

Cabinet – Supplementary Agenda no. 1

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 8 July 2025

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: St George's Centre, Pembroke Road, Chatham ME4 4UH

Agenda

4. Questions to the Cabinet

(Pages 3 -
6)

Appendix 1, previously marked to follow, is now attached.

For further information please contact Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer/Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer on Telephone: 01634 332715/332115 or Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

Date: 4 July 2025

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Appendix 1

Member's Question (relating to agenda Item 5 Medway Air Quality Action Plan 2025-30)

Question A – Councillor Crozer, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Simon Curry, the following:

You are asked today to approve Medway's new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), a document whose fundamental purpose is to provide a credible and effective strategy for improving air quality and protecting the health of residents. For any such plan to be considered robust, it must be deliverable and capable of addressing the most significant challenges it faces.

The council's own evidence base for the Draft Local Plan identifies that the single greatest future pressure on Medway's air quality is the plan's proposed housing growth. Specifically, the allocation of 5,710 homes on the Hoo Peninsula, which relies on the existing, congested A228 road network.

The council's Local Plan Air Quality Assessment only found the plan's impact to be acceptable on the critical assumption that a £170 million package of new roads and infrastructure would be built. As the Cabinet knows, this Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant has been withdrawn by the government, and the council's own viability evidence confirms that Section 106 contributions from the development cannot possibly cover this cost. The essential mitigation is therefore currently unfunded and undeliverable.

This has severe and direct consequences for the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Four Elms Hill, an area which already contains existing homes and a primary school, and where residents are exposed to illegally high levels of pollution. While we note the intention to move the school, this does not solve the underlying problem. The summit of Four Elms Hill will remain a severe pedestrian, cycling, and traffic pinch-point, with the pelican crossing ensuring the continuation of stop-start traffic conditions—the primary cause of heightened emissions. The 'real world' impact of the Local Plan, without the HIF-funded roads, will be to force thousands of additional vehicle journeys through this exact location, inevitably worsening a situation that is already a public health risk.

Therefore, my question is:

Given that the primary driver of future air pollution—the Local Plan's housing growth—currently lacks a credible, funded mitigation strategy, on what specific grounds does the Cabinet consider this Air Quality Action Plan to be effective, deliverable, and legally sound when it is clear that its objectives will be completely overwhelmed by the foreseeable and severe negative impact on the Four Elms Hill AQMA, an impact for which the council has no deliverable solution?

Public Questions

Question B – Nathan Ward, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Nina Gurung, the following:

Does the Cabinet support 'Putting Rainham First' project which aims to secure £10m to protect, preserve and present the heritage, arts and culture of Rainham?

Question C – Mrs S Williams, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Simon Curry, the following:

Considering the Medway Norse joint venture partnership has now been in place for over 10 years, I wonder whether Medway Council questions the effectiveness and whether money has genuinely been saved including whether there has been an acceptance of lower standards.

I am also curious as to whether tax paying residents of Medway have been receiving value for their money and can have pride in Medway.

Over recent years Medway has declined, it looks unkempt and sadly as this becomes more obvious to the residents of Medway, they will also do the same, the creep has already begun.

Medway Norse vehicles are seen in abundance out on the Medway roads each day. I wonder whether staff officers are out on the ground reporting all the necessary issues.

Executive officers and councillors drive around the towns and must see the rubbish, overgrown grass verges, overgrown pavements, overgrown street verges, trees hanging over pathways and roads. Public buildings/areas used to be serviced on an annual basis to uphold a standard of appearance. 'No mow' may is now on its way to July. Entering Rainham via the M2 is an example, litter, graffiti on signposts and overgrown grass verges are a disgrace. Areas of the carriageway on B2004 and several verge roads, namely A2, Beechings Way are knee deep in grass and weeds. Similar examples can be found in Chatham, Rochester, Strood and Frindsbury.

I can recall services when they were carried out by Council staff, there was a sense of pride and ownership. Unfortunately in recent times, it has become apparent that so many works are make do and bodge, rather than repair and permanently fix.

Can Medway Council honestly say that they have saved money and maintained their sense of Pride in Medway since entering into the Medway Norse Partnership, whilst still maintaining the same standards of upkeep to the Medway Towns?

Members' Questions

Question D – Councillor Hamandishe, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vince Maple, the following:

What would happen if The Labour Party decided to set up a politically directed “Department of Government Efficiency” comprising of party donors — outside of existing audit and scrutiny processes — and demanded access to all officer files, emails, and financial records? Would that be legal?

Question E – Councillor Spalding, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Teresa Murray, the following:

The main Local Plan Regulation 19 document is 581 pages long including numerous appendices.

In addition to this main document there are twenty seven sets of detailed background papers.

The first draft of the Local Plan Regulation 19 document was published on 3 June 2025.

That same evening the Cabinet met to consider approving the draft plan document.

The final draft appeared on 18 June when it was circulated with the special council meeting agenda.

All three drafts apparently contained errors and missing documents.

Why did Councillor Murray, the Deputy Leader of Medway Council, apparently mislead the cabinet and those watching the meeting by saying “This plan has been, along with the planning officers, to my Health and Wellbeing Board” when it could not have done, and saying this was “A plan ready to go to the inspector” when clearly it was not?

Question F – Councillor Kemp, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vince Maple, the following:

For over a decade, the floral displays adorning the railings along the A2 in Rainham have been widely celebrated as a vibrant and welcoming gateway to Medway. This initiative, previously supported by the now-defunct Members Priority Fund, contributed significantly to the visual identity of the borough’s eastern entrance.

With the removal of that funding source, and the subsequent withdrawal of the displays—much to the disappointment of both residents and visitors—Ward Councillors have stepped in temporarily, donating £1,000 from their Ward Improvement Fund allocation to sustain the displays for six months.

Given that these floral installations represent a borough-wide asset rather than a Ward-specific feature, and in light of similar displays being maintained in other areas—such as on the A2 adjacent to Jacksons Field—can the Leader of the

Council, or the appropriate Portfolio Holder, confirm whether permanent, borough-level funding will be allocated to ensure the continuation of these valued displays in Rainham?

Question G – Councillor Wildey, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vince Maple, the following:

Can the Leader of the Council explain why we should believe that any policy will not get reversed in the next few months?