

Council – 24 January 2024

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

10 Members' questions

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**Full Council 24 January 2024 – Schedule of written responses to
Members' questions not answered at the meeting**

Agenda Reference	Question	Response
10G	<p>Councillor Filmer asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, the following:</p> <p>“At the last Council meeting, this Council approved the Medway-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). On the 10 December Councillor Osborne tweeted ‘We are already issuing S.59s and seizing vehicles.’</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder advise the Council how many vehicles have been confiscated and Section 59 notices issued since the PSPO was approved by this Council?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, as you will appreciate the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) will give a distinct set of powers to the Council and Kent Police to address the issue of nuisance vehicles, it is proposed to have this operational by the end of this financial year.</p> <p>The provisions of section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 provide a separate set of existing powers that our Police Forces can utilise. Presently the use of section 59 powers is not recorded on The National Computers, our Police colleagues in Medway have agreed to start recording locally the application of this statutory mechanism. Although, we are waiting for this local dataset to develop I am advised by Kent Police that 21 s59s have been issued since January 2023, with 12 being issued in July/August and that three vehicles have also been seized.</p>
10I	<p>Councillor Kemp asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“Assuming that the proposed Red Route for Rainham High Street is implemented, will he give details of the actual costs of implementing the scheme?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>There are several implementation costs associated with the introduction of Red Routes. This includes the design, undertaking engagement and consultation, associated advertisement costs, a statutory consultation, CCTV infrastructure (ANPR Cameras), carriageway changes and new signage.</p> <p>Whilst finance information is not available to the granular level requested (i.e. split by location), I can advise that the total implementation cost is approximately £805,000 across all proposed Red Route sites.</p>

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10J	<p>Councillor Anang asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, the following:</p> <p>“Could the Portfolio Holder announce when traffic executing an illegal right turn from the A2 into Orchard Street in Rainham is going to be monitored and offenders prosecuted?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Councillor Anang.</p> <p>I can confirm that ANPR cameras have now been installed at the A2/Orchard Street junction to capture vehicles ignoring the right turn ban, and we are now carrying out tests to make sure the cameras link up with the back-office software. Once we have completed testing, we will identify a ‘go live’ date for camera enforcement, which is likely to be in February. We have a communications plan around this, which includes letters to residents and business, social media activity and website updates.</p>
10K	<p>Councillor Barrett asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:</p> <p>“Could the Portfolio Holder Please update on engagement that she has had with Registered Providers (RPs) since her appointment in May 2023?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. Engaging with Medway’s Registered Providers is an important part of understanding the position of the market, particularly on an issue as important as the delivery of affordable homes, which is close to my heart and one that I have spoken about on a number of occasions.</p> <p>Since May, I have attended a number of developer and other meetings at which registered providers have been present and spoken directly to them before and after those meetings, as well set-up direct meetings. This has included my major developers meeting, the Kent Housing and Developers Forum, and various visits to affordable housing sites.</p> <p>I look forward to continuing to engage with the sector to increase the number of affordable and social homes delivered in Medway.</p>

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10L	<p>Councillor Brake asked the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:</p> <p>“What engagement has the Portfolio Holder had in relation to the Rainham Healthy Living Centre and the Rainham Primary Care Network (PCN)?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>One of this administration’s priorities is to enable all Medway residents, to be able to access timely and high quality NHS services. I was aware of previous dialogue and actions arising following scrutiny of this matter at Medway Council’s Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC). I have been in regular contact with both council officers, including the Director of Public Health and officers from the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board including the Director of Primary Care and Estates.</p> <p>I am starkly aware of the need to ensure the viability of the Rainham Health Living Centre (HLC). To this end I convened a meeting with key stakeholders on the 13th of December 2023. The purpose of this meeting was to gain more insight and resolve (where feasible) issues impacting on the use of the HLC by the Rainham PCN. Attendees included the Clinical Director of Rainham Primary Care Network and their lead nurse, local ward members, other elected members including the Chair of HASC, the Director of Public Health and other interested parties for example the local Church representative were also in attendance.</p> <p>Following this meeting there were a number of specific actions agreed. These actions are being taken forward by ICB officers (as commissioners) and council officers. This issue is also still on the HASC work programme and will therefore be subject to further oversight and member scrutiny. I have received</p>

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		<p>assurance from the ICB that they have prioritised this facility within their emerging estates strategy. They have stated they continue to work with the PCN, Medway Council and other stakeholders, to ensure continuity of NHS provision at the Rainham Healthy Living Centre.</p>
10M	<p>Councillor Clarke asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:</p> <p>“The Portfolio Holder recently posted on Twitter that she had been looking at Business Improvement Districts around the Country. Please can she update the Council on her plans, taking into account what she learnt following these visits?”</p>	<p>Thank you Cllr Clarke for the question. This administration has a commitment to help set up Business Improvement Districts in areas where they are supported by local businesses, to improve the local trading environment. Alongside relevant officers and Cllr Maple, I have visited the Reading and Maidstone BID management teams to get a better understanding of the process involved establishing a BID and the involvement required from the local authority. A feasibility study is being undertaken, paid for through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to engage stakeholders in town centres to get their views on BID progression. Established Town Centre Boards will be consulted throughout the process.</p>
10N	<p>Councillor Doe asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:</p> <p>“Can the Portfolio Holder please update on action in relation to the Gillingham High Street Task Force set up by the administration?”</p>	<p>Thank you Cllr Doe for the question.</p> <p>The National High Street Task Force visited Gillingham in October 2023 to undertake a walkabout and facilitate an internal workshop with senior Medway Council officers to identify and understand the key issues in Gillingham, any internal barriers to addressing these key issues, and providing recommendations of how to overcome these to deliver tangible improvements in Gillingham. The workshop aimed to understand the council priorities and any challenges constraining the delivery of services and actions in Gillingham, with how these can be resolved including</p>

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		<p>improved governance and place management partnership structures of the town centre forum.</p> <p>In November 2023, the National High Street Task Force presented its findings and recommendations at the Town Centres board. These were (a) creating an internal group of Medway Council place leaders to focus on Gillingham and align and rapidly deploy resources and action, (b) To establish a “Town Board” and create a proactive town centre partnership with strong leaders from external stakeholders, (c) Undertake the Place Making Programme workshop from the NHSTF to help develop the vision and identity of the town, and (d) Develop the evening economy offer and raise standards of safety and security.</p> <p>We are now beginning the work to implement these recommendations. The Council will continue to work with the National High Street Task Force to support the socio-economic regeneration of Gillingham.</p>
100	<p>Councillor Gilbourne asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:</p> <p>“The former Wigmore Coach Park is still occupied by the Traveller Group some 8 weeks after they were supposed to leave the site. Councillor Osborne, who took the decision to site the travellers at the Wigmore Coach park without consultation with local Ward Councillors or residents, promised that the travellers would leave the</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. Medway has historically only ever adopted an enforcement stance in dealing with gypsies and travellers. This has often led to numerous encampments in a relatively small area, excessive bailiff and legal costs and a deterioration in relationships with the community. As part of a more modern and recommended approach to tackling encampments and in relation to very specific vulnerabilities of the group, the Council took the decision to allow a limited stay on the site in Wigmore.</p> <p>This was intended to be for a limited period of time and it's unfortunate</p>

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	<p>site by 18 October 2023. Councillor Osborne has failed to keep local Ward Members informed as to the progress in recovering the site and has allowed more travellers to use the site.</p> <p>Residents are rightly concerned that this matter is going to drag on for months more. Would the Portfolio Holder promise to expedite regaining possession of the site, apologising to residents for the previous broken promise?"</p>	<p>that the group have remained on the site beyond the time that was agreed. This makes adopting a more managed approach challenging going forward as it relies on both parties holding to their part of the agreement.</p> <p>I would like to apologise to any residents that feel that the Council has broken its promise, however I would point out that the Council has taken all reasonable steps to take back possession of the site and will continue to pursue this through appropriate legal channels.</p>
10P	<p>Councillor Hackwell asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:</p> <p>“As the Leader often tries to remind anybody that will listen to his rhetoric that the Council is broke, even though this is causing some reputational damage to the Council, when in fact the reality of the situation is the Council was in a worse position financially against the budget, at the same point last year, and the Council has considerably more reserves than it did in 2018.</p> <p>In the draft Budget for 2024/25, the Leader has said that there will be some tough decisions to be made, why then has the Leader allocated £10,000,000 for Medway Council Staff pay rises, this equates to roughly on</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>It is disappointing to see the previous Cabinet Member who was in charge of staff pay display such an inadequate grasp of how staff pay works. It can only be assumed that he has simply divided £10m by an assumed 2,000 employees. Maths that any primary school pupil with a calculator would be capable of.</p> <p>It is right that he is raising that fact that hard-working tax payers are struggling to pay the bills. That is why, as one of the biggest employers in Medway we are looking at providing a better pay offer for our staff.</p> <p>Not only is this a better deal for the hard-working staff at Medway Council it will assist in issues related to recruitment and retention of staff, which end up costing the Council more in terms of agency and locum staff fees. This investment will hopefully go some way in improving this situation.</p>

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	<p>average an increase of £5,000 per person a year, or around £100 a week each.</p> <p>Can the Leader explain to this chamber and to the hard-working tax payers of Medway, how he finds it acceptable that such an enormous pay rise is given to Medway Council staff, which has to be paid for by the hard-working tax payers of Medway when they themselves could be struggling to pay the bills?"</p>	<p>Some of that £10 million funding will be used to fix the flawed, potentially discriminatory MedPay system which despite repeated calls over a number of years failed to be addressed by the previous administration.</p> <p>This administration also takes the role of HR Professionals, Trade Union professionals and the Employment Matters Committee seriously, unlike the previous administration where one individual acted in a disrespectful manner year after year.</p>
10Q	<p>Councillor Hyne asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:</p> <p>“Can the Portfolio Holder please advise of any costs so far incurred due to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) situation at Gun Wharf?”</p>	<p>We have incurred costs of circa £60k to date for further surveys to fully understand the risk of the identified RAAC, feasibility studies and surveys on potential repair options and solutions for the Council’s accommodation needs. In addition, we’ve included critical works to make the area safe and functional for the limited number of staff and Members able to use and access the building. This has been essential in ensuring that Council services continue to run as smoothly as possible.</p>
10R	<p>Councillor Joy asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:</p> <p>“Please can you explain why you instructed the Town Centre Manager to send an email to Rainham Town Centre Partnership (RTCP) members with regards to red routes in Rainham on 8 November, requesting a response by 9</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. I can confirm I gave no such instruction on what is an operational matter. My understanding is that the town centre management team was asked by the sustainable transport team to further engage with Rainham residents and businesses on additional loading bays ahead of the statutory consultation on red routes. An extra push to make sure all views were being captured is something I would hope we would all welcome. Responses were requested by 9 November 2023 to allow sufficient time to look at any</p>

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	November but did not include all members of the RTCP.”	design changes if required, prior to progressing to statutory consultation.
10S	<p>Councillor Lammas asked the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, the following:</p> <p>“Can the Portfolio Holder please update on the pass rate for the most recent Medway Test?”</p>	Thank you for your question, I can confirm that overall, 56% of those who sat the test achieved the pass mark, of which 42% of Medway pupils who sat the test achieved the pass mark with out of area pupils at 71%.
10T	<p>Councillor Lawrence asked the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:</p> <p>“The Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy finally reached Cabinet on 19 December. The Portfolio Holder was effusive in her praise for the strategy. A strategy, 18 months in the gestation is one thing but delivering on the cerebral and unambitious targets is another. An example of the lack of ambition is in Shared Outcome 3:-</p> <p>‘By 2028 the rate of emergency admissions for those who are frail will have reduced by at least 1.5% to the rate it was in 2018.’</p> <p>Would the Portfolio Holder agree with me that this strategy needs more ambition, more work to make it fit for purpose and clearer lines of accountability?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. I am pleased to see that you have read the Integrated Care Strategy since it contains many critical targets for improving the health and wellbeing of Medway residents and is complemented by our own Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which came to the last Health and wellbeing board. Both were the subject of extensive consultation with our many health and community partners and I have been pleased to participate in the workshops and seminars associated with the consultation. I maintain my view that the strategies represent a sustained partnership approach and have the potential to shift the pervasive and persistent health inequalities in Medway.</p> <p>Your question is contradictory as to refers to cerebral shared outcomes but then says that these are unambitious. The outcomes are indeed cerebral because they involve intelligence and intellect as opposed to emotion and instinct and are supported by data and research. The example you have chosen to use on reducing emergency admissions for those who are frail is not unambitious, The reasons people are frail are complex and are impacted by a range of factors such</p>

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		<p>as physical health, daily activities ,living circumstances and local environment. Reducing emergency admissions depends on our ability to keep people well at home and the measures we take with partners to improve strength and balance, ensure good nutrition and maintain safe care so the target reflects the range of factors and with monitoring, the target can be increased to reflect progress. In my view the lines of accountability are clear and the target is fit for purpose because it has been identified using data on demographics, demand and population health.</p>
10U	<p>Councillor Spring asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards, the following:</p> <p>“Can the Portfolio Holder please update us on the current occupancy rate of Rainham Shopping Centre?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Having liaised with Evolve, the Head Tenant for Rainham Shopping Centre, I can confirm that all occupiable units are either occupied or in negotiation. The former Wilko unit is currently being refitted and is due to open in February 2024 as a B&M store and the former Bookmark unit is at an advanced stage in the letting process with a press release from Evolve to be issued imminently.</p>
10V	<p>Councillor Williams asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, the following:</p> <p>“When will the people of Medway see the proposed Community Wardens?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, we are working hard to explore ways teams can deliver on a named Warden for each ward in Medway within our current budget envelope.</p> <p>We want this service to be as effective as possible and avail itself of new reporting mechanisms that will make accessing the Authority’s functions as simple as possible. I hope you will appreciate that this will take time to create.</p> <p>In meantime, as we are developing this new service, residents can access all the normal Front Line Services in the standard ways</p>

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		where officers will assist them in resolving any issues.
10W	<p>Councillor Fearn asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:</p> <p>“What engagement has the Portfolio Holder had with her counterparts at Newham to discuss Anchorage House, given that the Labour Mayor of Newham decided to press ahead with this plan without consulting Medway Council?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. As soon we were made aware of the activity from Newham I spoke directly to the Mayor of Newham to voice my concerns. This was followed shortly by a meeting with the relevant portfolio holder in Newham. Since that time, I have also undertaken a visit to the building with officers and have also met with the housing management company Theori, who work closely with London Councils and identified the site for Newham. Unfortunately, Theori did not approach us.</p> <p>At every opportunity I have raised my concerns in relation to the use of the building, as well as out of borough temporary accommodation and permitted development regulations that have allowed this to happen.</p> <p>Relevant officers and I will continue to work with Newham to ensure that there is minimal impact caused by this development. But some impact is inevitable and unfortunately other local authorities are also continuing to place residents in Medway including Dartford Borough Council, London Borough of Bromley, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council.</p> <p>The housing market is under significant strain, and we need better national legislation to avoid future situations such as this, including. With this in mind I will continue to voice my concerns in relation to out of area temporary accommodation placements and permitted development regulations.</p>

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10X	<p>Councillor Cook asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, the following:</p> <p>“Can the Portfolio Holder update Council on the progress of the Medway-wide Public Space Protection Order agreed at our last meeting.</p> <p>I know this will be of particular concern to my constituents in Wayfield and Weedswood who have experienced significant anti-social behaviour with vehicles in Barnfield?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, as you will appreciate the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) will give a distinct set of powers to the Council and Kent Police to address the issue of nuisance vehicles.</p> <p>To ensure all the necessary statutory signage and engagement activities have been properly undertaken it is proposed to have this operational by the end of this financial year.</p> <p>This new power will be used in Partnership with Kent Police, who will continuing the use of the provisions of section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002. It is expected that this new enforcement tool will greatly complement the 21 s59s issued and 3 vehicles seized since January 2023 by Kent Police.</p>
10Y	<p>Councillor Pearce asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“Deangate Ridge continues to suffer from unauthorised access and use by quad-bikes and dirt-bikes.</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder and Council officers work with Ward Members to strengthen the security of the site and its boundaries to ensure local residents can enjoy Deangate Ridge safely and no damage is caused?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. The Head of Service for Valuation and Asset Management has received anecdotal reports that the unauthorised access has reduced since an increase in natural surveillance through various Council departments relocating temporarily to Deangate due to the partial closure of Gun Wharf.</p> <p>The pedestrian access point to the north of the bowls club has been identified as a weak point due to the design of the width restrictor which complies with disabled access but also enables access of unauthorised vehicles. This has been raised with our contractors Medway Norse. We will continue to monitor this and seek a solution that ideally prevents illegal access but maintains disabled access, a difficult balance to maintain.</p>

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		The above officer and Medway Norse will be happy to meet the Ward Members on site to review what further security measures can practically be installed.
10Z	<p>Councillor Sands asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Price, the following:</p> <p>“Hoo Village Hall has a new committee in place and is keen, with the support of Ward Councillors, for the Medway Council provided youth club and service to utilise this community facility.</p> <p>Will the Portfolio Holder and officers from the Youth Service meet with the Committee and Ward Councillors to discuss this and the enhancement of this vital service for our local youth?”</p>	Thank you for your question. An officer from the Youth Service would be happy to meet with the Committee and myself as the Portfolio Holder about making use of the new community facility.
10AA	<p>Councillor Spalding asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:</p> <p>“While dealing with the refuse collection fiasco, which was before it snowed and certain others even thought about the subject, I raised the issue of gritting roads during cold weather. I am grateful the salt bins, where available, were filled up.</p> <p>However, save for Allhallows, the other</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. There is a criterion applied when selecting salt bin locations, such as those at potentially hazardous locations where there are steep gradients or sharp bends, which create potential hazardous situations for network users.</p> <p>For the localities you mention in your question, these are seen as low risk areas in comparison to other hazardous areas in Medway, such as Lordswood and Walderslade, which are predominantly hilly in nature.</p> <p>I am happy for our officers to meet with you on site with a view to</p>

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	<p>villages and hamlets in my ward, Grain, St Mary Hoo, Upper Stoke, Middle Stoke and Lower Stoke do not have a single salt bin between them. This Labour administration promised fairness and inclusivity.</p> <p>What is the Portfolio Holder going to do to ensure all of my ward and indeed all the rural areas are treated fairly when it comes to provision of salt bins and road gritting?"</p>	<p>identifying any locations that may fit the adopted criteria.</p> <p>With regards to road gritting, the main roads to the villages of Grain, St Mary Hoo, Upper, Middle and Lower Stoke all form part of the Council's primary gritting route and therefore are deemed high priority routes and will therefore be treated at the same time as all the other primary routes within the authority.</p>
10AB	<p>Councillor Mandaracas asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Price, the following:</p> <p>"People who are care leavers can face additional challenges in their lives.</p> <p>What work is Medway Council undertaking to ensure Care Leavers are treated as having a protected characteristic, giving vulnerable young adults the best start in the next stage of their lives?"</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. Children in care and care experienced young people have been identified as a key priority for the new administration. As such, making care experience a protected characteristic is a proposal that the new administration has asked officers to scope for consideration by Medway Council. Work is currently underway by officers regarding this issue, including consultation with young people in Medway who are care experienced, and proposals will be put forward in the spring on how this can be progressed in the best interests of Medway's 656 children in care and care experienced young people.</p>