

Full Council 12 October 2107 – Schedule of Written Responses

Agenda reference	Question	Response
7A	<p>Matthew Broadley of Borstal submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“The proposal for a Rochester Town Council recommends a precept of 1.5% per annum.</p> <p>If a Town Council is created what assurances can Councillor Jarrett give that residents will not face exceptional annual increases to this precept in future years to cover cuts to local government funding, such as has happened in Conservative-controlled Newquay (88%), Penzance (50.98%), Wilmslow (28%) and Colne (17%)?”</p> <p>As Matthew Broadley was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Broadley. I’m afraid that neither I nor anyone else at Medway Council can give any assurances about the precept that a Rochester Town Council, if established, may or may not set. It would be for the Town Councillors to do that, based on what costs it expects to incur. As I understand it, the precept is not subject to any “capping” in the same way that Medway Council’s council tax can be capped.</p> <p>The Government is consulting at the moment on extending to Parish Councils, the principles of holding a referendum if a Parish Council wants to increase the precept by a specific percentage, particularly those with the highest total precepts and Band D equivalent properties. The Government has also said that they expect local (parish) councils to clearly demonstrate restraint when increasing precepts that are not a direct result of taking on additional responsibilities and that they will be keeping parish precept levels under review.</p> <p>There are some basic assumptions being made I believe, one being that the Town Council precept will be £18.00 per year.</p> <p>My view can however further inform this discussion in as much as were a Rochester Town Council (RTC) to be formed then it would have to take responsibility for all civic events in Rochester. To take a differing</p>

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		<p>approach would mean all of Medway's 277,000 residents subsidising an area which possesses its own precept raising powers.</p> <p>This would mean that RTC would have to raise £1,426,500 per annum and make a levy of just over £103.00 per year generating a requirement for a 6.7% increase at Band D in council tax in the affected area.</p> <p>The transfer of responsibility for civic events in Rochester would of course be a budget decision for this council to make if and when the occasion arises</p> <p>I'm sure the issue of the level of precept is one of the many factors that the residents in the proposed Town Council area are grappling with when responding to our current consultation exercise which closes on 30 October. It is intended to consider the outcome of the Community Governance Review at the meeting of Full Council on 25 January next year.</p>
7C	<p>James Chespy of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin:</p> <p>“Whilst much work has been done to refurbish the toilets in Sappers Walk, when will Medway Norse be fitting in sharps bins for those with substance abuse issues?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Chespy, firstly I would like to apologise that this has not been done sooner as part of the recent refurbishment, I naively assumed it would have been. I can confirm that Sharps bins will be provided at Sappers Walk within the next month, and emptied monthly thereafter.</p>

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	<p>As James Chespy was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>It is also proposed to provide the same facility at Northgate in Rochester, which unfortunately has similar issues.</p>
<p>7D</p>	<p>Ben Pranczke of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder of Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>“Following on from the response that he gave to Councillor Shaw’s question at Full Council on 20 July 2017, does Councillor Filmer have an update on the public toilet at the dynamic bus facility in Chatham, which at the time of writing is still not present despite it being part of the original planning application?”</p> <p>As Ben Pranczke was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Pranczke.</p> <p>The new toilet facilities have now been designed. Once we have the necessary planning permission required, work will start to build the new facility which will be fully accessible. This is a priority scheme and will be in place as soon as practicably possible.</p>
<p>10J</p>	<p>Councillor Osborne submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>“We've seen successful Pride events across Kent including Tory controlled Canterbury and recently Thanet and Tunbridge Wells Council, as well as a bid by Folkestone to host next year’s UK Pride event. Medway is the largest conurbation in the South East outside of London; will the Portfolio Holder confirm that this Council will consider and</p>	<p>Medway Council’s Events Team supports and assists several external organisations to run events, such as the Chinese New Year celebration; Ethnic Minority Forum Mela and Remembrance Day marches. These are subject to those organisations having the appropriate funding to run the event.</p> <p>Through the Medway Safety Advisory Group, advice and direction can be provided to ensure that support is given to any organisation wishing to run events, to do so safely and within the prescribed legislation.</p>

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	openly support any organisation that will establish a Medway Pride event?"	Support will continue to be given to such organisations, however, it should be borne in mind that there is currently no provision within existing budgets for any costs that would be incurred in hosting such an event as referred to by Councillor Osborne.
10K	<p>Councillor Murray submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:</p> <p>“Does she agree that the proposals on pensions, pay, job security and service provision by Royal Mail that have led to a ballot for industrial action need to be reconsidered, bearing in mind their potential impact on Medway both on service users and on our hard-working local Royal Mail employees?”</p>	I thank Councillor Murray for her question. Whilst the interests of Medway residents are paramount to this Council’s every action, the fact remains that this is a matter that exists between Royal Mail and the unions representing their members. Therefore, neither the proposals nor any industrial action constitute something that this Authority has any influence over, and so it is not for me or this Council to express an opinion on the independent decision making of the parties involved.
10L	<p>Councillor Maple submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin:</p> <p>“What lessons have been learnt by the council following its extensive loss of IT capacity in September particularly as regards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contingencies for critical frontline services, particularly where our most vulnerable residents could be at risk. 2. Future suitability of existing hardware with an increasing reliance on IT for council services. 	<p>Thank you for your question Cllr Maple. Taking each of your points in turn:</p> <p>Firstly, each service area of the Council has its own Business Continuity plan that prioritises the potential risks to service delivery for their stakeholders and customers. There is a clear internal and external Communications Plan for when such events occur. Services activate their Business Continuity plans to reduce disruption to critical frontline services and ensure services are provided to the most vulnerable residents that could be at risk.</p>

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	<p>3. Our IT security around potential attacks from malware etc.</p> <p>4. Contractual ability to seek remedy, compensation etc, from hardware providers or manufacturers?"</p> <p>Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Members' questions had been exhausted, Members would receive written responses to questions 10J-10L above.</p>	<p>Secondly, hardware and software systems are installed with resilience as a primary function. Every single point of failure is thoroughly investigated and where possible, within physical and financial constraints, mitigated. Hardware and software is generally procured with maintenance as part of the package. The component which caused the recent failure, is being tested to ascertain what went wrong, and a report will be with us soon.</p> <p>Thirdly, ICT data security is of paramount importance to this Council. So much so that this sometimes causes difficulties of its own, as with the recent problem with sending out the Medway Test results, where the large volume of emails resulted in them being caught in a firewall and being delayed. I am very sorry that happened, but better that, than our data security being compromised. We undertake specific IT security penetration testing on a regular basis to ensure we have security measures in place that comply with industry and statutory standards. And I wish to point out that during the recent ICT hardware issues at no time was any data at risk.</p> <p>Fourthly, discussions are ongoing with the relevant suppliers concerning the recent failure. If a contractual breach is discovered, all options will be considered.</p>