

Council – 21 July 2022

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

Agenda

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Full Council 21 July 2022 – Schedule of written responses to Public questions not answered at the meeting

| Agenda Reference | Question | Response |
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| 7B | <p>Alan Wells of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:</p> <p>In recent months there has been a number of fly tipping incidents in Strood Rural.</p> <p>The sites targeted that I know of are:</p> <p>Off Berwick Way approaching Medway City Estate (now cleared). In particular, the land between Hasted Road and Islingham Farm Road approaching the Wainscott Bypass, as well as other sites in the Frindsbury, Wainscott, and Upnor area.</p> <p>I have seen for myself huge mounds of construction and commercial waste illegally dumped on an industrial scale in the area, which is affecting the immediate environment. Fly-tipping has a detrimental effect on the look and feel of our area and the dumpers, must have made multiple visits, to these sites. Rural paths and views are blocked by lorry loads of commercial and industrial waste.</p> <p>As reported on KM Online, Medway has the highest amount of fly tipping in Kent, with 5,141 reported incidents, 2019/20 with residents and landowners forced to deal with the potential health and environmental hazards the rubbish represents.</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Mr Wells.</p> <p>The issue of fly tipping is a blight across the country and Medway occasionally experiences similar problems. Whilst I am unable to comment on specific sites, as they may be subject to active investigation, I would make the following observations.</p> <p>Regulatory Services lawfully deploys both overt and covert video surveillance equipment to capture evidence of those involved in waste crime, and this evidence is frequently used in criminal prosecutions.</p> <p>The issue of presenting video and photographic images online to identify those involved in fly tipping is being considered by the team and a policy is being produced to lawfully manage this process.</p> <p>A recent Medway Council prosecution for fly tipping resulted in a custodial sentence of twenty weeks and a Criminal Behaviour Order for five years, restricting involvement in handling waste.</p> <p>Our teams work in partnership with Kent Police, the Environment Agency and other Government bodies to tackle the organised criminals behind many major fly tipping incidents.</p> <p>They also have regular proactive patrols with the Kent Police's Rural Taskforce to disrupt those involved in the unlawful disposal of waste. These operations routinely result in prosecutions and the</p> |

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| | <p>Environmental crime should not be tolerated, and our green spaces should be there to be enjoyed by the whole community.</p> <p>The Council could install CCTV at the fly-tipping hotspots and introduce a 'Caught on Camera' campaign across Medway to deter and identify fly-tippers, and act to reduce incidents of fly-tipping. This type of approach has proven successful elsewhere, with a 'Wall of Shame' campaign, where video and images of fly-tipping are published on the Council's website, asking residents to help identify the perpetrators. The locations of the cameras based on fly-tipping complaints are monitored to understand reduction in fly-tipping at the sites with CCTV, but also to see if there are any adverse impacts such as fly-tipping increasing elsewhere.</p> <p>What actions are the Council going to undertake to ensure compliance with environmental legislation, and to crack down on fly tipping?</p> | <p>seizure of vehicles involved in the illegal carriage of waste.</p> <p>Residents can report any fly tipping incident on our website or by calling 01634 333333.</p> |
| 7D | <p>Sean Carter of Gillingham asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:</p> <p>Why does Medway Council's housing department not deal with housing repairs and housing issues, for example</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Mr Carter.</p> <p>The Housing Repairs team takes on average around 56 calls a day, raising approximately 530 jobs and completes anywhere between 400 and 500 jobs per month.</p> <p>In May, the repairs service received a score of 94.4% for customers satisfied with the</p> |

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| | <p>they are not available or hang up the phone?</p> | <p>overall repairs service and answered 97.5% of calls received, with an average waiting time of 19 seconds.</p> <p>The only time that a call handler would hang up the phone is if there was a loss of signal or if the caller was being verbally abusive. If the latter was the case, then the call handler would warn the caller prior to terminating the call.</p> <p>If you have any specific examples of any housing repairs or issues not being dealt with, then these can be raised as a stage one complaint, investigated, and they will be responded to directly.</p> |
| 7F | <p>Paul O’Neill of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:</p> <p>New proposed laws will introduce a new criminal offence where a person resides or intends to reside on any public or private land without permission. Currently Medway does not provide adequate temporary traveller sites which leads to inappropriate areas being used by travellers.</p> <p>The Council could acquire land for this purpose, for example, it could use compulsory purchase powers to acquire the site on Gillingham Business Park behind Aldi.</p> <p>How does the Council intend to fulfil its requirements to the</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Mr O’Neill.</p> <p>We do of course have a Traveller’s site at Cuxton.</p> <p>The Government is encouraging councils to have a site or sites that the travelling community could temporarily use, when in that Authority’s area.</p> <p>We do own the freehold of the site that you refer to at Gillingham Business Park, however, the site has been leased until 2280, and at present we have no intention of using compulsory purchase powers to acquire this or any other sites for temporary traveller accommodation.</p> <p>We will, as always, follow legislation and where necessary, consider what is appropriate, taking into account any action that has been undertaken by other councils.</p> |

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| | traveller community in the local plan? | In terms of the Local Plan, the Council has undertaken, as part of its evidence base, an assessment of Gypsy and traveller need and has assessed all existing sites. Relevant policies and allocations to assist meeting that identified need will come forward as part of the emerging Local Plan. |

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**Full Council 21 July 2022 – Schedule of written responses to
Members' questions not answered at the meeting**

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| 10K | <p>Councillor Cooper asked the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:</p> <p>It is estimated that 700,000 people in the United Kingdom are on the autism spectrum, which is more than 1 in 100. If we include their immediate families, autism is a part of the daily lives of around 2.8 million people in Britain.</p> <p>Young people with autism face very specific problems when it comes to going to school, and it is vital that we as a local government do all we can to help them. We have had information in the most recent agenda items at both Children and Young People’s and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees that Autism has been highlighted as the most prevalent cause for Children and Young People transitioning from Children to Adult Services.</p> <p>Medway Council has taken steps to assign the role of ‘care leavers champion’ or ‘education champions’ to people involved in the Council set up. Given the prevalence of autism in</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Councillor Cooper. We as a local authority are already part of the new arrangements to support people with autism and learning disabilities. With the establishment of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board on the 1st of July 2022, the Council has direct input into shaping services for this vulnerable population. I am assured that Council officers including the Director of People, Director of Public Health, Assistant Director of Education and the Special Educational Needs department are involved in the work to support these individuals and families.</p> <p>My view, much like the stance we have taken for issues such as dementia, is that we should not leave this important issue to a single individual to champion. Everyone should be more autism aware and be in a position to understand the issues and challenges people with autism and their families face and be able to advocate for them.</p> |

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| | <p>society, would the Portfolio Holder agree with me that it is time that we have an Autism Champion at Medway Council who could be the focal point of work we do in the community related to autism?</p> | |
| 10L | <p>Councillor Van Dyke asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:</p> <p>The government has just appointed a national ambassador for Womens' health following a call for evidence that shows there is gender bias within NHS services, which means that women's health issues are taken less seriously and frequently deprioritised. Is the Leader of the Council prepared to appoint a Women's health ambassador for Medway to show our support for ensuring that women in our community receive the high quality health services they deserve?</p> | <p>Thank you for your question Cllr Van Dyke. With the establishment of the Integrated Care Board for Kent and Medway a specific committee, 'Inequalities Prevention and Population Health Committee' has been formed. This committee is responsible for identifying inequity, developing policy and gaining assurance that the health and care system meets the needs of local people. At its first meeting on 12th July 2022, evidence was presented to the committee, highlighting the disparity in healthy life expectancy for women. I am assured that as this committee is tasked with developing the Integrated Care Strategy for Kent and Medway, the NHS and also services will be better aligned to meet women's needs. I would also draw your attention to the Director of Public Health for Medway's Annual Public Health Report 2017/18. This report highlighted some of the specific challenges to the health of local women in Medway and action needed to improve outcomes.</p> |

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| 10M | <p>Councillor Murray asked the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:</p> <p>A recent survey presented to Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in an item about the transition process for young people with mental health problems contained the shocking news that 82% of children and young people in Medway have experienced difficulty with their mental health and wellbeing and over a third of young people are currently receiving treatment and support for mental health issues. Furthermore, schools report the highest ever level of mental health problems amongst their pupils.</p> <p>Does the Portfolio Holder agree that this undermines Medway’s ambition to be a child friendly city, while explaining what she intends to do to ensure that the new strategy being rolled out to tackle these issues will be properly funded?</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Cllr Murray.</p> <p>We want Medway to be one of the best places in the country for children and young people to grow up. Giving them the best start in life, to develop skills, provide positive opportunities and achieve their goals for the future. We aim to do this through listening to children and young people to better understand their needs and ideas on how we can make Medway even more child-friendly.</p> <p>Children and young people have identified Health & Wellbeing as one of the seven core themes of focus for Child-Friendly Medway and helped us to prioritise the top five actions for each. These actions align with the NHS 5 ways to mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Following the guidance of children and young people, the Child-Friendly Medway team works with children, young people, parents/carers, families, Medway Council teams and external partners (including schools, NHS), and the wider community to deliver this ambition for our young people.</p> <p>We have developed a Mental Health leads network for schools to share best practice and deliver training to schools. We also have a youth participation worker in Youth Services who works with children and young people to shape the services to meet need. Following a recent City Hall event, Child-Friendly Medway also sponsored 190 hours alongside the PCC for Kent for the Brief Intervention Counselling project that the Medway Youth Service is running for young people in Medway.</p> <p>We do need to improve awareness of what is out there and encourage young people to manage their mental health, and Child Friendly Medway provides the perfect platform to do this.</p> |

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| 10N | <p>Councillor Hubbard asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:</p> <p>Maritime Academy should have been located on Strood Riverside. That town centre site has great access for those walking, cycling, or using public transport. The school's site on Frindsbury Hill, expected to open in 2024, will just add to the levels of traffic congestion and pollution.</p> <p>I am dismayed at the ongoing changes for students starting at the Academy this September. Temporary arrangements were in place to use the vacant Stoke Primary site. Money was spent. Financial costs incurred. Proposed bussing arrangements, delivering and collecting some 200 students a day, were in place. The last-minute intervention by the Government's Department of Education (DfE) stopping the use of Stoke has resulted in a scramble to get the alternate site at Twydall Primary, ready in time.</p> | <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Despite the decision not to utilise the former Stoke Primary School as the temporary home for the Maritime Academy being made late in the process, Medway Council officers have worked tirelessly alongside the DfE and The Thinking Schools Academy Trust as well as the Rainham Mark Trust to ensure that the temporary site at Twydall Primary School is ready in time for September. The DfE could not guarantee that the work required at Stoke would be complete in time hence the need to find an alternative that could be.</p> <p>The Academy is communicating regularly with parents to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary school, with the bus services to Twydall in place.</p> <p>Twydall also provides a more suitable option than Stoke for a second year in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>I cannot comment on the internal processes at the DfE which led to the decision not to use Stoke being taken, but I am extremely confident that the Academy will deliver an excellent education for the pupils attending the Maritime Academy in the temporary buildings and until such time as the permanent site is ready.</p> |

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| | <p>The Government's lead on this project is simply not good enough. Council staff have done their best and I am confident that the Academy's staff will deliver their educational best. Do you believe that the DfE should have been on top of matters much earlier, rather than letting matters fester, that in turn led to the disruption of plans at a very late stage?</p> | |
| 100 | <p>Councillor Mahil asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:</p> <p>As in previous years Kent County Council is offering a free bus service for under 16s. The benefits of such a scheme are clear in relation to the environment, but even more so in relation to the health and wellbeing of the children and young people, our local communities and Medway's economy.</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder please explain why Medway Council is, once again, not part of this scheme?</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Cllr Mahil.</p> <p>Of course, KCC received over £30million in funding from the Department for Transport as part of their Bus Service Improvement Plan. Disappointingly however, Medway was one of the 45 local authorities that received no funding and therefore initiatives like the one KCC offered to their community were not possible.</p> |

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| 10P | <p>Councillor Browne asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:</p> <p>The risk of another pandemic has been removed from Medway’s risk register on the grounds that there is now sufficient resilience and expertise within the Council to tackle another pandemic should one arise.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the good work that has been done and the skills that staff have gained from their experiences does the Leader agree with me that while there is still so much to learn about the development of Covid and its long-term effects that removing risk of a pandemic from the register diminishes awareness of the dangers of another pandemic and leaves the Council and our residents in a needlessly vulnerable position?</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. Protecting the Health and Wellbeing of the Medway population is the primary priority of this administration.</p> <p>As you know, Medway Council was the first local authority in the south- east and one of the first in the country to establish a local COVID-19 community testing programme. Our proactive and systematic action throughout the pandemic has been widely recognised and acknowledged both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>With the publication of the national ‘Living with Covid Guidance’ in April 2022 and the subsequent sun-lighting of the majority of covid regulations, the approach to tackling COVID-19 has shifted. This does not mean we are complacent about the risk to the public health posed by any new or novel pandemic. Our Director of Public Health is the lead officer with the statutory responsibility for health protection and has established a robust surveillance system, working with regional and local partners such as the UK Health Security Agency. This organisation holds the national responsibility for informing central government and therefore local government response to emerging threats to the public health.</p> <p>The Director of Public Health maintains a Health Protection Board, which is attended by all key stakeholders including the UK Health Security Agency.</p> <p>We have also updated our Local Outbreak Management Plan, specifically focussed on the COVID-19 issues. Should the call come, we have shown we have an effective Emergency Planning and Resilience response that has proven its ability to protect the health of Medway residents.</p> |

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| | | <p>We all await the findings of the independent inquiry to the COVID-19 pandemic. There will clearly be lessons that we can all learn when this inquiry reports. I am however assured that we have the appropriate processes in place to safeguard our local population. We have a range of effective treatments and counter measures in place to address the impact of COVID-19 and similar viruses.</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10Q | <p>Councillor Price asked the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:</p> <p>What action has the Portfolio Holder taken to ensure that the administration of SEND funding for the Medway Early Years Sector is efficient and effective?</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. Early Years SEND Inclusion Fund (SENDIF) falls under the remit of the Early Years SEN team. Early Years is included in the Portfolio Holder’s monthly Education and Social Care Oversight Board.</p> <p>SENDIF can be requested by PVI’s, Pre-school Settings, Maintained Nursery Settings, Registered Childminders and Registered Out of School Providers (where the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) is accessed). In Medway this is 240 settings.</p> <p>SENDIF comes from top slice of the National Education Grant (NEG) (3 and 4 yr old hours funding). This equates to approx. £20,000.</p> <p>The number of applications to for SENDIF has increased as below:</p> <table data-bbox="775 1485 1139 1664"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="775 1485 979 1514">Financial Year</th> <th data-bbox="984 1485 1023 1514"></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="775 1520 932 1550">2019-2020</td> <td data-bbox="984 1520 1023 1550">144</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="775 1556 932 1585">2020-2021</td> <td data-bbox="984 1556 1023 1585">148</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="775 1592 932 1621">2021-2022</td> <td data-bbox="984 1592 1023 1621">198</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="775 1628 932 1657">2022-2023</td> <td data-bbox="984 1628 1139 1657">130 to June</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Currently, as like previous years, the SENDIF budget is underspent. Each application is considered on its individual merits at a monthly panel meeting, which includes representation from providers. The majority of applications are approved with others usually being returned for more information.</p> | Financial Year | | 2019-2020 | 144 | 2020-2021 | 148 | 2021-2022 | 198 | 2022-2023 | 130 to June |
| Financial Year | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2019-2020 | 144 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2020-2021 | 148 | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 2022-2023 | 130 to June | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | | <p>The team is currently carrying 2 vacancies (total staffing:9 FTE) which we aware has caused some processing delays for providers, we are working to recruit to those posts as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Early Years SEN team support the 96 Private, Voluntary and Independent Nurseries (PVI's). They provide support to the nurseries via SENCO surgeries where discussion about the children's needs and advice regarding support including SENDIF is given. The settings are supported with strategies that are modelled to them. The Early Years SEN team provide training for the settings and see children who are delayed in two or more areas of development that are not accessing nursery.</p> |

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