in smaller houses which have larger gardens than typical modern dwellings.</p> <p>Can the Leader of the Council provide explanation of what this tax would mean for Medway residents, and confirm the Cabinet’s stance on the issue?”</p> <p>As Robbie Lammas was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Lammas.</p> <p>It should come as no surprise to you that I and my Cabinet colleagues share in your concern regarding Labour’s despicable Garden Tax, as the Conservative Group is not one that seeks to punish the hard-working families and homeowners of Medway.</p> <p>For clarity, this administration vehemently opposes home owners at all income levels being forced to pay a tax based on the land value of their houses. Tax of this kind would hit the South East particularly hard, and could even force Medway homeowners to sell off sections of their properties and gardens in a desperate bid to lower their bills.</p> <p>For years Medway Conservatives have fought hard to balance the books for the people of Medway, and it is with great pride that we continue to oversee a Council with the lowest tax in Kent. However, if Labour had their way, the average 'garden tax' per home for the South East could be as much as £5,539 – that’s nearly four times the average cost of council tax in the region last year, and of course this would come as a catastrophic blow to the people of Medway.</p> <p>The nonsensical idea of land value tax has also been rejected by housing experts, who observe that the policy would ‘decimate’ house prices and result in a housing market crash of catastrophic levels – now that sounds like the result of a typically well-thought-out Labour policy if ever I heard one!</p> <p>In summation, Mr Lammas, I think I have made it quite clear that a Conservative Cabinet will have absolutely no part in a</p>

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		ridiculous, unfair and fundamentally flawed taxation that would universally punish Medway residents.
7F	<p>Kate Harvey of Chatham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mackness:</p> <p>“How many children are still currently on statements in Medway (as opposed to EHCPs)?”</p> <p>As Kate Harvey was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	Thank you for your question, Ms Harvey. The answer is one.
7L	<p>Sean Carter of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake:</p> <p>“Why does Medway Council not provide proper welfare services?”</p> <p>As Sean Carter was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Carter. The Council provides a comprehensive range of social welfare services in order to meet our statutory obligations under the Care Act and Housing Legislation.</p> <p>Last year we spent £60m on adult social care and £5.5m on housing services.</p> <p>We employ Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Housing Officers and other staff to assess people in need and ensure that they receive the services and support they require.</p> <p>During 2017-18 Adult Social Care staff completed 3577 assessments with older and disabled people in need of support and responded to 1044 safeguarding concerns about adults believed to be at risk.</p> <p>The housing department also prevented 458 people from becoming homeless and completed home adaptations for 156 older and disabled people.</p> <p>We commission a large number of support packages including:</p>

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		<p>Home care; Residential and nursing care; Supported living and; Floating housing support.</p> <p>We also directly provide</p> <p>Support services for people with mental health problems Respite care and independence training for people with learning disabilities and A shared lives (adult fostering) service.</p>
7M	<p>Aimee Fitzpatrick of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>“Councillor Filmer, what progress have you made with the additional permit you agreed to, for informal carers, and when will this be implemented?”</p> <p>As Aimee Fitzpatrick was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Fitzpatrick</p> <p>A Resident Support Permit was introduced and available to purchase from 14 May 2018.</p> <p>A parking permit is already currently available for professional carers, but the new permit has been introduced for family members or friends who provide support to residents and their families living in controlled parking zones. The Support Permit is designed to help families and vulnerable adults who have regular visitors and informal day-to-day help.</p> <p>We have recently written to all resident and visitor permit holders advising them of new permit that is available. Residents can apply for two Resident Support Permits per household, each year. Each permit will be allocated to a specific vehicle, decided by the resident who requires additional support. The price of the permit is £30.00 per annum.</p> <p>As part of the application process, the owner of the vehicle to whom the support permit will be allocated to will be asked to confirm that they provide regular help to the resident living in the controlled parking zone.</p> <p>To apply for a Resident Support Permit visit https://www.medway.gov.uk/supportpermit</p>

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	<p>Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for public questions had been exhausted, written responses would be provided to questions Q-U.</p>	
7Q	<p>Samantha De Vere of Chatham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mackness:</p> <p>“Your recent review into SEN education states that there is no shortage of places at Abbey Court Secondary School for academic year beginning September 2019. Since not all children have been transitioned from statements to EHCP, it is important to know if the data for this SEN review was collected from statements or EHCPs.</p> <p>Could the Portfolio Holder confirm that all the figures in the SEN review were collected from EHCP data?”</p>	<p>I would like to thank Ms De Vere for her question. The review currently being undertaken by officers in relation to future demand will look at data from all key sources including EHCP plans.</p>
7R	<p>Tony Jeacock of Rainham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake:</p> <p>“Medway's mantra is 'Better for Less' but this year Council Tax has been increased by 6%, specifically, we are told, because of the need to spend more on welfare.</p> <p>I am given to wonder how can the Portfolio Holder possibly justify the recent pay freeze for some social services staff, the very people assessing the care needs of the elderly and vulnerable, at a time when their workloads have increased with larger client bases having more complex care needs.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Jeacock.</p> <p>Upper tier local authorities have been able to apply a “social care precept” since 2016/17, which has allowed a total increase in Council Tax over a three-year period of 6%.</p> <p>This additional funding is essential to ensure that we are able to continue to meet the needs of an ageing population, to ensure that we have a stable provider market, and to support people to be discharged from hospital effectively.</p> <p>All Council staff, including those in Adult Social Care, have received a cost of living pay award of 1.1% for 2018/19, with the majority of staff also receiving an additional 0.4% as a result of achieving their annual performance targets.</p>

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	<p>The imported restructuring, without having the necessary additional training provided, has resulted in a deluge of experienced staff leaving, only to be replaced in a number of instances by locums who incur a much greater cost to the Council and Council taxpayers. How can this be better for less?"</p>	<p>Staff turnover is monitored by the service, and over the last 6 months is comparable to overall Council turnover rates. Exit interviews are offered to all staff to help us to understand the reasons people leave.</p> <p>Staff workloads are also monitored, and managers support staff to prioritise workloads to ensure that they are able to manage their work effectively.</p> <p>Front line staff are also helping us to redesign ways of working through our Adults Improvement Programme. This programme aims to free up staff time to ensure that we are able to deliver good quality strengths based practice. Recently all front line staff were provided with mobile working devices, which are helping to give staff additional flexibility to manage their workload.</p> <p>Some locum staff are employed to cover vacant posts, however we have a range of initiatives in place to increase the number of permanent staff, including a rolling recruitment programme and an assisted year in employment programme for newly qualified staff.</p>
7S	<p>Vivienne Parker of Chatham submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>What is the Council doing to make the wet walking surfaces at Splashes less slippery particularly for the hydrotherapy patients?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Ms Parker.</p> <p>Splashes has a very good safety record for slips and falls. In the period between January and March this year there were only eight reported incidents from more than 36,000 visits.</p> <p>However, there is always room for improvement and my team will look into this further to see if there are any additional safety measures, beyond those already in place, which could ensure the safety record is maintained.</p> <p>The Leisure team will follow this up with you direct.</p>
7T	<p>Anthony Hill of Strood submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning,</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Hill.</p> <p>The point you raise concerning electric key charging is an issue for many people</p>

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	<p>Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:</p> <p>“Last month, I was speaking to a single mother of two children in social housing at Medway Gate. Amongst other issues raised, was that she has to top-up her electric key at either Cedar Road, or Darnley Road. For those not familiar with Strood this journey is approximately a mile. Roughly a 20-minute walk for someone in good health – let alone what this walk would take with a pram, in the rain, or in the snow.</p> <p>Therefore, when Medway Council assess and evaluate a planning application, can the Portfolio Holder please provide full details of what factors are taken into account, including whether the types of issues set out above are included?”</p>	<p>living in all parts of Medway, many of whom are a reasonable distance from local or town centres where there will be shops or venues to get those keys topped up. While the provision of, and method of payment for, electricity is not a planning consideration, but rather it is down to individual occupiers to arrange with utility companies the appropriate scheme for them, what the Council does do within the planning process, is consider the sustainability of development. This includes considering proximity to local services. However, this could and will still mean in many cases, a reasonable walk, bus trip or short drive to many of those services.</p> <p>It is simply not possible, from a viability perspective, for all developments to provide every service and facility within a 5 minute walk.</p>
7U	<p>Bryan Fowler of Chatham submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“At a Planning Committee meeting on 6 June, Councillors Jarrett and Wildey personally represented to the Committee that an application in Medway be rejected. They spoke of the Planning Inspector being unelected and that it was a bad day for democracy when Planning Inspectors’ decisions changed things. The MP for Chatham and Aylesford stated in letter about the same matter “While planning is a matter for the Local Authority, I would again urge Medway Council to again reject the application”.</p> <p>Following the advice from officers, Councillors voted to allow the planning application</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Fowler.</p> <p>As you have said, overturning of decisions by a Planning Inspector, particularly on major schemes such as the one you witnessed, is a concern for Councils up and down the country. It is, though, appropriate and quite right for there to be an independent mechanism for Council decisions on planning applications to be reviewed to ensure that Councils are making appropriate decisions in accordance with Planning legislation. This independent mechanism is the Planning Inspectorate.</p> <p>In terms of your question, the starting point for the determination of any planning application is the Development Plan. The Council is required by Government Planning legislation to have a 5 year housing land supply. At present the Council’s Development Plan is the 2003 Local Plan, and most of the housing allocations in that Plan have already been built out.</p>

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	<p>and nearly all mentioned they did so reluctantly.</p> <p>As Leader of the Council what are you doing, including with local MPs, to ensure greater localism in determining planning applications and to reduce the influence of the Planning Inspectorate?"</p>	<p>The result of that, together with the population growth that Medway is experiencing, and the fact that the development industry has not been building enough housing to meet demand, means that Medway does not currently have a 5 year housing land supply.</p> <p>The consequence of this is that Medway (along with many Councils all over the country) is vulnerable to speculative planning applications and, if refused, then the inconsistencies of the appeal system.</p> <p>The way to bring greater control is to produce a Local Plan that sets out housing allocations, which are deliverable and will ensure a 5 year housing land supply. This is not a short process and the Council, due to Lodge Hill, had to re-start work on producing a Local Plan in 2013. Following the completion of consultation on the recent Development Strategy Options, the Council is working, to produce a draft Local Plan for consultation towards the end of this year, which will then enable a final Local Plan to be submitted for public examination by an independent Inspector next year. Once adopted, the Council will then have an up to date Local Plan, with a 5 year housing land supply and will then be in a position to very robustly defend any large scale planning appeals.</p>
	<p>Members' questions not answered at the meeting</p>	
10A	See Appendix 1	
10G	<p>Councillor Griffiths submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE:</p> <p>"With serious issues including potholes and fly tipping continuing to blight residents,</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Cllr Griffiths.</p> <p>Rochester Airport is one of Medway's most valuable assets and is increasing in strategic importance, particularly given the ongoing decline in the number of airports in the south east. Safeguarding the future of the airport is therefore considered to be a priority.</p>

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	<p>can the Portfolio Holder explain why the Council still sees the spending of more than £4 million of tax payers' money on an airfield operated by a private company as a priority?"</p> <p>As Councillor Griffiths was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 9.1.</p>	<p>The £4.4m investment at Rochester Airport is being funded by the Central Government Local Growth Fund. The Local Growth Fund is administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which aims to secure 78,000 jobs by 2021 and £900m private sector investment across the SELEP region. The airport improvement works are a priority project for SELEP in contributing towards these objectives and is a vital first step in the development of Innovation Park Medway which will create an estimated 1,300 high GVA employment opportunities and bring in a significant level of private sector investment.</p> <p>Medway Council owns the Rochester Airport site and currently leases the site to Rochester Airport Ltd. as the airport operator. The £4.4m Local Growth Fund award is ring-fenced for the purpose of improving the airport infrastructure, which remains a Medway Council asset, and as a result delivery of these improvements is not diverting any funding away from key front line services.</p> <p>We have submitted a request for LGF funding to bring forward the first two phases of the Innovation Park Medway project. Phase 1 of the project focusses on infrastructure improvements at the airport. Through the delivery of these works the future of the airport will be secured, whilst releasing the land required for the creation of Innovation Park Medway. Phase 2 of the project will deliver the enabling infrastructure required to bring forward development on the newly released land, which will form Innovation Park Medway.</p> <p>This project is vital for the economic future of Medway and the wider region, and will support our aspiration for Medway to be the most successful area of economic regeneration in the South East, bolstering our reputation as one of the leading centres for innovation in the region.</p>
	<p>Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for</p>	

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	<p>Members' questions had been exhausted, Members would receive written responses to questions J and K.</p>	
10J	<p>“The whole Council will be saddened to read reports of the death of Russell Lane on 17 February 2018 following the incident in Rochester High Street on 8 January 2018. Our condolences go to his friends and family.</p> <p>Councillor Jarrett gave Councillor Maple a detailed reply in late January on the immediate response to the tragic incident – could the Leader give a supplementary response with specific focus on:</p> <p>Any updated position regarding investigations being undertaken by the Health & Safety Executive;</p> <p>When any investigation is likely to conclude and report;</p> <p>Any further engagement measures as a result of this incident with both homeless voluntary organisations and the business community around Rochester High Street and other High Streets across Medway to try and prevent any such further tragedy happening.”</p>	<p>Thank you Councillor Paterson for your question.</p> <p>The pre inquest meeting was held last week to determine the events leading up to the death of Mr Lane. There will be an inquest probably around October \ November time and Veolia may have to attend with the drivers and loaders, but we are awaiting confirmation of this. The HSE were not at the pre inquest meeting and neither were any of Mr Lane's family. The main discussion was around the treatment Mr Lane received and why Mr Lane where he was.</p> <p>All training material from Veolia concerning actions taken to assess bins for rough sleepers was sent to the HSE in early April but they have received no further communication from them since. We cannot comment on when the HSE will or will not conclude any investigation, as this is down to them to decide. It is however likely that the case will not be closed until after the results of the inquest are known.</p> <p>Veolia have increased the monitoring of the High Streets where bin stores are situated and they are constantly reminding all crews of the rough sleepers training guides. All staff have been advised that if they discover any signs of rough sleeping near these types of bin they are to contact the office and wait for a Supervisor to attend. This is then recorded as a safety concern and communicated the Council's monitoring officers to ensure the necessary people are informed. There has been one incidence reported to the Council in June this year. Towards autumn/winter as the nights cool significantly it is the intention of both Medway's Waste Contract team and Veolia to ensure further reminders are sent to relevant landlords around the need to ensure bins are secured and to</p>

Agenda reference	Question	Response
		advise us of any incidents of rough sleepers being found in or around bin store areas. This information can then be shared with the relevant teams and voluntary agencies for support measures.
10K	<p>Councillor Khan submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“In the business case for the Chatham Big Screen to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership it stated there would be a "a proactive programme of one off events including concerts, festival, films and sporting events.”</p> <p>Could the Leader confirm how many of the World Cup 2018 games have been shown on the Chatham Big Screen?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Councillor Khan.</p> <p>Like the rest of the nation, we were delighted by the performance of the England team in the recent Football World Cup and send our congratulations to them on getting to the semi-finals and our commiserations on being beaten by Croatia. As the team progressed up the ladder we did indeed look into the opportunities to screen the semi-finals on the Big Screen as it would have been an ideal opportunity and venue to screen such an important match for our country and create a family friendly event for many to enjoy.</p> <p>As you would expect, it’s not just a case of switching on the TV to BBC or ITV when it comes to screening events of such significant national importance. Events need to be planned and staffed along with partner agencies such as the police and fire service to ensure that people can enjoy themselves in a safe environment.</p> <p>Very sadly, after consultation with our colleagues in the police, we concluded that it was not going to be possible to achieve this during the week of the semi finals and finals. The disappointing events at the Command House the previous week, combined with the deployment of a number of our police officers to other duties outside Medway linked to the visit of President Trump, led the police to conclude that, at such short notice, it just wasn’t possible to confidently make the screenings a safe event for all those attending. In addition, the Council’s own events team and stewards were already fully committed with the running of the Castle Concerts.</p>

Agenda reference	Question	Response
		We were disappointed that on this occasion it just wasn't possible – we are as proud as anyone of our national heroes. We are keen to use the Big Screen for such events in future and will look into opportunities, with sufficient notice, for screenings of events and activities for the enjoyment of the people of Medway.

Democratic Services

25 July 2018

Question No. 10A

Councillor Osborne asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Whilst accepting his former status as Rochester Bridge Trust Warden, can the Leader confirm whether the Medway Tory lobbying efforts to the Tory government to take what has been labelled by the KM as a ‘Money pit’, i.e. the Medway Tunnel, onto their books has been a success **and in support of his answer can he provide at this meeting an annualised capital and revenue spend in a tabular format to indicate total spend of taxpayers money spent on this facility, since it was purchased for the grand sum of £1, by the Medway Conservative administration?**”

Written response to section of question highlighted in bold:**Overall costs to Medway Council**

Year	Revenue Expenditure £
2014 - 2015	479,350
2015 - 2016	499,659
2016 - 2017	501,734
2017 - 2018	360,457
Total	£1,814,200

These costs relate to revenue as all capital costs have been met from a Department of Transport Grant and represent 18.1% of the total expenditure (revenue and capital) for Medway Tunnel to date.

The Table overleaf gives a breakdown on all Medway Tunnel expenditure since financial year 2009-10

Medway Tunnel Expenditure 2009-2010 to 2017-18 Summary

Year	Revenue Expenditure £	Capital Expenditure £	Total £
2009/2010	611,736	106,101	717,837
2010/2011	861,000	831,766	1,692,766
2011/2012	766,754	1,463,932	2,230,687
2012/2013	641,405	127,538	768,943
2013/2014	451,586	317,082	768,668
2014/2015	479,350	292,317	771,667
2015/2016	499,659	418,580	918,238
2016/2017	501,734	476,511	978,245
2017/2018	360,457	371,090	731,547
Total	5,173,681	4,404,917	9,578,598

Funding

Revenue initially funded from Rochester Bridge Trust contribution of £3,273,760 when spent in 2013-14, **Revenue** was then funded by tax payer from 2014-15 onwards

Capital funded from Department of Transport Grant

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