

**COUNCIL**  
**17 OCTOBER 2013**  
**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

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**Summary**

To set out the public questions received for this meeting.

**1. Background**

1.1 Section 8.3 of the Council Rules, as laid out in the Council's constitution, sets out the rules for the receipt of public questions as follows:

- At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation. Members of the public who have not submitted questions before will be given priority over those who have, and second questions will only be dealt with when all first questions have been dealt with. Any questions that have not been dealt with within the time limits will receive a written reply after the meeting.

1.2 The questions received for this meeting are set out in below in the order they were received, allowing for the rules above.

**2. Public questions**

**A Janet Stephens of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

Rochester Airport Masterplan is a public infrastructure project. Can Councillor Jarrett confirm that he understands the financial implications and liabilities that the Land Compensation Act 1973 (part 1) may impose on the airport operator?

**B Colin McEvoy of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

No supporting documentation has been provided by Medway Council to validate claims of creating 1000 jobs cited in the Rochester Airport

Masterplan post 2016 when the Council will take back the land on the west side of the airfield. It is therefore unlikely that people in Medway desperate for new employment opportunities will see any jobs created on the land until post 2019 or beyond.

As you have publicly stated at the last Council meeting in July 2013 that Medway Council has looked at options for the airfield will you therefore tell Medway Job seekers how many new jobs could possibly be created and by what date if the entire airfield closed January 2014 with the full 110 acres available for development?

**C Anthony Finbow of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

Medway Council have stated "having a paved runway means that aircraft will be able to accelerate more quickly than on grass and take off earlier. That means they will have climbed much higher before they pass over homes near the airport - which will result in less noise than at the moment."

The perception of loudness by the human ear is related to the sound pressure level, frequency and duration of sound. It is an extremely complex calculation. An aircraft might be slightly higher as it passes over homes at the end of the runway, but due to the processing of sound by the human ear, local residents will not detect any beneficial reduction in noise or disturbance, especially those at the end of the runway.

Do you have evidence such as calculations or measurements which support the noise benefits purported by the Medway Council publicity material?

**D Rita Mew of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

The results of the "Rochester Airport the future" public consultation show an overwhelming disapproval by the public for the current Rochester Airport Masterplan. Almost 90% of the 900 returned forms cited in the interim report to the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 October were in disagreement with the plans. The following table shows a breakdown of the results.

Results of Rochester Airport Masterplan Public Consultation		
Perspective	Total	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	745	81.7%
Disagree	64	7.0%
No Opinion	1	0.1%
Support	23	2.5%
Strongly Support	79	8.7%
Total Forms Submitted	912	

Accepting there may be some minor refinement to the figures in the final report, will Councillor Chitty confirm she will act in accordance with and be bound by the majority of the "Strongly Disagree" electorate wishes stated in the Medway Council "Rochester Airport the futures" response forms received by the Council?

**E Darren Welch of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

The Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee report from 3 October "Rochester Airport Masterplan Consultation Update" paragraph 1.2 states;

"The Masterplan is being developed in partnership with BAE Systems, and the costs of doing so are being shared with BAE."

Please tell us what percentage of the £4.4 million of ratepayers money BAE Systems are contributing given that the company may be released from a large financial obligation on the land which does not expire until 2079?

**F Mike Ongley of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement, Councillor Tolhurst, the following:**

Do you think Medway will see Educational Improvement if Michael Gove's mission for dismissing hardworking Teaching Assistants is fulfilled?

**G Ben Pranczke of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

What representations have you or officers of the Council made to the government regarding the potential impact on jobs across Medway, including the regional sorting office, with the proposed privatisation of Royal Mail?

**H Harinder Singh of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:**

Will the Portfolio Holder confirm the programme of public consultation on the proposed changes to Strood Library to its new location?

**I Paul Chaplin of Rainham will ask the Chairman of Employment Matters Committee, Councillor Wicks, the following:**

Following the Government's announcement that there will be an immediate review of controversial Zero Hour contracts, can the Chairman tell us why over 10% of Medway Council's workforce, in excess of 700 people, are employed on such contracts?

Also why it is only the lower paid employees subjected to these contracts whilst higher grades retain full employment rights on permanent contracts?

**J Sue Groves MBE of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:**

The lack of information in Medway Matters on the annual firework display regarding blue badge parking is in itself a deterrent for people with accessibility issues from attending. This is not unique across Medway Council run events.

Could the Portfolio Holder commit to ensuring that suitable parking provision is made and that provision is promoted actively in Medway Matters and other Council communication mediums?

**K James Brewood of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

It appears you are presiding over a projected overspend of £3.6 million of ratepayers' money for this financial year. Councillor Chitty has stated that ratepayer money invested in Rochester Airport will be recovered by higher fees for those that use the airport.

To avoid any future surprises similar to this year's "unacceptable" overspend publicly stated by yourself, can you confirm that you have approved a timely Return on Investment (ROI) calculation for ratepayers' £4 million investment in the airport infrastructure alone which does not lose the ratepayer money and leave us with another "unacceptable" financial situation?

**L William McLennan of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

Councillor Chitty purports to be concerned about residents' safety giving assurances the CAA will be involved. However, at the Rochester Airport Masterplan Public Consultation on July 22-23<sup>rd</sup>, it was clear to most people that individuals and organisations invited by Medway Council to talk with the public all had a financial or beneficial interest in its adoption.

Why were no impartial or independent representatives from the Civil Aviation Authority or Air Accident Investigation Branch at the event to offer unbiased guidance to the residents?

**M Michael Fowler of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

Can Councillor Chitty please confirm that she understands by approving the current Rochester Airport Masterplan, the Council will have no power under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or the Noise Act 1996 to protect local residents from the intensification of pollution, noise, and trespass of aircraft over local schools, elderly care centres and homes near to the airfield.

**N Lauren Wright of Walderslade will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

Will the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services look to put additional double yellow and single line markings on King George Road and Meadow Close in light of increasing parking concerns during weekdays near the Walderslade Hook Meadow library?

**O Jonathan Primett of Chatham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following:**

Does the Leader of the Council feel that public consultations are a legitimate expense and of any real value when in the eyes of many residents in Medway, they are seen to be largely disregarded and overlooked, and in the case of Rochester Airport, the decision seems to have been made and the money allocated before a consultation has even concluded?

**P Robert Heathfield of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

Will the Portfolio Holder confirm the potential sum of money being returned to Morrisons due to failure to deliver improvements for Strood residents?

**Q Rachel Garrick of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor O'Brien the following:**

At this point in time, Ofsted has stated that some 8,000 children in Medway receive primary education which is of a poor quality. The area has a high correlation between the receipt of means tested free school dinners and failure to attain national average results in GCSEs. The area now has a grammar school which has been placed in special measures. What plans does the Council have to secure the education and future employment prospects of the area's children?

**R Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

Now that our Local Plan has lapsed and we are now operating according to paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework which means there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development particularly where policies are out of date, does this mean that the development at Lodge Hill can now go ahead in any event?

**S Mike Ongley of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor O'Brien, the following:**

Do you support the GMB Campaign to defend the role of Teaching Assistants in Medway schools which are under threat from Michael Gove?

**T Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

Why has the Council not so far sprayed 2 sites of Japanese knotweed on Street End Road, Chatham and at the bottom of Napier Road, Gillingham which I reported to Front Line Services earlier this summer?

**Lead officer contact**

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**Background papers**

None