

Cabinet – Supplementary Agenda No. 2

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 4 August 2026

Time: 7.00pm

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

Agenda

4. Questions to the Cabinet

(Pages 3 - 4)

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

8. Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

(Pages 5 - 8)

Please find enclosed an addendum report with additional information provided, as referenced in the main report.

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: 31 July 2026

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Member's Questions

Question A – Councillor Lawrence will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Councillor Curry and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter the following:

“In July 2023, former Cabinet Members, Councillors Naushabah Khan and Tris Osborne - now MPs for Gillingham & Rainham and Chatham & Aylesford respectively - granted without consultation a 'temporary 3-month' licence to occupy the former Wigmore Park & Ride site, assuring the public and Ward Councillors that it was unsuitable for permanent occupation. Three years later, following a costly court defeat caused by a lack of clear Council strategy, Cabinet is now asking Medway taxpayers to borrow £2.684 million to turn this 'temporary' measure into a permanent, expanded 14-pitch site.

Paragraph 8.1 of Agenda Item 8 astonishingly claims that 'a public consultation is not required... as the site is not near a residential area', completely ignoring established residents in Hempstead, Wigmore, and Bredhurst, as well as the once-planned 88 homes (including 22 affordable homes) directly opposite at Blowers Wood. Given these circumstances, how can the Portfolio Holder justify the recommendations within the report?

In giving their response, the Portfolio Holders should address:

- bypassing public consultation with local residents and Ward Councillors on a £2.684 million capital scheme.
- the total failure to explore or secure viable alternative uses for this valuable Council-owned asset over the past three years.
- the loss of 88 desperately needed local homes (including 22 affordable units) at Blowers Wood caused by this reactive planning panic.
- expecting Medway taxpayers to pick up a multi-million-pound borrowing bill to fix what can only be described as a masterclass in administrative ineptitude.”

Question B – Councillor Perfect will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple the following:

“Whilst your government is now completely focused on the North, at the expense of everywhere else, Medway Council has a significant in year revenue gap. It was also shortchanged by £8m by the Government at the start of this year through the fairer funding review.

When is the Leader of the Council due to meet with the new Prime Minister and Secretary of State, to ask them both for a fairer funding settlement for Medway?”

Question C – Councillor Spalding will ask the Portfolio Holder of Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry the following:

“With the ongoing hot weather and at a time when use of buses is being encouraged, it is, in my opinion, equally important to consider bus drivers, especially those on long routes such as the ones serving my ward at the very edge of Medway.

It has come to my attention that driver welfare is apparently not as good as it could be.

Does the Portfolio Holder share my view that bus drivers should be afforded appropriate considerations by bus operators to ensure their comfort and their safety, and by definition, the safety of passengers. When responding will he confirm he will write to all Medway's bus operators asking them to review their current policies and make changes if required and make changes as appropriate?”

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

“Will the Labour Group be repaying the £105,000 as well as any interest incurred for the failed Option 4D business case back to the Council?”

Question E – Councillor Joy will ask the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs the following:

“Could the Portfolio Holder please provide the persistent absence statistics for each of the last three completed academic years?

In giving her answer she should provide:

- the attendance statistics broken down by school type, namely Primary and Infant Schools, Secondary Schools, SEND Schools, and Post-16/18 establishments, the figures for Looked After Children highlighted within each category;
- the actions the Council is taking to improve attendance across Medway schools;
- how both, local authority-maintained schools and academy trusts, are being held to account.”



Cabinet

4 August 2026

Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation – Addendum report

1. Additional Recommendations to main report
 - 1.4 The Cabinet is asked to consider and note the outcome of the Call for Sites exercise and review of Council owned land in its consideration of the options for the former Wigmore Park and Ride site.
 - 1.5 The Cabinet is asked to support a proposed minor modification to the Local Plan policies map to clarify the existing and consented gypsy and traveller sites to be safeguarded in accordance with policy T10 in the submitted draft Medway Local Plan.
2. Outcome of Call for Sites for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople
 - 2.1 Following correspondence between the Inspectors appointed to examine the Medway Local Plan 2041 and the Council, the Planning Service carried out a review of land with potential for use for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation.
 - 2.2 The Council issued a 'call for sites,' specifically for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Sites, between 8 June 2026 and 20 July 2026. The notice of the 'call for sites' was publicised with developers, land owners, consultees and wider stakeholders through use of the database of contacts developed for the local plan. A Council member assisted in promoting the Call for Sites to contacts with links into Gypsy and Traveller communities.
 - 2.3 The Council received no submission sites, and the Council member's approach also received no follow up on suggested sites.
 - 2.4 The Council member liaised with the Planning Service to review council owned land and he made a number of suggestions for further review of sites. The member suggested sites were located in the Capstone Valley area, High Halstow, Cuxton, Luton, Lower Rainham bordering the estuary, and Rochester. These sites were included in the assessment carried out by Planning officers. Most of the sites were removed in the earlier stages of

assessment due to conflict with screening criteria, particularly protected open space and environmental designations. Other sites were included in the later stages of assessment.

- 2.5 Alongside the Call for Sites exercise, the Planning Service carried out a review of its own landholdings with the objective of identifying deliverable and developable sites for the first 10 years of the Plan. The approach to this work is set out below.

Site identification and screening

- 2.6 Planning officers used the latest Land Registry spatial data in a Geographic Information System to identify land in the Council's ownership. The Council reviewed practice in other Local Planning Authorities to inform its methodology, including minimum size site. Having discounted 1,176 sites that are smaller than 400 sqm, 978 sites remained for assessment.

Assessment

- 2.7 The next stage comprised an assessment as to the suitability, availability and achievability of each site. Policy B (paragraph 13) of the national 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (December 2024)¹ provides a basis for a desktop assessment of suitability. The following designations and areas were considered:

- Habitats sites.
- Ancient Woodland.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- National Nature Reserves.
- Local Nature Reserves.
- Flooding from rivers and sea (Flood Zones 2 & 3).
- Green space.
- Green Belt.
- Air Quality Management Area (within 25m).
- Existing waste management facilities (within 100m).

- 2.8 Sites intersecting with these designations were discounted, leaving 423 sites requiring a planning officer's desktop review to consider:

- Potential access arrangements.
- Potential adverse impacts on residential amenity.
- Existing land use of the site itself.
- Compatibility with adjacent land use.
- Presence of dense vegetation.
- Topography

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites>

- 2.9 Most of these 423 sites were schools, highways or public realm which were discounted on the next iteration of assessment.
- 2.10 Nineteen sites were identified as potentially suitable, requiring a detailed assessment by Council officers according to the criteria in Policy T10: Gypsy, Travellers & Travelling Showpeople. On a more detailed assessment, these were largely found to be unsuitable on environmental, amenity or access grounds.
- 2.11 The only site emerging with potential as an allocation in the Local Plan is the former Wigmore Park and Ride site, which is the subject of this report. Should Cabinet support the allocation of the Wigmore site for gypsy and traveller accommodation, the Planning Service would carry out focused consultation as a proposed main modification to the submitted plan.
- 2.12 Through the Local Plan, the Planning Service would seek to safeguard existing and consented gypsy and traveller sites, including designation on the policies map for the plan. It is considered that some of the existing and consented sites would provide capacity for intensification to contribute to new supply through additional pitches, particularly to meet needs arising from family growth.

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