

Council – Schedule of written responses to public questions and Members' questions not answered at the meeting

Date: 24 January 2019

Items

- 7 **Public and Members' questions** **(Pages
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- Please find attached the Schedule of written responses to public questions and Members' questions not answered at the meeting.

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Date: 6 February 2019

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Full Council 24 January 2019 – Schedule of Written Responses to public and Members’ questions

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	Public questions not answered at the meeting	
7A	<p>John Williams of Rainham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin:</p> <p>“As you all know Council Tax is an unfair tax in any event, it is understood that it is a government requirement to impose this tax.</p> <p>Surely increases should be shared more fairly and this could be done by dividing the required total increase by the number of households in the authority, therefore all pay a fair share of the increase, relieving those on fixed income and living in high banded dwellings of a greater increase than those on lower bands.</p> <p>Has the Council considered this?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Williams.</p> <p>The process of setting amounts of council tax is carried out only by billing authorities e.g. Medway Council, as required by section 30 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p> <p>All dwellings are valued by the Valuation Office Agency (part of Her Majesty’s Revenues and Customs) and allocated a valuation band from A (lowest) to H (highest) according to its open market value at 1 April 1991</p> <p>Section 5 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the amounts of council tax payable in respect of dwellings situated in the same billing authority’s area and listed in different valuation bands A to H shall be in the proportion:</p> <p>6: 7: 8: 9: 11: 13: 15: 18 A: B: C: D: E: F: G: H</p> <p>Consequently, at the opposite extremes a band A property counts as two thirds or 6/9ths of a band D and a band H property counts as 18/9ths or two band D equivalents. The other bands are calculated pro rata to their statutory relationship to a band D property.</p> <p>The Council therefore has no discretionary power to vary either the process of setting the council tax or the distribution of any such increase.</p>

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7K	<p>James Chespy of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“What are you going to do to get a new job after you are defeated next May?”</p>	<p>We shall see!</p>
7L	<p>Sean Carter of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin:</p> <p>“Why is the Council covering up fraud amongst its officers?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Carter. I want to make it abundantly clear that the Council treats any allegation of fraud very seriously.</p> <p>The Council has a dedicated Audit & Counter Fraud Service that operates independently and objectively, investigating all allegations of fraud and corruption committed both against and within the Council.</p> <p>If anyone has concerns about a Council officer allegedly committing fraud, it can be reported directly to the Audit & Counter Fraud Service, who will then take necessary action to investigate those concerns.</p> <p>In the event that allegations of fraud are proven, the Council takes all necessary steps to deal with the matter, which includes disciplinary action and, where appropriate, criminal proceedings.</p> <p>In this particular instance, I understand that when you submitted your public question you were provided with the details of the Council’s dedicated fraud reporting line and you were advised to call the relevant phone number as soon as possible.</p>
7R	<p>Lia Mandaracas of Twydall submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake:</p> <p>“Baby weighing services have been significantly reduced over the last 6 months leaving new parents with less support for ensuring their babies and toddlers</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, we are passionate at Medway Council about the need to create an environment to give every child the best possible start in life. Supporting and empowering new parents and families within young children, is a key strand of our approach. Medway Council has been nationally recognised for the work it has done in relation of promoting the healthy weight</p>

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	<p>maintain a healthy weight and that good eating habits are established for the future.</p> <p>What is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure that this vital service is accessible to as many parents as possible?"</p>	<p>of our children. The council will continue to commission a wide range of services to support local families who may need help.</p> <p>As a result of a recent comprehensive review that was undertaken by Medway Community Healthcare (MCH) who provide our child health services, some changes have been made to improve provision within our community health clinics. These changes include increasing capacity in areas and specific sessions where there was identified high demand. In order to meet this demand, some capacity was redirected from sessions that were not well utilised. In addition to ensure parents who may need input from more specialist staff receive it, some sessions which do not need specialist input are covered by other competent and suitability qualified staff. These changes may have affected some bespoke baby weighing clinics.</p> <p>There are over 100 community based groups and services run by MCH as well as the offer from our Early Help hubs. These now provide some Self-Weighing sessions for families. In addition to being able to access support these community based sessions, all Medway families with a child under the age of 5 have a named health visitor who can be contacted if there are any questions or concerns. Parents can also use a dedicated single point of access phone number provided by MCH. This facility provides parents with the ability to call and speak to a health care professional directly should they have any queries and concerns about their child's health.</p> <p>We will continue to work with our providers to ensure the needs of parents and children in Medway are appropriately met.</p>

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7S	<p>Bryan Fowler of Chatham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE:</p> <p>“This is a question about the £1.4M revamp of Chatham Station. On the 29th November 2018 you were quoted in the Medway Messenger as saying “This project will make it easier for residents and visitors to access the station”. It is disappointing to note that the sheets of A4 paper posted on windows around Chatham Station show that a key part of the project, widening the pedestrian access by means of a ramp to the bus stops, is now listed “as a potential future project”.</p> <p>Network Rail has stated the cost of this raft has now exceeded the project budget and has been “de-scoped”. Bearing in mind that planning permission has been given for this project by Medway Council, how can residents be confident that this essential part of a major regeneration project (safe pedestrian access over the raft) will ever be delivered?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Fowler.</p> <p>The scope of the works when the project started was to create the pedestrian access over the raft. When further investigation was carried out around the area, it became apparent that additional work was required to make the structure safe, and the cost of this work meant that the funds available were not sufficient.</p> <p>Network Rail have indicated that the completion of the raft has been listed as a future project, but to date the Department for Transport has not confirmed any more funding for station enhancement works. Work is underway to improve the station forecourt and public realm spaces to link up to the rest of the Chatham town centre placemaking works, and these will be completed in the summer.</p>
7T	<p>Rob Heathfield, Chair of Friends of Rede Common submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin:</p> <p>“I’m sure you would agree with me that the dog attack on Rede Common in December was totally unacceptable, regrettably this is the second similar incident in six months.</p> <p>What did Medway Council do between June and December and what further work will be</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Heathfield. We are aware of the incident on Rede Common and that this is an ongoing investigation with the Police.</p> <p>My Community Warden Team will attend an event with the Friends of Rede Common on 20 April where they will promote the work of service as well as advising on responsible dog ownership, including keeping dogs under control and the benefits of microchipping dogs.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that the Community Warden Service launched the ‘Medway Canine Code’ to encourage</p>

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	<p>happening to reduce risk of dog attacks?"</p>	<p>more responsible dog ownership last autumn and this has been heavily promoted on the Medway Council Stray Dog Service Facebook page. The Wardens were also in attendance at the four Council run 'Focus on Events' across Medway last summer and will again be taking part in similar activities this coming year.</p>
7U	<p>Martin Rose of Rainham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:</p> <p>"The decision to postpone consultation on Medway's draft Local Plan until summer 2019 is extremely disappointing.</p> <p>The current situation places developers in a strong position to push ahead with piecemeal, unsustainable and undesirable applications, in the absence of a Local Plan. The Council's need to meet government housing targets further compounds this issue.</p> <p>The South East is experiencing significant population growth and housing shortages, particularly in the affordable sector. An adopted, up-to-date Local Plan would protect our countryside in vulnerable areas such as the Capstone Valley and help ensure developers make appropriate contributions to much needed social infrastructure.</p> <p>Medway Liberal Democrats believe this situation should be addressed as soon as possible, within this Council term.</p> <p>Delaying to the summer avoids resolution of questions of where to build, and does nothing to protect the residents of Medway from undesirable and environmentally unsustainable development.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Rose.</p> <p>We recognise the challenges around housing nationally, which in particular impacts on the South East. This is due to the number of houses being built by the development industry over the last 10 years not being sufficient to meet demand. We are working hard to deliver a Local Plan as quickly as the required process allows and are working closely with the Government to ensure that the Plan will be found sound. The recent delay in the plan production is for two reasons. Firstly, Medway needs to know the housing figures that the Government would like us to plan for and that simply is not known yet. We are awaiting clarity the Government on what housing figures we need to try to plan to meet. Secondly, in order to get anywhere near meeting the eventual housing and growth requirements, significant investment in infrastructure is required, particularly in relation to the Hoo peninsula. We will be submitting a Housing Infrastructure Fund bid to Homes England in March, which if successful will help us to meet these housing and growth requirements. The outcome of that bid will be known in late spring and will then enable us to complete work on the draft plan.</p> <p>As I have set out previously, we are planning to publish the draft Local Plan in the summer. This is set out in the latest Local Development Scheme, approved by Cabinet on 18 December 2018. The Local Development Scheme shows the timetable and programme for the preparation of the new Local Plan</p>

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	<p>Please explain the reasons for the delay and which, if any, measures are being taken to expedite the process of adopting a Local Plan?"</p>	<p>and is available to view on the Planning Policy pages of the Council's website.</p>
7V	<p>John Castle of Chatham submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>"Shelter have announced their figures for homelessness across the country. Medway has figures far higher than the rest of Kent, this should be a cause of concern, with over 600 children affected.</p> <p>Medway Liberal Democrats believe these numbers hide many others in need of permanent houses. Some are in temporary accommodation, some are sofa surfing, others are in distressed circumstances fleeing from abuse. We believe the number of people needing accommodation is higher than the Shelter numbers.</p> <p>Medway Council provides the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE) for emergency housing in freezing temperatures. There is also an announcement of a government backed hub coming to Medway.</p> <p>Medway Liberal Democrats believe that more action is needed to address the situation.</p> <p>What actions above those mentioned earlier are the Council prepared to take?"</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Castle. We provide a number of services to support those who are homeless or in housing need.</p> <p>Our Housing Options Service, based at Kingsley House, works with over 2000 cases per year offering support, advice and accommodation to help people maintain their current housing or seek alternative options.</p> <p>We commission a range of supported accommodation and floating support services that provide assistance to the most vulnerable to address their housing needs. Additionally we have secured over £1m of government funding to assist those that are rough sleeping in Medway.</p> <p>The number of children referenced in the report is the number of children in temporary accommodation, and as the largest authority in Kent it is expected that we would have a larger number.</p> <p>In August 2017 we published our Homelessness Prevention Strategy which sets out the actions we will take to support those that are homeless, and we will be reviewing the strategy later this year.</p>

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7W	<p>Lindsey Burke of Rochester submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin:</p> <p>“It is my understanding that Medway Council owns and is responsible for the actual CCTV cameras and that MCG informed the Council that cameras were beyond repair and needed replacing. Yet the broken CCTV camera outside The Crown Pub in Rochester has been broken since I reported it to the Council nearly a year ago.</p> <p>As the Councillor who is responsible for the portfolio that includes CCTV can Councillor Gulvin explain why no action was taken to replace this broken camera and why Medway Council have allowed the CCTV cameras in Medway to fall into such disrepair?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Burke. A review into the condition of the CCTV network was launched when it became clear that much of the equipment was failing due to its age. As a result, we have made provision to update equipment in a number of key locations across Medway including Rochester. This improvement project is underway and is anticipated to conclude this financial year.</p>
7X	<p>Chris Spalding of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>“A lack of foresight and planning prior to the opening of the new Amazon depot meant many lorries looking to deliver goods got lost due to a lack of road signs causing and continuing to cause misery for many Peninsula residents.</p> <p>A meeting with Council officers at which Councillor Pendergast and I were to present a comprehensive plan that would have ended this chaos was cancelled by the Portfolio Holder so he could take the matter forward.</p> <p>Would it not have been sensible to allow the meeting to go ahead and adopt or amend our plan rather than the Council wasting</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Spalding. My officers quickly responded to concerns that delivery vehicles were getting confused en route to the new site. It became evident that issues with the postcode meant that navigation systems were not taking drivers to the correct location. My team met with a representative from Amazon who was very concerned that misdirected delivery vehicles were causing residents problems and was keen to work with us to resolve the issue. In response, temporary signage was put in place, which remains in situ and will be checked on a regular basis.</p> <p>We have been considering the issue of permanent road signs and further meetings with the business park developer have taken place to discuss a mixture of new and amended signs on the wider network. The first tranche of signs would be between Four Elms and the business park, and the second</p>

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	resources and council tax payers' money duplicating work that that already been done for free?"	tranche would be between Four Elms and the M2.
	Members' questions not answered at the meeting	
10J	<p>Councillor Khan submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:</p> <p>"The Planning Committee are being forced to take decisions that they disagree with due to the repeated Tory failure to implement an up to date Local Plan.</p> <p>How many more planning applications does the Portfolio Holder expect to see passed with similar views expressed by the Planning Committee?"</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Councillor Khan. The Council is planning to publish the draft Local Plan in the summer. This is set out in the latest Local Development Scheme, approved by Cabinet on 18 December 2018. The Local Development Scheme shows the timetable and programme for the preparation of the new Local Plan and is available to view on the Planning Policy pages of the council's website.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Council will continue to assess applications based on an assessment of National and Local Planning Policies and all other material planning considerations. Where those applications are unacceptable they will be refused and the Council will defend those decisions on appeal as is the case with appeals at Brompton Farm Road in Strood and Chattenden.</p> <p>It is important to favourably determine applications that are sustainable, to ensure that Medway continues to deliver to meet its housing needs and we are working to see those permissions come forward on sites within our main regeneration areas.</p>
10K	<p>Councillor Murray submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>"Medway Development Company's current public proposals will lead to a reduction of just under 600 car parking spaces across Medway.</p> <p>Although all Councillors want to see a reduction in car usage, is the Portfolio Holder concerned</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Councillor Murray.</p> <p>The Council has identified under-used car park sites and other sites and asked MDC to bring forward options for new housing developments.</p> <p>Considerations was given to actual usage of the car parks and the ability for that use to be accommodated in the spare capacity in the rest of our car parks, particularly in Chatham.</p>

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	that this may have a further negative impact on our already struggling High Streets and town centres?”	In addition, officers are looking at additional car park provision in our town centres, to accommodate predicted growth.
10L	<p>Councillor Maple submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>At time of submission, it is widely anticipated that the meaningful vote in Parliament on Brexit will reject Theresa May’s deal. In December, the Leader of the Council said, for a number of reasons, he has no confidence in the Prime Minister.</p> <p>If the outcome of the meaningful vote is as anticipated, does the Leader of the Council agree with me that it is in Medway’s best interests that the Prime Minister resigns?</p>	No I do not agree the Prime Minister should resign.

Democratic Services

6 February 2019

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