

Council – 23 January 2020 Schedule of written responses to questions not answered at the meeting

Items

Public questions/Members' questions

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Schedule of written responses to questions not answered at the meeting

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Date: 5 February 2020

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Full Council 23 January 2020 – Schedule of written responses to public questions and Members’ questions not answered at the meeting

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	<p>Public questions not answered at the meeting</p>	
<p>8B</p>	<p>Graham Colley of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:</p> <p>“Most car journeys are short and, in many cases, could be replaced by bicycle journeys. Good for the environment and health of the individual. However, potential cyclists are concerned about cycling safety. London Boroughs have made massive strides to improve cycle routes and safety.</p> <p>Would the Council please detail its cycle policy, including what has been achieved over the last 12 months, its aims over the next one, three and five years and what adjustments have been made with the advent of electrically assisted bikes?”</p> <p>Note: As Mr Colley 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 Colley. Our policy on cycling is set out in our Cycle Action Plan. The plan is to provide safe, attractive facilities for cyclists by expanding and improving the cycle network. This will improve the health of people who live and work in Medway, help improve congestion and air quality and reduce social isolation by promoting cycling as a leisure activity.</p> <p>Since 2015, the Council has invested £2.8 million into cycle infrastructure improvements in Medway. This has expanded our cycle network by an additional 14km and linked it up with longer distance routes, forming part of the National Cycle Network. We have also improved 3km of existing cycle routes and built a new urban pump track facility at the Queen Elizabeth Fields in Gillingham; this opened in June last year and is proving very popular. Our cycle counters are telling us that our investment is paying dividends: recent data indicates an average increase in cycle usage of 5%, and we have seen an increase in cycling to school across the secondary school age group.</p> <p>As part of our plan for cycling, we have delivered free Bikeability training to over 1,000 children during the last academic year. We have also promoted a number of national campaigns, such as The Big Pedal, which involved 22 schools in Medway competing for the highest percentage of pupils, staff and parents cycling, scooting or walking to school. And of course, last year we hosted the National Cycling Championships. A superb event that not only promoted cycling, but put Medway on the map too.</p> <p>We will continue to support and promote cycling in Medway over the next five</p>

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		<p>years. Our budgets are limited, but we are constantly looking for opportunities to secure funding from Central Government for cycling, and we will continue to publicise and promote cycling across Medway. We expect new developments coming forward to provide good facilities for cycling and there is an opportunity to make sure cycling infrastructure is part of all our monumental regeneration projects.</p> <p>We are also looking forward to working with Network Rail in delivering a new cycle hub at Chatham Station. This is expected to deliver over 200 cycle spaces and electric charging points for hybrid bikes. In conjunction with this, we are currently exploring other funding opportunities linked to expanding our e-bike provision within Chatham town centre”.</p>
8C	<p>Peter Alexander of Street Fuel Ltd asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:</p> <p>“Does the Leader of the Council accept that given the commitments given by Peel L&P when it obtained planning approval for the Chatham Waters site in 2013 to provide the necessary investment in the Docks through the release of the Chatham Waters site have not been forthcoming, the inclusion of Chatham Docks (SLAA 2018 site 824) as a mixed-use redevelopment site in MLP 2037 provides Peel L&P with a justification to renege on its commitments under the Chatham Water planning approval?”</p> <p>Note: As Mr Alexander 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 Alexander, This is a complex issue and needs to be considered in the context of what has happened over the intervening years and what is happening in relation to national planning policy and our evolving Local Plan work.</p> <p>The original application for Chatham Waters was submitted back in 2011 and was assessed based on the local and national planning policies that existed at that time. It was also considered in relative to use the policies that were evolving through the Core Strategy work that it was hoped would inform the updated Local Plan and Policies that were set to be assessed through an Examination in Public in 2013.</p> <p>The Core Strategy was later withdrawn, due to issues primarily to do with Lodge Hill and work then commenced on developing a new Local Plan. This work is ongoing and in particular the evidence base needs to be completed in order to inform a draft Local Plan which it is hoped will be produced for consultation in the summer of this year. The draft Local Plan will have to demonstrate how</p>

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		<p>we are planning to meet our growth needs over the next 15 years, delivering housing and employment and protecting our natural and historic environment in a sustainable way, and meeting the requirements of National Policy.</p> <p>The Strategic Land Availability Assessment that came to Cabinet in December is part of the evidence base, but does not allocate sites for development.</p> <p>Peel has put forward the remaining part of Chatham Docks as a potential development site and that site, along with all the other sites put forward by developers and land owners, has had an initial assessment through the SLAA. There is further work to be undertaken in relation to the Strategic Transport Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment that needs to be completed before any site will be included as an allocation in the forthcoming Draft Local Plan. This work is ongoing and will be informed by a significant evidence base, following processes laid down in national legislation.</p> <p>It would not be appropriate to discuss the merits or otherwise of specific sites in this Council Chamber at this stage, without the necessary evidence base being completed. To do so could potentially prejudice the Local Plan process and potentially result in the Plan being found unsound, nor an outcome any of us would wish to see”.</p>
8F	<p>John Spencer of GPS Marine Contractors Ltd asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:</p> <p>“GPS Marine has produced a report which I would ask that Councillors read (via our website - https://gpsmarine.co.uk/), which sets out the key benefits that can</p>	<p>“Thank you for your very detailed question and comments Mr Spencer.</p> <p>We had a number of other public questions on the issue of Chatham Docks at this meeting and in the responses given, the point was made that the Strategic Land Availability Assessment submitted to Cabinet in December does not allocate sites for development and it would be wrong to read it as such. It would also be</p>

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	<p>be readily secured simply by moving freight off the road and onto rivers. These already considerable benefits will be increased massively as soon as vessels start to use biofuels and introduce emissions reduction technologies. The first steps towards these changes are already being made.</p> <p>The South East is extremely well placed to take advantage of the benefits that water freight brings, but the opportunity to take advantage of such benefits will be lost for ever if facilities such as Chatham Dock are continually lost to residential development.</p> <p>The Council declared a climate emergency last year, keeping Chatham Docks open would be a firm step towards doing something about the climate emergency. Promoting the use of Chatham for intra port freight would be a second step and the Council using the dock area for its waste and refuse services and shipping waste by barge to the incineration facility would constitute a real step change in terms of the Council's environmental credentials.</p> <p>Chatham Dock is an irreplaceable strategic asset in terms of water freight and water freight derived benefits. In London such assets are protected under the "Protected Wharves Scheme" and are being brought back into use as quickly as planning allows.</p> <p>I believe that for all the reasons alluded to, the Council should consider adopting such a scheme in the case of Chatham Docks.</p> <p>I also believe that that water freight brings significant benefits in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving</p>	<p>inappropriate to discuss specific sites and any potential allocations at this time without the necessary evidence base. As has been made clear, such discussion could prejudice the Local Plan process.</p> <p>Work is continuing on the evidence base to support the draft Local Plan that will be released in the summer.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, I will pass your detailed comments on to our Local Plans team to take into consideration in their ongoing work".</p>

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	<p>curbside air quality, reducing traffic congestion, reducing road wear and reducing HGV related road traffic accidents.</p> <p>I would also state that Council should be doing more to promote the use of the river Medway for freight traffic – starting with its own domestic and commercial waste.</p> <p>GPS Marine operates the largest fleet of tugs and barges on the Thames and Medway and currently provides employment for 126 people. The closure of Chatham Dock would lead to losing all but one of the ship repair facilities on the river Medway. GPS Marine uses EAPL and Stick-Mig Welding Ltd, both of which are based at Chatham, to do most of the steelwork repairs on its fleet of 70 vessels. If it becomes impossible to repair the fleet without leaving the Thames and Medway, it is conceivable that it will become impossible to operate the fleet. This would put hundreds of thousands of truck movements back onto the roads annually and cause thousands of tonnes more carbon to be emitted into the atmosphere as stated in GPS Marine’s report.</p> <p>Therefore, is the Council’s concern in relation to climate change sufficiently robust to cause it to act to prevent Chatham Docks closing and maintain the area’s ability to use its natural assets to deliver the benefits of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, reduced traffic congestion, reduced road wear and reduced HGV related road traffic accidents?”</p> <p>Note: As Mr Spencer was not present at the meeting, he would</p>	

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	receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.	
8H	<p>Daniel Belmonte of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:</p> <p>“How will the Council use its procurement power to respond to the climate & biodiversity crisis?”</p> <p>Note: As Mr Belmonte 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 Belmonte.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that the Council is already using its considerable procurement power to respond to the climate and biodiversity crisis. We have and will continue to use our significant buying clout to respond to the climate and biodiversity crisis, by always considering the impacts, both internally and externally, of all of our purchasing decisions at an early stage, of every procurement activity.</p> <p>This work is led by a dedicated Category Management team, who have successfully driven social value out of contracts for the last 8 years.</p> <p>They build climate and biodiversity outcomes into the relevant contract specifications and create Key Performance Indicators to track and report on expectations.</p> <p>In addition, they are experts in proactively grouping similar needs across Council departments such as fleet or security, to reduce waste and duplication in our supply chain.</p> <p>The aspiration to keep under review our suppliers and procurement processes will be included in the emerging Climate Change action plan referred to earlier in the meeting”.</p>
8I	<p>Marilyn Stone of Rainham asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:</p> <p>“I would like to ask on behalf of all Medway Green Party members if you are able to provide an update</p>	<p>“Thank you for your question Ms Stone. The first progress report, since Medway Council declared a Climate Change emergency in April 2019, will be presented to Cabinet on 3 March and will be publicly available on our website.</p> <p>Thurs far, we have taken the following steps:</p>

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	<p>on the work you are doing around the climate emergency.”</p> <p>Note: As Ms Stone was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>A cross-service Officer Group and a Member Advisory Group have been set up, and they meet regularly to progress actions.</p> <p>Officers engage regularly with key stakeholders including Kent County Council and district authorities to share best practice. We have engaged with Kent County Council on the development of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.</p> <p>Officers are currently exploring options for appointing a consultant to undertake a carbon baseline assessment of the Council’s own estate and operations, in order to establish a pathway to net zero.</p> <p>A bid has been submitted to the Heat Network Delivery Unit for a Heat Mapping and Energy Masterplanning exercise for the Hoo Peninsula and Medway.</p> <p>Service providers have been invited to tender via the Refit programme, a government backed procurement initiative, which will see existing Council buildings assessed for energy efficiency in order to propose retrofit measures which will contribute towards a reduction in emissions.</p> <p>Officers are currently evaluating tenders for an LED street lighting conversion programme.</p> <p>I would encourage you to take a look at the newly-created Climate Change web page which can be found at www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange. The web page will be updated frequently as progress is made on our Climate Change action plan”.</p>

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8M	<p>Paul Watkinson of PDMM Ltd asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:</p> <p>“The notion that Chatham Docks ‘is not financially viable’ is fantasy. The Docks have suffered from a lack of investment by Peel L&P over the last two decades, despite during this time the tenants in addition to the rents paid, have also seen the services charges increase. These service charges are supposed to fund the upkeep and maintenance of the site. Peel L&P has created the illusion of a run-down, financially unviable asset, in order to convince Medway Council that the only solution is to redevelop the site for luxury housing.</p> <p>Would the Council agree that:</p> <p>Sheerness or Thamesport is not suitable for the existing tenants because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) The road network in and out of Sheerness / Thamesport cannot cope with a further 400-600 vehicle movements; B) The quayside at Sheerness / Thamesport has an 8mtr tidal movement that is wholly unsuitable for the coastal vessels using Chatham Docks or for the vital ship repair works undertaken in Chatham Docks; C) The cost of relocating the businesses in Chatham Docks will 	<p>“Thank you for your detailed question Mr Watkinson. We had a number of other public questions on the issue of Chatham Docks at this meeting and in the responses given, the point was made that these are questions that relate to the evolving Local Plan and it would not be appropriate for me to comment at this time, on site specific issues. I will however, ensure your question and comments are shared with our Local Plan team, to take in to consideration in the Local Plan process”.</p>

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	<p>put many of them out of business.</p> <p>Kingsnorth is not suitable for tenants because;</p> <p>A) There is not suitable quayside. The existing jetty is c.400mtrs long and in poor condition and is not designed to handle general cargos or capable of being used for ship repairs;</p> <p>B) Medway Council has already informed tenants in Chatham Docks that there is now insufficient space on this site to accommodate the business needs of the specialist Companies in Chatham Docks?"</p> <p>Note: As Mr Watkinson was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	
8N	<p>James Chespy of Gillingham asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:</p> <p>"Will Councillor Doe withdraw his disgraceful remarks made about Jess Glynne in relation to the loss of revenue coming from her having to cancel due to ill health her concert at Rochester Castle?"</p> <p>Note: As Mr Chespy 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 Mr Chespy for your question.</p> <p>The comments I made in relation to Ms. Glynne's cancellation were to express my extreme disappointment at her lack of attendance on behalf of the people of Medway, who will always be my top priority. I also spoke to highlight the unforeseen considerable pressure this placed upon the Council's officers and Events Team, whom I should like to thank for their sterling work in securing Craig David as a replacement act at such short notice".</p>

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8Q	<p>Martin Rose of Rainham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:</p> <p>“Debenhams on Chatham High Street is, sadly, due to close imminently. Its size, shape and location may make it an unattractive prospect for retail investment, particularly in the current unpredictable environment for business.</p> <p>The primary concern is that it will go the way of the other local buildings such as the Theatre Royal, Rochester Post Office and Britton Farm in Gillingham, remaining derelict for a long time, leading to a cycle of further decline in the eastern end of Chatham High Street. This well-connected site could offer the community a great deal, providing new housing, educational or health care facilities.</p> <p>With this in mind, what is the Council doing to ensure the future use of the Debenhams site serves the needs of the community and in providing a response can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether the Council will work with developers to change its planning designation to residential or other uses to avoid a cycle of decline on the High Street?”</p> <p>Note: As Mr Rose 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 Rose. I can completely understand your concern over the closure of Debenhams and the impact on Chatham. I can confirm the Cabinet has recently adopted a new masterplan for Chatham which sets out clear aspirations for the city centre, including the quarter around Debenhams. This will assist and guide discussions around the short and longer term solutions for this site.</p> <p>I can also confirm that my officers have already met and continue to meet, the representatives of the land owners in order to work together to achieve an appropriate redevelopment of this site, for the benefit of the viability and vitality of our city centre”.</p>

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	Members' questions not answered at the meeting	
10K	<p>Councillor Cooper submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“Given the vital importance of robust challenge and scrutiny to the rapid and sustainable improvement of Medway's Children's Services, as emphasised by the Commissioner, what assurances can he provide to backbench members of his own group that they will be encouraged to be robust in Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and that they will not face disciplinary or other action for challenges to the administration?”</p>	<p>“Thank you for your question Councillor Cooper.</p> <p>Members of the Conservative Group are encouraged to fully engage in the process of Overview & Scrutiny, and are assisted in that by being part of the ruling Conservative group and therefore have ready access to Cabinet members with whom they can discuss policy, performance and other matters.</p> <p>Unlike members of the Labour Group, who seek to politicise Overview & Scrutiny debate at every opportunity, members of the Conservative Group carry out their role in a measured and responsible manner, seeking to take Medway forward and not back”.</p>
10L	<p>Councillor McDonald submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake:</p> <p>“According to NHS Data, Medway CCG has a total of 2,917 patients per FTE fully-qualified GP - the highest number of patients per GP in the country. What are the reasons for this and how is the Council addressing them?”</p>	<p>“Thank you for your question, Councillor McDonald.</p> <p>There are a number of factors that have led to the increase in the ratio of patients to GPs in Medway in recent times. These issues are not unique to Medway and include:</p> <p>An ageing GP workforce - A large cohort of local Medway GPs have reached, or are approaching retirement age.</p> <p>Workforce - It can take 10 years to train and qualify as a GP. There is a national shortage of GPs which is fully acknowledged by the government. There is a significant and growing demand for primary care services. Medway has to compete to attract GPs in this challenging environment.</p> <p>Whilst the Council is not responsible for employing GPs or the delivery of primary care services, we are fully engaged in terms of holding the NHS to account through the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Medway CCG has acknowledged the</p>

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		<p>Council's concerns and has provided evidence of the range of services and changes they are making to mitigate the risks arising from the reduction in the number of GPs. There is a national programme to address the challenges facing the NHS, including workforce issues, through the NHS Long Term Plan. Both Overview and Scrutiny and the Health and Wellbeing Board have recently considered reports on the local implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan.</p> <p>Medway CCG has put in place an additional number of initiatives to improve access to primary care. These include bringing GPs together in local primary care networks which helps to improve resilience. In addition, the CCG has commissioned an additional 53,000 GP appointments for Medway residents via Improved Access Hubs which offers direct access to GP appointments and is available 7 days a week.</p> <p>The CCG is working with the Council to improve the quality of GP Premises and to facilitate the provision of key worker housing to help attract GPs and their families to Medway. Initiatives include proposals for the development of new healthy living centres on the Hoo Peninsula and in Chatham and Gillingham.</p> <p>There has been a redesign of the overall local health and care system, bringing together our local acute hospital, community and mental health services.</p> <p>Pharmacists are playing a key role to support local people with advice and treatment including medication for certain conditions.</p> <p>The CCG has also commissioned specially trained paramedics who undertake home visits, thus supporting GPs practices.</p> <p>The Council is also working with the CCG to develop and implement social</p>

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		<p>prescribing services. This way of working alongside the alignment of other community services, including local authority commissioned services, is termed an Integrated Care Partnership.</p> <p>Finally, in recognition of the need to demonstrate leadership in this area, Medway Council has taken direct action and created a medical bursary at the new Kent and Medway Medical School. The Medway Council bursary will fund the education of a medical student for the full 5 years of their clinical training. Medway Council was the first organisation in Kent and Medway to establish a bursary with the Medical School. From our lead others are now following”.</p>

Democratic Services

5 February 2020

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