

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday, 14 August 2013**

**6.30pm to 9.20pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Baker, Bright (Chairman), Carr, Clarke, Etheridge, Gilry, Griffiths, Adrian Gulvin, Mackinlay, Mason, Osborne, Smith and Stamp

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Baker (Substitute for Councillor Turpin)  
Gilry (Substitute for Councillor Hubbard)  
Smith (Substitute for Councillor Juby)

**In Attendance:** Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture  
Sarah Dagwell, Head of Waste Services  
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director, Housing and Regeneration  
Steve Hewlett, Integrated Transport Manager  
Daniel Kalley, Democratic Services Officer  
Richard Kidd, Business Development Officer  
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager  
Brian McCutcheon, Planning Policy and Design Manager  
Lyn Meadows, Interim Head of Legal  
Phil Moore, Head of Highways and Parking Services  
Catherine Smith, Development Policy and Engagement Manager  
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

**271 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 27 June 2013 was agreed and signed as correct by the chairman.

**272 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hubbard, Juby and Turpin.

**273 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

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The chair proposed to change the order of the agenda to allow the lead petitioner for the “Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan” to address the committee as the first item on the agenda.

The committee agreed to the change in the order of the agenda.

### 274 Declarations of interests and whipping

There were none.

### 275 Petitions

#### Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out petitions received and a summary of Officer’s responses to petitioners.

The Committee was informed that in accordance with the Council’s petition’s scheme, Mr McLennan (lead petitioner) for the ‘Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan’ petition had asked for the petition to be referred to this Committee.

The Chair invited Mr McLennan to address members.

Mr McLennan representing all the signatories of the “Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan” addressed the Committee and explained that there had been an oversight in the petition process on his behalf, as he had not collected the addresses of those who had signed the petition, however he was in the process of collecting all addresses in order for the petition to be properly validated.

He informed the committee that the petition statements addressed to the Council were not prescriptive, instead they were seeking the Council to consider all the options available. He expressed concern that the proposals set out in the Masterplan had a wide range of safety and environmental impacts, which would be prejudicial to the local community.

Mr McLennan then addressed the committee on each of the responses to the petition and raised the following:

**Ensuring residents safety** – Mr McLennan stated that it was an individual pilot’s responsibility to decide whether to fly in difficult weather conditions. The creation of a single paved runway increased the risk of accidents occurring, as the final decision on whether it was safe to fly remained with the pilot.

**Consultation process** – Mr McLennan felt that the consultation process had been compromised, as earlier publication documents contained the views of the area Ward Councillors. The purpose of the consultation was not to try and influence public opinion.

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He stated that parts of the local community could not raise their concerns over noise sensitivities owing to a previous civil agreement.

**Economic Strategy** – Mr McLennan questioned what independent studies had been carried out in respect of the financial returns that would be made on the airport. Providing the results of an independent study would allow residents and businesses to consider the proposals and allow for a range of options to be explored.

**Financial Investment** – The WS Atkins financial statement confirmed that having a paved runway was not financially justifiable. As a business Rochester Airport would not make significant financial return on its investment. The creation of a single paved runway would increase the non-domestic rate of the airport site to £300,000 a year.

Mr McLennan referred to the development of Buckmore Park, which had resulted in this site encountering financial difficulties and subsequent bankruptcy. He considered that should the proposals for Rochester Airport go ahead then similar issues could occur at this site unless there was a significant increase in air traffic and flyers to cover the costs.

The committee thanked Mr McLennan for addressing his concerns and he responded to a number of questions from members as summarised below:

- The percentage/number of accidents that had been caused by pilot error at Rochester airfield was 50%. This was 9 in total, since 2000.
- The local community supported the airfield in its current guise, and they realised that it was part of the infrastructure of the area.
- It was not possible to compare the safety of an aircraft with that of a car, as residents did not get the choice of whether they lived underneath the flight path of a light aircraft and it would be costly for those residents under the flight path to move out of their home.
- Concern that the proposed runway in the masterplan would end 135 metres from the nearest house.
- All possible options in relation to the land at Rochester Airport should be put forward to the local community for consideration.
- The current proposals did not show how the Council could make a return on its investment.
- There had been no dialogue between residents and the Council in regards to the financial aspect of the airport.
- The land at Rochester Airport was not being maximised under the current proposals. The creation of 1000 jobs was not enough with regard to the potential of the land, if the land was properly developed more jobs could be created.
- The consultation has been rushed through over the summer when many people are not available to respond.

Mr McLennan thanked the committee for allowing him to address his concerns.

**Decision:**

The committee noted:

- 1) The responses to the petitions in paragraph 3 of the report and the responses to the Lead Petitioner on the 'Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan' petition at Appendix A.
- 2) The concerns raised by the Lead Petitioner on the 'Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan' petition outlined at the meeting.

**276 Rochester Airport Masterplan Consultation**

**Discussion:**

The Planning Policy and Design Manager introduced the report to the committee. He explained that Rochester Airport was a strategically important site for the regeneration and growth of Medway and had the potential to meet a significant proportion of the area's future employment.

Consultation was open to the public and businesses for comment until 20 September 2013. The current consultation provided more detail on proposals for developing the area in comparison to previous consultations and a report setting out results of the initial consultations was set out at Appendix 1.

The masterplan had been submitted to Council on 25 July 2013 and Cabinet on 6 August 2013. A summary report on the early findings of the consultation would be presented to this committee at the next meeting.

A copy of the Masterplan was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

Members welcomed the report and raised a number of points and issues including:

**Financial Justification** – A member stated that they welcomed the partial redevelopment of the airport as it would create much needed jobs in the community. It was felt that the current proposals to spend £4.4 million would benefit only a small proportion of the local residents. There was concern that there had been no reports detailing the pros and cons of having a single runway at the airport. It was felt that a full Community Impact Study should be taken to allow a range of options to be considered with regards to the redevelopment of the airfield. It was suggested that building an urban park was one option that could be a better use of the land and bring a higher rate of return on investment. Concerns were also expressed about the value for money, as taxpayers would be required to meet the cost for the development of the airport.

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A member commented that the current lease on the airfield was nearly at an end, and that it would be more appropriate in times of austerity to look at how the land could bring about the greatest economic output and was not dependent upon spending the money on a residual flying area.

A comment was made that the current proposed investment would help facilitate the growth of jobs and the creation of a more advanced technological park. The return on investment would not be instant, however in the long term the Council envisaged a significant economic benefit to Medway as a whole. It was felt that if investment was not made then the airfield might cease to exist, which could be detrimental in the long run to the local community.

**Number of movements at the airport** – Officers were asked to clarify the total number of movements on the site. A member questioned the statement that there were 35,000 movements a year and doubted that this would increase to 50,000 once the site had been re-developed.

Officers explained that the total number of movements were specific to aircraft that were taking off and landing and nothing more. The committee was advised that the number of movements was not currently controlled, however the total number of flights and hours of operation could be capped through the planning permission process.

**Land at Woolmans Wood** – A member asked for clarification on the land ownership of Woolmans Wood. Officers informed the committee that the land had been owned by the Council, but had been sold to a private developer, however there was a covenant in favour of the Council.

**Impact on residents** – A member commented that having Rochester Airport in Medway was an asset that most towns would be envious of, and the masterplan ensured the future of the airport. Some members commented that there had been nothing to suggest that the masterplan proposals caused more disruption to local residents, as the airport would still be used primarily for pleasure flights.

There was concern that the masterplan did not recognise the loss of amenity space to residents.

It was felt that the masterplan did not address road access sufficiently, in particular Maidstone Road and the Horsted Roundabout. There was the possibility that a high volume of traffic could cause congestion at peak times of the day.

A member proposed a recommendation to Cabinet, which was seconded, that the Council should undertake a Community Impact Study to assess how the proposed residual flying arrangements would impact on those living locally, and a full options appraisal to assess what other uses the residual airfield area could be put to, if flying were discontinued.

On a vote (5 in favour, 8 against) this recommendation was not agreed.

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**Decision:**

The Committee noted, the draft Rochester Airport Master Plan, welcomed the improvements to the Rochester Airport site and the employment opportunities and recommended that the Cabinet adopt the Masterplan.

**277 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services**

**Discussion:**

The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services had provided a report that set out activities and progress on work areas within the his Portfolio during the past year and the Committee asked him questions about these which included:

**Planned and Winter Maintenance** –A correction to the length of pavement resurfaced was noted.

The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services stated that the perception of road maintenance was about timing. When customers were surveyed about the state of the roads there had been a period of heavy snow, which had caused many of the surfaces on the road to break up. The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services was confident that satisfaction with the maintenance of roads would balance out in the next quarter.. Investments had been made to keep roads in good condition and were among the best in the South-East.

**Capital Projects** – The Council were progressing a number of schemes in the next year, this included improving school access at Woodlands Road in Gillingham, and the creation of a new car park at the former railside in Gillingham. Following a member's concern that the installation of a build up and pedestrian crossing at Woodlands Primary School could exacerbate the problems at this site, the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services advised that he was happy to re-visit the proposed scheme and look at it again.

The Portfolio Holder advised the committee buses were having difficulty accessing the Medway Hospital, due to ongoing site congestion. The Committee was advised that there was recognition that buses currently had problems accessing the Hospital site and options were currently being investigated.

In relation to the new primary school in Chatham, safety audits would be carried out to ensure all safety aspects were covered.

The Portfolio Holder assured the committee that the Council were working hard to obtain the necessary funds to improve the Sans Pareil roundabout and had bid for funds from the South-East Local Transport Body for both this roundabout and the route between Four Elms roundabout and the Medway Tunnel.

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**Recycling** – Starting at the end of October recycling collections would be made on a weekly basis. Recycling rates were increasing each year and were currently at 40%. In relation to other local authorities it was difficult to compare overall recycling figures, as they used different systems to Medway and some would most likely use incineration. The Council recognised that some people lived in flats and did not have the facility to put their recycling in a bin, however the introduction of the weekly recycling would alleviate many of the problems.

**Chatham Bus Station** – The Council was aware of the issues during periods of windy weather at the bus station and were looking into ways of improving protection for the public, particularly on Platform B. Proposals would be reported in due course.

**Road Safety** – The figure of 51 killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road accidents was still too high, a number of interventions were looking at how this number could be reduced. The Chairman requested a breakdown of how many of the 51 were fatalities and requested that a briefing note on this be provided. Another member explained that statistics relating to seriously injured were always combined with statistics for fatalities by emergency services as it was recognised that once a seriously injured person left the site of an accident, it was down to a third party as to whether the individual would likely survive.

**Parking** – Parking arrangements across Medway were being reviewed in partnership with Alpha Parking.

**Buses and Smart ticketing** – The joint project with Kent County Council was progressing well. The programme had been mapped out and phase one pilot would be rolled out in February 2014, with phase two rolling out at the end of the financial year.

A member suggested that when considering smart ticketing, consideration be given to the Oyster card scheme.

The continuance of the 155 bus service had been secured, the Portfolio Holder agreed to check that the service was still to continue as normal.

**Medway Tunnel and LED Lighting** – Savings had been made since the lighting in Medway tunnel was changed. The Council was looking at potential energy savings by changing streetlights across Medway to LED lighting. Any proposals to change the lighting would be reported on in due course.

The committee were advised that there was still 3.6 million left in the Medway Tunnel fund account.

**Darnley Arches** – The Portfolio Holder supported the work of the De-Cluttering Medway Task Group and suggested that a report be submitted to this Committee on improvements that could be made to Darnley Arches.



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**Gun Lane, Strood** – The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services agreed to ask Officers to look at the timing of the traffic lights at the junction of Gun Lane, Strood.

**Station Road, Rainham – Pavements/Shop Fronts** - In response to a request from a member, the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services agreed to ask Officers to investigate the issues raised regarding the impact that the improvement works to the pavement in Station Road has had on the frontages of shops where they abut the pavement.

### **Decision:**

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services for his attendance and welcomed a report on the improvement scheme for Darnley Arches.

## **278 2013/14 Q1 Performance Monitoring**

### **Discussion:**

The Performance and Intelligence Manager, Regeneration, Community and Culture introduced the report to Members which provided performance information against the Council's relevant Key Measures of Success for quarter 1 (April – June 2013).

For quarter 1, 19 out of 25 Regeneration, Community and Culture Council Plan Key measures of success were on target or exceeded their target. The Performance and Intelligence Manager outlined a number of successes under each priority.

Members welcomed the report and raised a number of points and questions including:

**Satisfaction with road maintenance** – A member expressed concern about the decline in the level of satisfaction with road maintenance. Referring to the previous report from the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, he drew attention that only 9 miles out of 1800 miles had been resurfaced, and therefore it had hardly been surprising that satisfaction levels had dropped. It was stressed that this should be an area that should be closely monitored. Concern was also expressed in the amount of money that had gone into the budget to improve road surfaces, which had subsequently been removed.

The Highways Maintenance and Parking Manager explained that the perception from residents had been that roads were not being maintained, however, there had been snow on the ground when the satisfaction survey had been undertaken. Snow had caused the road surfaces to break up and these had taken time to be repaired. He also confirmed that Medway was getting a much better return on the money it spends with its suppliers than other local authorities.



**Local Development Framework (land at Lodge Hill/Chattenden)** – A member noted that following Hearing Sessions held as part of the Examination of the Medway Core Strategy, the Planning Inspector concluded that significant further work was required in relation to the strategic development allocation at Lodge Hill, and she advised the Council to withdraw the plan. Natural England's proposal to notify much of the Lodge Hill area a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) created significant difficulties, putting the Core Strategy in a precarious position. This could undermine the authority in defending its unbuilt environment from development.

**Open top tour bus** –A member asked whether the Council had offered concessionary travel on the new open top tour bus to workers across the public sector. They also asked if this was part of a wider project to get people on the bus.

The Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture informed the committee that for events such as Undersiege the Council had issued vouchers to young people so that they could use the bus. In respect of public sector workers, he would check and advise the member direct. However, he stated that as the bus was a funded service, it was available for anyone to use.

**Riverside 1 – Customer satisfaction rates** – A member commented that it was pleasing to see that customer satisfaction rates were good in respect of services provided at Riverside 1, particularly as during the quarter, there had been welfare benefit changes.

**Decision:**

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the report on the first quarter performance against key measures of success along with the additional comments referred to above; and
- 2) Welcomed the benchmarking methodology provided at appendix 1

**279 Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan**

**Discussion:**

The Development Policy and Engagement Manager introduced a report on the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan. The current plan expired in April 2014 and the Kent Downs AONB Unit had carried out a review to ensure that a new plan was to be in place by April 2014.

The plan that was out for consultation represented much of the existing plan's ambitions and policies. There would be some changes made, most notably adding additional detail to the sections considering biodiversity and green

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infrastructure. The Development Policy and Engagement Manager explained that the AONB plan was much more than a planning document and could take note of a wide range of issues including farming and rights of way.

The committee were advised that the consultation ran until 18 September 2013. Following revisions to the draft plan, the Council would be required to formally adopt the management plan as part of its policy framework. A final report would be presented to Cabinet in late 2013/ early 2014.

Members commented that they had discussed the Management Plan at a previous Local Development Framework Advisory Group meeting and were supportive of the plan. A member commented that a number of voluntary organisations had carried out excellent work in the countryside.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and supported the aims and objectives of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014/19.

## **280 Work Programme**

### **Discussion:**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and highlighted to the Committee the additions to the Cabinet Forward Plan, as set out at paragraph 4 of the report.

The committee was advised of a request for a Members Item regarding car-parking enforcement and a geographical map of resident parking permits to be submitted to the next meeting. This report was to look specifically at the revenue made from parking enforcement, including a breakdown of the source of the revenue e.g. CCTV cars, fixed cameras or via parking wardens

The committee agreed to visit Chatham Bus Station in the middle of November, prior to a report being presented to the committee in December.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note:

- 1) The Committee's work programme as attached at Appendix 1;
- 2) The inclusion of an annual update on domestic abuse, a summary report on the early findings following the completion of the Rochester Airport Masterplan consultation, and a Members Item on car-parking enforcement and resident parking permits.
- 3) The transfer of housing issues to the remit of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee as outlined at paragraph 3.3.

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- 4) In accordance with minute 7 above a report be submitted to a future meeting on the proposed improvements at Darnley Arches.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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