

## **COUNCIL**

**25 JANUARY 2018**

### **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF ROCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

Portfolio holder: Councillor Rupert Turpin, Business Management

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

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#### **Summary**

This report sets out the results of the consultation exercise and deliberations of the cross-party working group with regard to the conduct of the Community Governance Review and seeks a decision on whether to establish a new parish council.

#### **1. Budget and policy framework**

- 1.1 The conduct of a Community Governance Review (CGR) and the associated decisions about the formation or otherwise of new Town and Parish Councils is a matter for Council.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015), devolved decision making powers relating to certain parish matters from central to local government. These powers include the creation and grouping of parishes and everything pertaining to their electoral arrangements.

- 2.2 On receipt of a valid petition from 1623 local government electors requesting that a CGR is conducted to consider the establishment of Rochester Town Council, Full Council at the meeting on 25 January 2017 approved the establishment of an informal cross-party Member and officer working group and delegated authority to the Chief Legal Officer to conduct the Community Governance Review in consultation with the informal cross-party Member and officer working group. Full Council also approved the Terms of Reference for the review and noted the likely costs.
- 2.3 It had been intended to report the outcome of the Review to the meeting of Full Council in October 2017, but the conduct of the Review was delayed due to the unscheduled General Election called for 8 June 2017 as key officers had to prioritise the conduct of the elections. This delay could not be avoided and was recognised by the main petitioners.

### **3. Guidance and criteria to be used for a CGR**

- 3.1 In undertaking the Review, the Council must be guided by Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and The Electoral Commission in April 2008. Also the following regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the Review: Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/625); Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/626).
- 3.2 The Council is obliged to take account of the necessary criteria when conducting the review, namely:
- The identities and interests of the community in the area
  - The effective and convenient governance of the area.

and the Council should take into account influential factors such as the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

- 3.3 The Council is also obliged to consult the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body which appears to have an interest in the review and must take into account any representations received in connection with the review. The Guidance issued by the DCLG indicates that this might include local businesses, as well as local public and voluntary organisations.

## **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 When undertaking a Review, the Council is required to consult the local government electors for the area under review as well as any other person or body which appear to have an interest in the Review.
- 4.2 The working group took the view that “any other ....body” included local businesses as well as local public and voluntary organisations. Although such bodies would not be responsible for paying the additional precept for a Parish Council, they might want the opportunity to provide their views on whether a Parish Council would improve the community governance arrangements in the area.
- 4.3 The working group agreed that the most effective and efficient way of capturing the views of the local government electors and “other bodies” was to undertake a consultation over a 12 week period, comprising a survey which could be completed on-line or by completing and returning a paper form.
- 4.4 To accompany the survey, the working group approved a leaflet containing some background information about the Review and what powers Parish Councils can have. The working group were mindful that the information provided needed to be neutral whilst also seeking to answer the most obvious questions that consultees would ask, particularly addressing points the petitioners had raised in their literature.
- 4.5 The survey was sent to 22,086 electors in the proposed area and to 916 other amenity, public and voluntary organisations and businesses in the proposed area. A total of 2,605 responses were received. After validating the responses and discounting duplicate responses and those from individuals who were not eligible to participate, the total number of responses from eligible electors is 2,594 which represents a response rate of 11.27%. M.E.L Research was engaged to analyse and report on the consultation responses in accordance with the Council’s procurement rules.

## **5. Working Group deliberations**

- 5.1 The report of the Working Group, including its recommendation is attached as Appendix 1.

## **6. Options for consideration**

- 6.1 Under section 93 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, a Principal Council must comply with various duties when undertaking a Review, including:
1. Having regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:
    - a. Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area
    - b. Is effective and convenient
  2. Taking into account any other arrangements, apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions that have already been made, or that could be made for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review
  3. Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.
- 6.2 In addition, the Council is required to take account of any statutory guidance published by the Secretary of State. In March 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England published such Guidance on Reviews.
- 6.3 Whilst the guidance is generally supportive of parish councils, it is not prescriptive and does not state that they should be routinely formed. In parts of the guidance, it stresses that the statutory duty is to take account of any representations received and gives the view that where a council has conducted a review following receipt of a petition, it will remain open to the Council to make a recommendation which is different to the recommendation the petitioners wish the council to make. It also acknowledges that a recommendation to abolish or establish a parish council may negatively impact on community cohesion and that there is flexibility for councils not to recommend that the matters included in the petition must be implemented if they judge that to do so would not be in the interests of either the local community or surrounding communities and where the effect would be likely to damage or undermine community cohesion.
- 6.4 The working group's report is comprehensive and sets out in some detail the evidence gathered, the responses from the consultation exercise and their conclusions. However, it is important Council take into consideration all the matters required by the legislation and make their decision on the outcome of the Review based on the evidence presented so some of the main issues, evidence and conclusions are set out in the following paragraphs.

## **Identities and interests of local area**

- 6.5 It can be seen from the working group's report that the evidence they gathered confirms that in terms of community governance arrangements already in place, the local population in the petition area has an aptitude to form local associations and partnerships to address local issues and that there is already an extensive range of such groups in the Rochester area. There are specific groups that help local people overcome difficulties and fulfil their potential. The working group report that the residents of Rochester make good use of the various methods for engagement to make their views known to the Council, including asking Council questions and interacting with their ward Councillors to deal with a range of issues. Election turnout is also marginally higher in the wards covered by the proposal compared with others in Medway. Local people have also contributed significantly to the creation of a successful community by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, improving the management and maintenance of such facilities.
- 6.6 The working group also concludes that the Council already contributes significantly to the sense of local identity for the residents and shows that it recognises the unique identity of the area in a variety of ways, not the least of which is the festivals and other events centered on attractions in Rochester celebrating it as a place of cultural heritage.
- 6.7 It is clear that more than half of the respondents to the consultation exercise are happy with the existing community governance arrangements and feel that another layer of bureaucracy would be of no benefit.
- 6.8 Just over half (51%) of all respondents to the consultation exercise thought that there should not be town councillors to represent their views in addition to the existing Medway Councillors. The most common explanation for not wanting town councillors was that it would increase bureaucracy and duplication of roles, be too expensive and that there were no clear benefits.
- 6.9 The conclusion reached by the working group is that the existing community governance arrangements reflect the identities of the local population affected by the proposal and that the majority of those who responded to the consultation exercise confirm this.

## **Efficiency and effectiveness**

- 6.10 The conclusion of the working group is that the boundaries for proposed parish council are not easily identifiable in all places and would create significant difficulties for the conduct of effective and efficient elections because the boundary does not exactly match those of existing Wards or even the administrative polling districts into Wards are divided. Another Review would be needed to achieve parish and Ward boundaries that were coterminous.
- 6.11 The consultation exercise responses in respect of the proposed boundary for the parish council seem to be in favour of it although the working group note that a significant proportion (nearly a quarter) responded as “don’t knows” and that they had queries about the boundary. If these “don’t knows” are added to those not in favour of the proposed boundary, the outcome is less clear cut.
- 6.12 The extent to which local electors are willing to pay an additional precept for a new parish council is one of the key factors for the Council to consider and the consultation exercise clearly shows that the vast majority of respondents were not willing to do so on the grounds that there was no discernable benefits and that they could not afford it.
- 6.13 The working group gathered evidence of the Council’s ongoing commitments to the people of Rochester in terms of providing locally a range of quality services and through heavy direct and indirect financial investments and noted that the petitioner organisers have not identified any specific services the new parish would provide that are not already provided by Medway Council; if the new parish wished to provide new or additional services they would have to raise the precept which would not be in keeping with the clear responses from the consultation exercise about electors not being willing to pay an additional precept because they can see no clear benefit and could not afford it.
- 6.14 The working group takes the view that the parish council would not be effective or convenient based on the lack of real evidence about the extent to which the parish council could viably deliver quality services not already being provided by Medway Council. Their conclusion also reflects concerns expressed in the consultation responses about the precept that a new parish council might raise and more notably, respondents views that the proposal did not sufficiently justify the formation of a body to deal with issues in a more effective or efficient manner than was in place already.

- 6.15 Ultimately the key question asked of the electors and other organisations about the proposed new parish council was whether they thought the existing community governance arrangements in Rochester should remain or whether a new parish council should be created. The resounding result was that 65% of those who responded thought that the existing arrangements should be kept and only 35% wanted to change the arrangements to create a new town council. Nearly half of all those who thought the existing arrangements should be maintained indicated that they thought there was no need for change because the current arrangements work. Nearly 20% of these respondents also didn't want to pay the extra precept and thought it would be too expensive.

### **Other forms of community representation**

- 6.16 The Council is obliged to consider other forms of community governance or representation that could be put in place when undertaking this Review and the working group have outlined various alternative forms of engagement forums that could be established instead of a parish council.
- 6.17 Although questions were raised about these other forms of representation at the open meeting hosted by the City of Rochester Business Forum, the working group point out that the overall result of the exercise was that the vast majority thought the existing arrangements should be maintained. Therefore it is only proposed to note the features of these alternative arrangements.

### **Conclusions**

- 6.18 Taking into consideration the responses from the consultation exercise, evidence gathered and presented by the working group and their own conclusions as set out in their report dated December 2017 and summarised in this report, the following conclusions are submitted:
- The existing community governance arrangements in Rochester reflect the identities and interests of people in Rochester and are effective and convenient, which is a positive impact on community cohesion and are supported by those who took part in the consultation exercise.
  - Currently local people in Rochester participate effectively in the way their neighbourhood is managed and have established an extensive and comprehensive network of local associations and partnerships to address local issues including community cohesion.

- The proposal for a new Town Council in Rochester is not viable because local people do not consider it will improve their representation, think it will cause duplication of roles, increase bureaucracy and offer no significant benefits and are not willing to pay an additional precept on that basis
- The proposed Rochester Town Council will not have a significant positive impact on community cohesion and there is insufficient evidence that it could provide effective and convenient community governance nor deliver quality services that are not already being provided by Medway Council
- The boundaries of the proposed Rochester Town Council area are not easily identifiable and would create significant difficulties for the conduct of elections because they are not coterminous with existing Ward and polling district boundaries
- In the light of the majority of respondents support for the existing community governance arrangements no alternative arrangements shall be considered

## **7. Communicating the outcome of the Review**

- 7.1 As soon as practicable after making any recommendations, the Council is required to publish its recommendations and ensure that those who may have an interest are informed of them. Similarly, as soon as practicable after making a decision on the extent to which it will give effect to the recommendations made in a Review, the Council must also publish its decision and its reasons for taking that decision and take sufficient steps to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the decision and the reason for it. Neither the legislation nor Guidance specifies who should be informed or how this is to be achieved.
- 7.2 Officers intend to update the web pages relating to the Review so that interested parties can read the working group's report, this report and the Council's decision, as well as issuing a press release to maximise the coverage in the local media. This is considered to be the most effective way of publicising the recommendations, decision and reasons.

## 8. Advice and analysis

### 8.1 Sustainability

The informal working group considered the sustainability implications of the proposals for the Rochester Town Council and the outcome recommended by the working group and has sought to reduce any negative impacts.

### 8.2 Diversity

A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed on the Review and the outcome was that there is unlikely to be an adverse impact on any of the characteristic groups. A copy of the full DIA is attached as Appendix 8 to the working group's report.

## 9. Risk management

9.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community. The following table considers any significant risks arising from this report.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>
Damage to reputation of the Council amongst local population and Government	Failure to undertake CGR in accordance with legislation and DCLG guidance	Establishment of informal working group to co-ordinate implementation of CGR comprising key officers and Members	D1
Damage to reputation of the Council amongst local population	Failure to approve establishment of new Town Council for Rochester	Decision based on comprehensive evidence gathered by working group and outcome of consultation exercise	D1

## 10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There is no budget provision for the conduct of the CGR or the consultation process required. The table below shows a breakdown of the best estimate of total costs spent on the consultation process and other costs associated with the CGR:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Estimated costs to date £</b>
Printing and collation of questionnaire, leaflet, outgoing and reply envelopes	6691
Outgoing and incoming postage	1438
Analysis of consultation responses	5508
Canvasser deliveries	4417
Internal design costs	1532
Officer time	14471
	<b>34057</b>

- 10.2 A bid of £33,392 has already been submitted for funding from the Community Governance Review New Burdens Fund which is available to support local authorities that are required to undertake a review. This was based on very early estimated costs. Agreement from the DCLG has been obtained that a more detailed and accurate bid can be submitted once all the costs are known at the conclusion of the exercise. It is anticipated that the New Burdens Fund will meet all the identified costs.

## 11. Legal implications

- 11.1 The legal implications for this matter are set out in the body of the report.

## **12. Recommendations**

### 12.1 Council is asked to:

- 12.1.1 note the comprehensive report by the informal cross-party Member and officer working group attached as Appendix 1 and the summary of its conclusions set out in this report.
- 12.1.2 agree that in the light of the evidence and consultation exercise responses set out in the working group's report, the existing community governance arrangements in the proposed area for the Rochester Town Council, remain unchanged – that a town council is not created in Rochester.
- 12.1.3 note that officers will take the necessary steps to inform the electors and organisations affected by the proposal of the Council's decision as set out in paragraph 7.2.

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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Report of the informal cross-party working group

### **Background papers**

None



**REPORT OF INFORMAL CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP -  
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF PROPOSAL FOR  
ESTABLISHMENT OF ROCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

**December 2017  
Perry Holmes  
Chief Legal Officer**

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015), devolved decision making powers relating to certain parish matters from central to local government. These powers include the creation and grouping of parishes and everything pertaining to their electoral arrangements.
- 1.2 This decision making process is laid out in the Act as a Community Governance Review (“the Review”). It can be instigated in one of three ways: by a petition from local electors demanding a review; by the Principal Authority agreeing to a request for a review; or by a Principal Authority resolving to conduct a review.
- 1.3 A petition was submitted from 1623 local government electors requesting that a Review is conducted to consider the establishment of Rochester Town Council. The petition was verified as a valid petition within the terms of the Act and as such the Council was obliged to carry out a CGR in accordance with the Act. The terminology “Town Council” is one of the authorised alternative styles for a Parish Council allowed for by the Local Government Act 1972 and is explicitly referred to in the petition as being the preferred style. The formal wording of the petition and the proposed area for the new Parish Council are attached as Appendices 1 and 2.
- 1.4 At the meeting of Full Council 26 January 2017, Council delegated authority to the Chief Legal Officer to conduct the Review in consultation with an informal cross-party Member and officer working group. A Terms of Reference was also approved at the same meeting, as attached at Appendix 3.
- 1.5 The Working group was established with the following membership:

<b>Elected members</b>	<b>Officers</b>
Councillor Rupert Turpin – Cabinet Member for Business Management	Chief Legal Officer
Councillor Howard Doe	Head of Elections & Member Services
Councillor David Carr	Corporate Intelligence Analyst
Councillor David Wildey	Head of Marketing & Communications
Councillor Steve Iles	Planning Manager Policy
Councillor Nick Bowler	Revenue & Benefits Contract Manager
Councillor Tristan Osborne	Communications Account Manager

- 1.6 The working group met on 22 February, 11 July, 2 September and 16 December to agree an overall timetable for the Review, approve the consultation methods, consider the types of evidence it wanted to gather regarding existing community governance arrangements in the petition area, and to consider the outcome of the consultation and its recommendations to Full Council.

### **Factors for consideration**

- 1.7 Under section 93 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, a Principal Council must comply with various duties when undertaking a Review, including:
1. Having regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:
    - a. Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area
    - b. Is effective and convenient
  2. Taking into account any other arrangements, apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions that have already been made, or that could be made for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review
  3. Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

In addition, the Council is required to take account of any statutory guidance published by the Secretary of State. In March 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England published such Guidance on Reviews.

- 1.8 The guidance expands on the two main criteria above and highlights that:
- the impact on community cohesion is linked specifically to the identities and interests of local communities. Community cohesion is seen as recognising the impact of the changes brought about by migration and diversity and responding to them so that different groups of people get on well together.
  - cohesion issues are connected to the way people perceive how their local community is composed and what it represents. An important aspect of this is allowing effective participation by local people and organisations in the way their neighbourhoods are managed.
  - it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity.

- Size, population and boundaries are linked to both community cohesion and the identity of local communities, but more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient. The guidance stresses that whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and likely to remain, easily identifiable and reflect the “no man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways.

- 1.9 The guidance acknowledges that how people perceive where they live is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. The pattern of daily life in each of the communities, the local centres for education, and childcare, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication will have an influence on the extent to which all of the residents in the proposed area share a sense of community although the focus of people's day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity, if for instance overwhelming historic loyalty is to another feature.
- 1.10 Whilst the guidance is generally supportive of parish councils, it is not prescriptive and does not state that they should be routinely formed. In parts of the guidance, it stresses that the statutory duty is to take account of any representations received and gives the view that where a council has conducted a review following receipt of a petition, it will remain open to the Council to make a recommendation which is different to the recommendation the petitioners wish the council to make. It also acknowledges that a recommendation to abolish or establish a parish council may negatively impact on community cohesion and that there is flexibility for councils not to recommend that the matters included in the petition must be implemented if they judge that to do so would not be in the interests of either the local community or surrounding communities and where the effect would be likely to damage or undermine community cohesion.
- 1.11 The working group took the view that it was important to understand the existing community governance arrangements in the proposed area, and the extent to which local residents contribute to local democracy as well as considering the responses received from the survey.

- 1.12 A matrix of the factors for consideration as outlined above was drawn up and the working group spent time collating and considering information and data that provided evidence of the extent to which existing community governance arrangements satisfied those considerations. It then considered the impact the proposal for a parish (town) council might have on community governance in the area, and whether the proposed parish council would be effective, convenient and viable in terms of size, population and boundaries. This was undertaken in conjunction with the results of the consultation exercise. A copy of the matrix and the information considered is attached as Appendix 6.

## **2. Consultation arrangements**

- 2.1 When undertaking a Review, the Council is required to consult the local government electors for the area under review as well as any other person or body which appear to have an interest in the Review.
- 2.2 The working group took the view that “any other ....body” included local businesses as well as local public and voluntary organisations. Although such bodies would not be responsible for paying the additional precept for a Parish Council, they might want the opportunity to provide their views on whether a Parish Council would improve the community governance arrangements in the area.
- 2.3 The working group agreed that the most effective and efficient way of capturing the views of the local government electors and “other bodies” was to undertake a consultation over a 12 week period, comprising a survey which could be completed on-line or by completing and returning a paper form.
- 2.4 In the light of these factors, the working group agreed a survey comprising 5 main questions to try to ascertain consultees’ views on the existing community governance arrangements in the area. Free text boxes were provided after each main question for respondents to explain their response in more detail.

- 2.5 To accompany the survey, the working group approved a leaflet containing some background information about the Review and what powers Parish Councils can have. The working group were mindful that the information provided needed to be neutral whilst also seeking to answer the most obvious questions that consultees would ask, particularly addressing points the petitioners had raised in their literature. A copy of the leaflet is attached at Appendix 4.
- 2.6 The survey and background information (along with postage paid reply envelopes) were delivered to all consultees in paper form, and all were provided with a unique survey reference which, in association with the name and address, were used to ensure that the views of only those electors and organisations directly affected by the proposal were taken into account and to minimise multiple responses.
- 2.7 The survey and background information were also made available on-line for those who preferred to use that method. A dedicated web page was designed that contained the background information, map of the proposed area as well as some Frequently Answered Questions. The Council's social media accounts were used regularly to raise awareness of the consultation and to remind people of the deadline.
- 2.8 The consultation took place over a 12 week period and ended on 30 October 2017.
- 2.9 The City of Rochester Business Forum hosted a public information meeting on 28 September that was attended by approximately 100 people and the Chief Legal Officer explained the background to the Review and answered some audience questions relating to how the Parish Council could be established, when the first elections might be held to the newly established Parish Council, the impact of a new town council on city status bid and how much a new town council could cost, for example.
- 2.10 The survey was sent to 22,086 electors in the proposed area and to 916 other amenity, public and voluntary organisations and businesses in the proposed area. M.E.L Research was engaged to analyse and report on the consultation responses. A copy of their report, including the questionnaire, is attached as Appendix 5.

### 3. Consultation responses

3.1 Out of the 23,002 consultees, a total of 2605 responses were received. After validating the responses and discounting duplicate responses and those from individuals who were not eligible to participate, the total number of responses was 2594 which represents a response rate of 11.27%. These comprised 2564 responses from eligible electors, 24 responses from amenity groups, other organisations and businesses and 6 responses where it was not possible to identify whether they were from an organisation or an individual. The response rate is disappointing but this suggests that the proposal for a new Parish Council does not engage the electors in the area sufficiently to take part. 19491 electors chose not to participate.

3.2 Table 1 below shows the breakdown of responses by Wards or parts of Wards included in the consultation:

Ward (or part)	No. of electors consulted	No. of responses	% of electors responded	% of all responses
River	911	99	10.87	4
Rochester East	7912	704	8.89	27
Rochester South & Horsted	5198	687	13.22	26
Rochester West	8064	1104	13.69	43

3.3 2190 respondents opted to fill in the paper questionnaire and respond by post, representing 84.4% of all responses and 404 online responses were received (15.6%).

3.4 Table 2 below shows a breakdown of the respondent profile:

	No. of responses	% of responses
Male	1269	50
Female	1189	47
Aged 17 – 54	998	41
Aged 55 and over	1424	59
Long term health condition	572	23
No long-term health condition	1681	67
Prefer not to say	274	11
White	2162	93
BME	152	7

Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

#### **4. Analysis of existing community governance arrangements, consultation responses and evidence collected**

##### ***Identities and interest of community and impact on community cohesion***

- 4.1 One of the first factors the working group considered was whether the existing community governance arrangements reflect the identities and interests of the community and the extent to which current arrangements in the area enable and empower the local community to fulfil its own potential and overcome difficulties and encourage community cohesion. It also looked at the extent to which local people participate in the democratic processes already in place. Neighbourhood renewal is also an important factor of building and maintaining successful communities and the working group looked at the extent to which the local community have ways of influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, improving the management and maintenance of such facilities as well as .
- 4.2 The main conclusion from gathering this evidence was that the local population has an aptitude to form local associations and partnerships to address local issues and that there is already an extensive range (at least 60) of such groups in the Rochester area. These are addressing issues such as the maintenance and improvement of local parks and other community facilities, specialist and generalist interest groups and hobbies, faith groups and groups for people of particular ethnic backgrounds or cultures.
- 4.3 The working group found examples of many activities taking place within the proposed parish council area that help local people overcome difficulties and fulfil their potential from toddler clubs, mental health support groups, a Dementia cafe, carers' support group, bereavement support group, a Saturday breakfast club, a foodbank, respite breaks and day trips for deprived families, an active scout and guides community, as well as the Sikh temple, all working on projects and initiatives that benefit constituents and have a positive impact on community cohesion. Some of these examples were referred to in the discussions that took place at the City of Rochester Business Forum meeting on 28 September.
- 4.4 On examining the extent to which the local community currently contributes to the decision-making activities affecting them, the working group noted that between 2013 and 2016 the percentage of all questions submitted by the public at meetings of Full Council asked by people from Rochester has varied from 47.8% to 18.4%. Since 2015, the percentage of all formal petitions submitted to the Council by people from Rochester or about issues in Rochester has ranged between 5.8% and 10.3%.

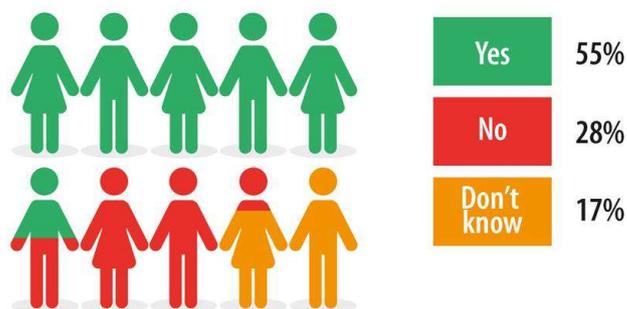
- 4.5 Local ward Councillors informed the working group that they see hundreds of people a year per Ward at their ward surgeries or through other direct contact, and deal with a range of local issues such as parking, litter, school places, dog waste and refuse, as well as dealing with immigration appeals, benefit appeals, or school transport appeals, inadequate housing, council tax disputes and victims of anti-social behaviour and dissatisfaction with local services.
- 4.6 The working group also noted that turnout in the Local elections 2015 varied between 63.43% and 68.58% in Rochester East, Rochester West and Rochester South & Horsted wards, against an average of 61.24% for the whole of Medway. There has been one by-election in Rochester South & Horsted ward in 2008 where the turnout was 40.94% and 5 candidates for one vacancy.
- 4.7 In considering whether establishment of a Parish council would improve the situation, the Working Group noted that there are clearly a healthy number and comprehensive range of organisations and groups operating in the area of the proposed Town Council, or providing services for the local electorate. The working group has found no evidence that a parish Council would have a positive impact on the scope or effectiveness of the way they operate. Indeed it might be argued that another tier of local government might confuse electors and the people leading these groups and organisations as to who can assist them.
- 4.8 It would also appear from the information available that the residents of Rochester make good use of the various methods for engagement to make their views known to the Council, ask questions and interact with their ward Councillors. Local people have also contributed significantly to the creation of a successful community by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, improving the management and maintenance of such facilities. Medway Council already contributes significantly to the sense of local identity for the residents and shows that it recognises the unique identity of the area in the form of 8 days of festivals centred on attractions in Rochester and 17 days of other events celebrating Rochester as a place steeped in history and cultural heritage sites. These and the various attractions in the immediate area contribute to the more than one million visitors to the area over the last 3 years.

4.9 The working group noted that although it is difficult to anticipate the levels of interest in a parish council if it were established, having looked at the most recent parish election results, in 2011 only 20 out of 108 seats were contested (18.5%) and in 2015 40 out of 108 seats were contested (37.03%). At least 25 Parish vacancies arose between 2011 and 2015 and at least 21 Parish vacancies since 2015 elections. This would seem to highlight a potential issue about sufficient numbers of people being willing to put themselves forward as candidates at election time as well as the on-going need for people to fill the inevitable vacancies that occur between elections.

4.10 The responses from the consultation exercise support these conclusions as shown below.

### Current community governance arrangements

4.10.1 Around half (55%) of all respondents were happy with the current arrangements for decision making in the area:



4.10.2 In explaining why they were happy with existing arrangements, respondents indicated that present arrangements work well, are fair and correct and that they only have one authority to deal with. Those who were not happy mentioned wanting greater representation and the loss of city status.

Happy with current council arrangements as (I) only have to deal with one authority (and) having a 2nd one would complicate things.

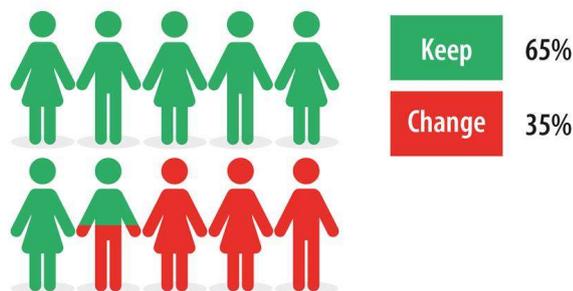
I feel that there are no obvious problems and that another layer of bureaucracy could be a hindrance rather than a benefit.

Medway Council are doing the best they can with council tax receipts. The services in general are good especially refuse and street cleaning.

- 4.10.3 There was a slight difference in satisfaction levels according to age – respondents aged 55+ were more likely (58%) to say they were happy with the current arrangements compared to 51% of respondents aged between 17 and 54.

### Levels of support for the creation of new parish council

- 4.11 65% of all respondents indicated that they preferred to keep the existing community governance arrangements in the area; 35% of respondents indicated that they wanted to change the arrangements and create a new Parish Council.



- 4.11.1 Those wanting to keep the existing arrangements represent 7.6% of all the eligible electors in the area and those in favour of a new Parish Council represent 4% of all those eligible.
- 4.11.2 There were some interesting differences in the responses across the proposed area. Respondents in Rochester South & Horsted Ward were more likely (76%) to opt to retain existing arrangements compared to 60% in River and Rochester West wards. A significant proportion of those in Rochester West and River ward (40%) were in favour of creating a new Parish Council, compared to 24% in Rochester South & Horsted. A map at Appendix 7 shows those in favour of existing arrangements broken down by polling district.
- 4.11.3 All respondents were asked to explain why they had chosen their preferred option. The most common response (47%) of those against the creation of a new parish council, was that it was felt there was no need to make changes as they were happy with the current arrangements, that the alternative was too expensive or did not want to pay more council tax (20%). Those who wanted to create a parish council were of the view that it would provide more local representation for the area. Nearly a fifth of the respondents who were in favour of a new parish council mentioned that it would provide an opportunity to gain city status.

“My needs are fully met by the current arrangements. The streets are clean, litter is collected on time, local amenities are very good, there is sufficient green space, there are good options for recreation (tennis courts, gym, areas for walking). We have a range of GP surgeries to choose from and there is a good selection of schools.”

“This is just another level of bureaucracy where the cost will be funded by local council taxpayers”

### Levels of representation

4.12.1 Just over half (51%) of all respondents thought that there should not be town councillors to represent their views in addition to the existing Medway Councillors. 36% of respondents indicated they thought there should be town councillors and 13% indicated that they didn't know.



4.12.2 The most common explanation for not wanting town councillors was that it would increase bureaucracy and duplication of roles, be too expensive and that there were no clear benefits. Those who did want town councillors mainly commented that it would increase the representation for the area.

“Unnecessary - duplication of current roles and responsibilities.”

“If this is going to put an additional cost on residents, I don't want it. Our councillors are already representing us.”

“Having read the attached leaflet there is no additional benefit gained by setting up a town council. Just additional costs.”

- 4.12.3 A breakdown by age group shows that respondents aged 55+ were more likely to disagree (54%) that there should be town councillors to represent their views compared to 45% of respondents aged between 17 and 54.
- 4.13 All this evidence would appear to confirm that a healthy contribution is already made by Rochester residents to the decision making activities of the Council, to the management and maintenance of their neighbourhood, to empower others to realise their potential, overcome difficulties and benefit community cohesion. Respondents to the consultation are clearly satisfied with the existing arrangements and do not think any town councillors are needed. They refer to duplication of roles and responsibilities and a lack of benefits deriving from additional costs.

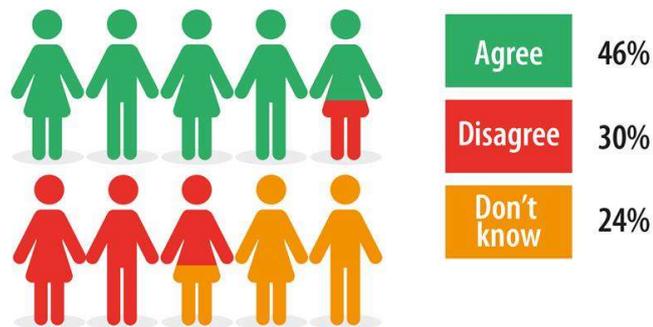
***Effectiveness and convenience***

- 4.14 As stated previously, an important factor for the Council to take into account is the extent to which the community governance arrangements in place and those being proposed are effective and convenient. The guidance clarifies that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity and that whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and likely to remain, easily identifiable.
- 4.15 The current Ward boundaries have been in place since 2003 and as far as local people have any need to know the exact boundaries they have largely been represented by the same ward Councillors since 2007.
- 4.16 The proposal for the Rochester Town Council area includes all of the Rochester East and Rochester West wards, but does not include the whole of the Rochester South & Horsted ward (RSH) or the whole of River ward. To complicate matters further, the proposed area does not include the whole of the polling districts contained within the RSH or River wards; only a selection of properties in City Way in RRS1 are included and all electors in polling district RRS3 including the Davis Estate are excluded. In River ward only half of the electors in polling district RR3 are included and the boundary cuts across Gundulph Road. This is confusing for those outside of the proposed area, particularly those immediately adjacent to the boundary. The working group feel that this means the boundaries are not easily identifiable in all places.

- 4.17 The petitioners have indicated that they have attempted to align their proposal to the area of the previous Rochester upon-Medway council but they have not done so exactly as it should have included most of polling district RRS1 but less of polling district RRS4. That authority also included areas of Strood which have not been included in the proposal.
- 4.18 Administratively it is difficult, if not impossible to conduct efficient and effective Parish and/or Local elections where the areas do not exactly align with existing administrative boundaries. For example, it would result in only a handful of electors in polling district RRS1 being eligible to vote in a parish election to the new Rochester Town Council when the register of electors is published based on the whole of the existing RRS1 boundary. At combined elections in particular, the situation would increase the potential for incorrect ballot papers being issued to ineligible electors as well as confusion amongst electors as to which elections they are eligible to vote in. To remedy the situation, another review exercise would need to be undertaken to try to make polling district boundaries mirror Parish boundaries.

### Proposed boundary for new parish council

- 4.19 The responses from the consultation exercise show clear differences of opinion about the proposed area for the new parish council. 46% of respondents agreed with the proposed boundary, whilst 36% disagreed. 24% indicated that they didn't know.



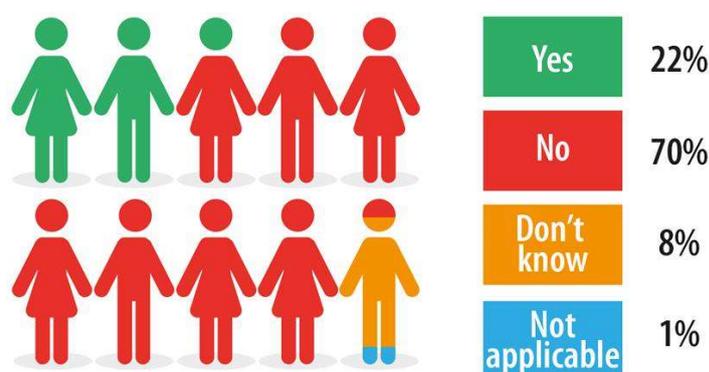
- 4.19.1 A breakdown by demographics shows that respondents aged 17-54 were more likely (52%) to agree with the boundary compared to 43% of those aged 55+. Electors in Rochester West ward were less likely (26%) to disagree with the boundary compared to respondents in River (37%), Rochester East (33%) and Rochester South & Horsted (32%). This may reflect the fact that Rochester West ward largely comprises the towns' central area compared to the other wards.

4.19.2 Those who were in favour of the boundary commented that they felt it covered the boundary for Rochester well and covered the area they always understood to be “Rochester”. However, those who did not agree with it indicated that it was “too big” and that a town council that included rural areas wasn’t very practical and that the boundary should be re-determined using the M2 bridge and B2097 as the limits. 54 of those who responded as a “don’t know” indicated that they had queries with the proposed boundary. If the “don’t knows” are considered along with those disagreeing with the proposed boundary it shows that the issue is less clear-cut, with more than half of respondents uncertain with the proposed boundary.

4.19.3 It is difficult for the working group to confirm whether all the residents in the proposed area have a distinctive, shared and recognisable community of interest and sense of identity around "Rochester". The pattern of daily life in each of the communities, the local centres for education, and childcare, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication will have an influence on the extent to which all of the residents in the proposed area share a sense of community although the focus of people's day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity, if for instance overwhelming historic loyalty is to "Rochester" as a town.

**Willingness to pay additional precept**

4.20 In terms of respondents willingness to pay an additional precept for a new parish council a clear majority (70%) indicated that they would not be willing to do so, compared with 22% who would be willing. 9% of respondents indicated that they didn’t know or that it was not applicable as they were responding on behalf of an organisation which would not pay the additional precept.



4.20.1 Those who were not willing to pay an additional precept commented that they felt they were repaying enough or couldn't afford more, or that the proposed parish council was not needed and no benefit would result. Those in favour indicated that the costs would be worth it if the charge was manageable and if local issues received more funding and were addressed. Those who indicated "don't know" commented that they had a query about the charge or would like more information about how it would be calculated.

"No pay rise in the past 5 years these extra costs would put a lot of pressure on already overburdened payments of council tax, electricity, gas etc."

"I don't believe that the extra money would actually show any benefit or improvement in Rochester."

"With the town council having limited scope of power and the final decisions resting with Medway Council it seems like we will be paying double the money to double up the bureaucracy without any obvious advantage!"

4.20.2 In terms of a breakdown of the responses by demographic group, males were significantly more likely to be willing to pay a precept than females (24% compared to 20%)

### **Provision of quality services**

4.21 In considering whether the establishment of a new Parish council would improve the situation, the guidance makes it clear that the effectiveness and convenience of local government is understood in the context of a local council's ability to deliver quality services. The working group gathered evidence about Medway Council's current levels and quality of services that matter to local people and noted for example, that over 48% of locations in the area were predominantly free of litter. The Council also provides a range of services locally in Rochester from the Community Hub sited in the newly refurbished Eastgate House, from abandoned vehicles, bus passes, recycling, stray dogs, to traffic management, trees and waste services. In 2016 the Hub had nearly 200,000 visitors.

- 4.21.1 The Medway Citizen’s Panel is a representative sample of local residents who have volunteered to participate quarterly in local consultations. 14 postal surveys were undertaken quarterly from August 2013 to May 2017 with Panel members being asked questions about the level of satisfaction with Medway services and the extent to which the Council makes the local area a better place to live. Analysis over the 4 year period shows that taking all surveys into consideration Rochester has a similar perception of the council compared with other Medway areas, although the margin of error found with Rochester’s results mean that differences are indicative.
- 4.21.2 In terms of the extent to which Citizen Panel members felt satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Medway Council runs its’ services, for all respondents, the satisfaction level was between 57% and 64% over the 4 year period. Generally satisfaction levels amongst Rochester residents of the Panel were higher, although did fluctuate during the time period. Asked whether they thought Medway council provides value for money, those respondents who agreed ranged between 50% and 60% over the period of time and residents in Rochester on the Panel were generally higher than other parts of Medway. When asked if they thought Medway Council provide high quality services for people, the general trend over the 4 year period across the Panel was for those who agree representing between 40% and 60% of respondents, with those in Rochester following the same trend. Between July 2014 and August 2016 Rochester and other Medway residents had very similar rates of residents thinking the council makes the local area a better place to live. Between August 2013 and early 2015 the percentage of Rochester residents who felt they could influence decisions matched other Medway areas.
- 4.21.3 Between July 2015 to July 2016 Rochester had higher levels of agreement than other Medway areas.
- 4.22 The proposers of the parish council have indicated a number of matters on which it would focus including responding to consultations and making representations on planning applications. However, the only specific services it has publicly mentioned are managing open spaces and allotments. Whilst some respondents to the consultation indicated that a new parish council would give them better representation and the ability to focus on things affecting them on a day to day to basis, no specific services have been suggested and indeed, the working group notes that nearly a fifth of those in favour of a new parish council indicated that it would help regain city status rather than necessarily provide services.

- 4.23 The Working Group concluded that the few services suggested by the proposers of the new parish council are already carried out by Medway Council and little evidence has been provided to indicate that a parish council would provide these any more effectively or economically. If the parish was to take on more powers and services, it would need to increase the precept to cover those costs. A recurrent theme from the consultation responses was a concern about the cost to the precept payer. Respondents clearly felt that they would experience financial pressure if they had to pay an additional precept and that they would not necessarily see any benefit or improvement in Rochester as a result of the additional precept. The uncertainty about the level of precept that might be set by a new parish council was of concern to many respondents who replied “don’t know” to this aspect of the questionnaire. A variety of views were expressed on this and other themes during the lively debate about the Review at the public meeting hosted by the City of Rochester Business Forum as well.
- 4.24 The proposers of the parish council have also referred to the parish council being able to raise funds to invest in local initiatives and have mentioned a sum of £100,000 being used to fund such things as festivals and tourist facilities, signage, playgrounds and some other examples. No further details of this have been made available, so it is difficult for the working group to make a proper judgement on the extent to which this is viable. However, the working group noted that the Council has showed its’ recognition of Rochester’s specific identity in Medway and identified that in recent times significant sums had been invested in Rochester by the Council or had been brokered by the Council for the benefit of Rochester.
- 4.25 This included the approximately £120,000,000 invested by the Homes & Communities Agency and the Council in the Rochester Riverside development of 1400 homes, a school and two hotels which is due to start later this year. It also considered the £26 million invested by Network Rail in the new Rochester train station which opened in 2015 together with the £4 million invested by the Council in the new adjacent multi-storey car park. As well as housing and transport investment the Group considered the £2.2 million invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund in the historic Eastgate House on Rochester High Street. The working group also considered collaborations between the local community and the Council on such initiatives as the Vines Park upgrade in central Rochester where £33,000 of Section 106 funds were invested. In noting this historic and recent local funding and inward investment and the ability of already established groups to raise funding in collaboration with the Council, the working group wondered at the likelihood of a new Town Council with no track record for attracting funding, or any portfolio of successful completed projects to raise additional local funding or to broker the inward investment or local finance.

4.26 The working group also noted that the local community had benefited from the use of Ward Councillors' Ward Improvement Fund (WiF) over the last few years. The WiF exists to enable Ward Councillors to contribute to a short-term initiative that commands support in the local community and responds to an unmet need or improve social, economic or environmental well-being in the Ward. It cannot be used to fund an activity that is already funded by Medway Council. Since 2015 a total of £24000 has been contributed towards 47 projects in the area covered by the proposed new parish council ranging from support for community outreach initiatives for young people on a local estate, contributions to help disadvantaged children attend extra curriculum activities and alternative therapies, contributions towards a community festival, street pastors, play equipment and community Christmas decorations.

## **5. Other forms of community representation**

5.1 During the public meeting organised by the City of Rochester Business Forum, a question was posed about other forms of community representation such as "Local Area Committees" which might increase community involvement as an alternative to a new parish council. In accordance with the statutory guidance, the Working Group undertook some research into these other forms of community representation and found that many of them exist across the country and that their status, format and management arrangements differ widely.

5.2 Area committees enable authorities to fulfil their community governance roles and deliver policy on issues such as social inclusion. The local authority provides resources and Councillors are usually integral to their constitution. They can be set up to advise on issues such as parks, off-street parking, public toilets, street cleaning, abandoned vehicles and planning applications as well as contributing to shaping council services and improving local service provision. Some Councils have established community councils which in addition to advising on local issues, manage funds and allocate money for local projects and activities.

5.3 Neighbourhood management bodies offer similar opportunities for residents to work with local agencies, usually facilitated by a neighbourhood manager, to improve services at neighbourhood level through implementation rather than advising or making decisions on better management of local environment, increasing community safety etc. These bodies usually cover smaller geographical areas than area committees.

- 5.4 Area or community forums can be set up to comment on a specific project or initiative that will impact on the local area. They aim to influence decision making rather than having powers to implement services.
- 5.5 Community associations offer a particular and widespread democratic model for local residents and local community-based organisations in a defined neighbourhood to work together for the benefit of that neighbourhood. They usually manage a community centre as a base for their activities and local councillors are often represented on the committee.
- 5.6 Partners and Communities Together (PACTs) are a relatively recent initiative which allows the community to identify and focus on issues of importance and concern to them. PACT processes have been established across Medway, including at least one in the area of the proposed Parish Council.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The evidence the working group gathered and the results of the consultation seems to indicate that the local electorate have a healthy and comprehensive range of organisations and groups catering to their needs and helping them to overcome difficulties and fulfil their potential. Respondents were clearly satisfied with the existing arrangements of community governance. Local people also seem to make use of the existing democratic engagement arrangements to seek support or advice from their ward Councillors, or to ask questions or lobby for change, as well as showing a higher than average level of election turnout. It is not clear from any of the material provided by those in favour of the proposed parish council, that such a parish council would make any significant contribution to community cohesion and indeed the working group were concerned that the introduction of another tier of local government might confuse electors and lead to a diminution of the success of the existing organisations by adding bureaucracy.
- 6.2 Local people have also contributed to the creation of a successful community by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, improving the management and maintenance of such facilities. Whilst a parish council would become one of the bodies that has to be consulted on planning applications it is not clear to the working group that this justifies the establishment of the parish council, particularly given the existing pattern of involvement of local people matters relating to their local area.

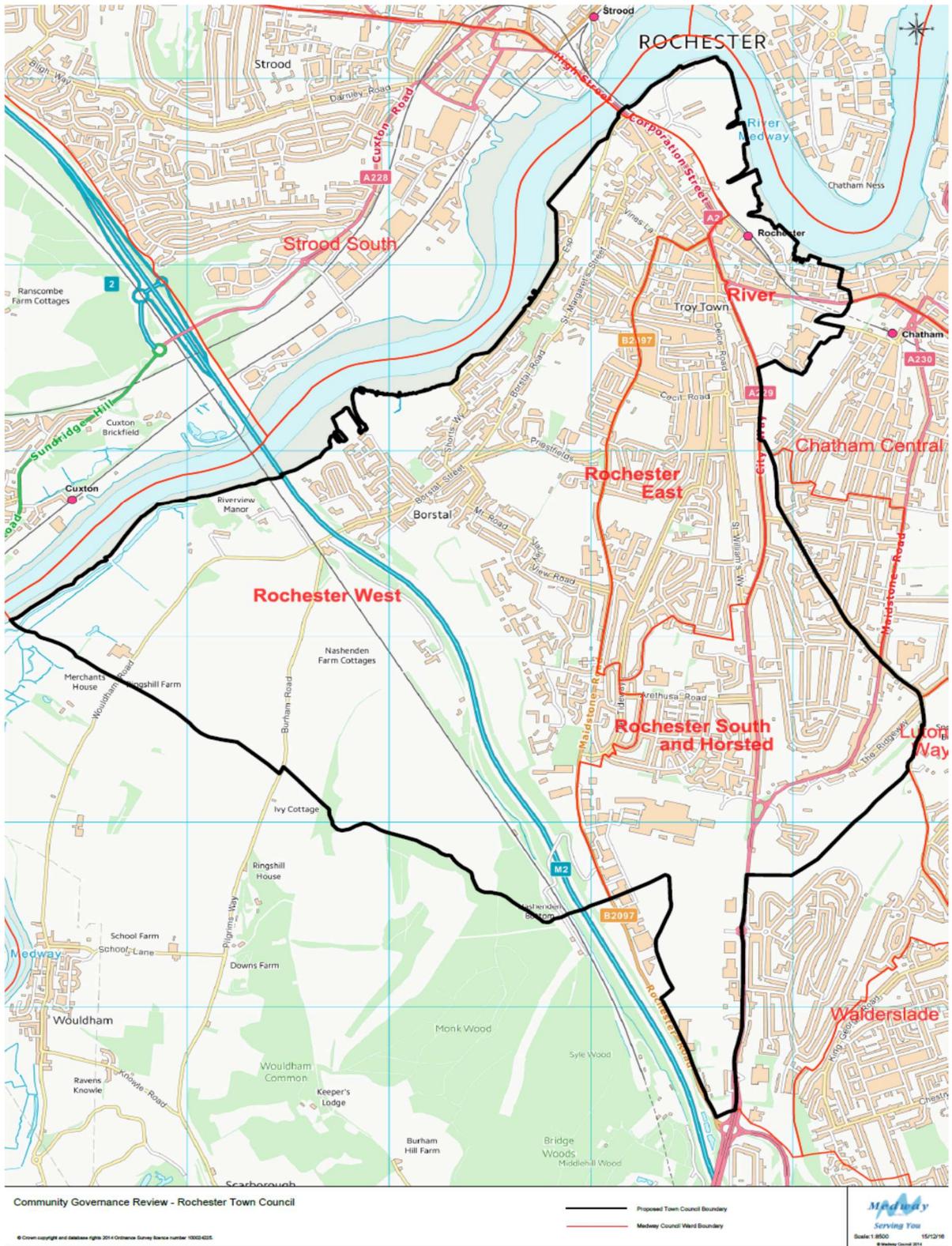
- 6.3 Although nearly half of the respondents to the consultation thought the boundary for the proposed parish council covered the correct area, the working group is of the opinion that the boundaries are not easily identifiable and will lead to confusion by electors and the various organisations and groups currently meeting the needs of local people. The fact that the administrative boundaries of Medway Council wards and polling districts do not match the proposed area means that elections would be difficult to manage efficiently and effectively without another review of those boundaries. Such a review would be time-consuming and lead to changes being introduced simply to align with parish boundaries.
- 6.4 It is also not clear whether there is a common sense of identity amongst the various communities included in the proposed area and the working group are of the opinion that this could result in the parish council not being effective.
- 6.5 The outcome of the consultation does not show broad support for the formation of a new parish council. Most of the respondents do not want one and the working group are of the opinion that, given every registered elector received a hardcopy leaflet and questionnaire, the level of non-response indicates that the issue of a new parish council does not sufficiently engage the electorate in the area and has not shown a wider demand for a change in the governance arrangements.
- 6.6 The working group's view that the parish council would not be effective or convenient is based on the lack of real evidence about the extent to which the parish council could viably deliver quality services not already being provided by Medway Council and also reflects local people's concerns about the level of precept of a new parish council and respondents views that the proposal did not sufficiently justify the formation of a body to deal with issues in a more effective or efficient manner than was in place already.
- 6.7 The working group considered the possible alternative and additional forms of community governance such as those described in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.6 above, which were raised in the public information meeting on 28 September at the Corn Exchange. However, given all the evidence gathered showing (a) an existing comprehensive range of organisations, (b) that 65% of respondents indicated that they wished to keep the existing community governance arrangements, and (c) that around 55% of respondents said they were happy with the existing decision-making arrangements, the working group are of the view that the introduction of any of the alternative forms of community governance would not improve the extent to which community governance better reflected the identities and interests of the community or was more effective or convenient.

- 6.8 On balance therefore and having taken into account all of the information considered as part of the Review, the recommendation of the informal working group is that the existing community governance arrangements in the proposed area remain unchanged – that a town council should not be formed in Rochester.

This petition is addressed to Medway Council under Section 80 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“The Act”). We, the undersigned, are electors who live in Rochester and believe that Rochester should have a Town Council. We ask that Medway Council undertake a Community Governance Review in accordance with its duties under Section 83 of The Act. We hope that the outcome of this review leads to the creation of a new local council for Rochester, to be called Rochester Town Council, which would work with Medway Council to represent our community and bring about improvements to our town.

We recommend the Town Council includes:

1. The Rochester East Ward;
2. The Rochester West Ward;
3. The part of the Rochester South & Horsted Ward west of the A229;  
and
4. The part of the River Ward west of Gundulph Road and Fort Pitt Hill.



## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF ROCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF REVIEW**

That a Community Governance review (CGR) is carried out by Medway Council under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the Act”) as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015 in response to a valid petition from 1623 local government electors in the proposed area of the Town Council as set out in the attached map.

The review will comply with the legislative requirement, have regard to the associated statutory guidance and will be conducted in accordance with these terms of reference which were approved by Medway Council on 26 January 2017.

The outcome of the review will be reported back to Council in October 2017.

As per the 2007 Act (as amended), Medway Council will take account of the necessary criteria when conducting the review, namely:

- The identities and interests of the community in the area
- The effective and convenient governance of the area.

and the Council should take into account influential factors such as the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

In undertaking the review, Medway Council will be guided by Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the Act”) as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015 and the guidance on CGRs published by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010.

The review shall be of the community governance needs of the area of the proposed Town Council, including the proposals put forward in the petition for the establishment of a Town Council for Rochester. If the review recommends that a new Parish should be constituted, it will also make recommendations as to:

- the name of the new Parish
- whether or not the new parish should have a parish council
- whether or not the Parish should have one of the alternative styles, including being called a Town Council
- what electoral arrangements should apply to the new council, including when ordinary elections should take place, the number of councillors to be elected to the parish council, and whether it should be divided into wards

- whether or not the council should make a reorganisation order including such incidental, consequential, transitional or supplementary provision as may appear to be necessary for giving full effect to the order for the establishment of the parish. This may include provisions with respect to the transfer and management, or custody of property, transfer of functions, property, rights and liabilities.

A Working Group has been established comprising of Councillors and Officers to work on the review; however, it does not have any decision making powers and so formally the authority to conduct the Review has been delegated to the Chief Legal Officer in consultation with the working group. The final decision will be made by the full Council based on the recommendations of the working group.

In coming to its recommendations in the Review, the working group and the Council will need to take account of the views of local people. The Act requires the Council to consult the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the Review and to take the representations that are received into account by judging them against the criteria in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended).

## How would a town council for Rochester be funded?

Town councils are funded through a charge added to your council tax. This is known as a **precept**. The precept is decided by the town council and is determined by the level of services the town council wants to provide. Any area of service that is taken over by the town council would not be funded by a budget transfer from Medway Council. It would be funded by the town council precept. The precept cannot be 'capped', in the same way that council tax can be capped. ('Capping' is a limit on the maximum amount that can be charged, or by how much council tax can be increased. Capping is set by central government).

The level of potential precept for the proposed town council is not known yet. A town council is responsible for meeting all of its own expenditure, the cost of premises, and the number of staff employed to deliver services.

Although it is not possible to advise at this stage what a precept for Rochester town council would be, we have set out below some examples for existing town councils of a similar size:

Town Council	Population	Members	Annual precept 2017/18
Faversham	c20,000	14	£53.06
Sevenoaks	c21,000	16	£111.00
East Grinstead	c27,000	18	£76.68
Hailsham	c21,000	23	£126.53
Lewes	c18,000	18	£154.26

## Will I pay more council tax?

Yes. Your council tax does not reduce by the equivalent amount of the precept payable. The precept is an additional charge on top of your council tax. This is because the precept pays for the additional services and functions provided to the area, which are in addition to those paid for with your existing council tax.

## What happens next?

As you live in the area of the proposed new town council, we would like you to let us know your views on the proposal by completing the CGR questionnaire. You can do this online by visiting [www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview](http://www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview) or by completing the attached form and returning it in the envelope provided by 5pm on Friday, 9 October, 2017.

The *Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review* is available on our website.

A report on the responses to this Community Governance Review and details of the next stage of the process will be posted on our website after October 2017.

# A town council for Rochester?

Background information and questionnaire



This information can be made available in other formats and languages. Please phone 01634 333333 for more information.

[www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview](http://www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview)

Serving You

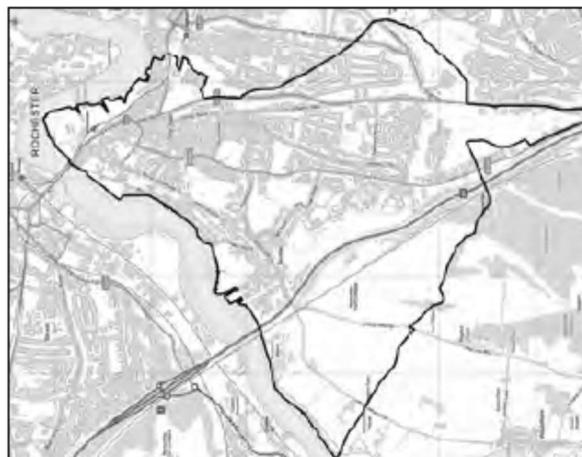
## Introduction

A valid petition (signed by 7.6% of the local people) has been submitted to Medway Council requesting that a Community Governance Review (CGR) be undertaken to consider the establishment of a Town Council for Rochester. As the Principal Council in the area, Medway Council is obliged to conduct a CGR in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015).

The enclosed survey gives you the opportunity to give your opinion on whether a town council should be created for Rochester.

Petitioners are suggesting that the area the town council would cover includes 21,000 people in the following areas:

- Rochester East Ward
- Rochester West Ward
- Rochester South and Horsted ward (excluding roads to the east of Pattens Lane / Old Pattens Lane, and the Davis Estate)
- Part of River Ward (west of Gundulph Road and Fort Pitt Hill)



You have received this survey because you are included on the electoral register for the area. Surveys have also been provided to organisations operating within the area who could be affected by any changes and who, therefore, may also wish to comment.

The information contained in this booklet explains the background to the survey and should be viewed alongside more detailed information on the council's website [www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview](http://www.medway.gov.uk/rochesterreview)

You should return your completed survey in the envelope provided to reach us by 5pm on Friday, 9 October, 2017.

## Community Governance

**What is the aim of the Community Governance Review?**  
The aim of this CGR is to decide whether a new parish, to be called Rochester Town Council (as suggested by the petitioners), should be created. To do this Medway Council has to gather information about the current community governance arrangements in the area.

**What is Community Governance**  
Community governance is decision-making that affects you and your local area. This does not always have to be part of formal council processes. There are many different types of local governance such as community groups, trusts, societies, residents or tenants associations, or neighbourhood groups.

An important part of the CGR is hearing the views of electors and interested groups and organisations in the affected area to enable them to review the proposal in more detail and then provide feedback to the council which is why we are running this survey. This feedback will then be used by councillors, along with other relevant information, to make an informed recommendation regarding the future community governance arrangements for the petition area. A final decision would be made by all Medway councillors at the full council meeting in October 2017.

**Current governance arrangements**  
Currently there are nine Medway Council councillors who represent the Rochester area and one MP. A new parish or town council would require separate elections for an additional 15 (approximately) councillors. The nine current councillors would continue to represent Rochester at Medway council meetings.

The proposed town council would not replace Medway Council. Medway Council would remain as the principal council for the area, and would be responsible for providing most of the local authority services to Rochester. If the review were to recommend the creation of Rochester Town Council, the services that the Town Council would be responsible for would be agreed as part of this process. However, a Rochester Town Council would not have the same legal duties and resources as Medway Council.

## What services could a town council provide?

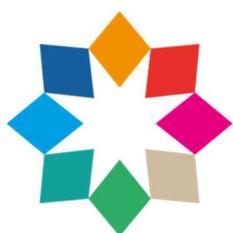
A new parish or town council could provide a limited number of services for example:

- Allotments
- Bus shelters
- Footpaths
- Playgrounds
- Traffic calming

These services are currently provided by Medway Council and paid for by your council tax.

The new parish or town council would have a legal right to be consulted on planning matters affecting the area, however, Medway council would remain the planning authority.

A new parish council could also organise community litter picks or voluntary work to improve a park or open space.



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Corporate Governance  
Consultation

Medway Council

**Report V3.0**

**January 2018**

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## Project details and acknowledgements

<b>Title</b>	Rochester Community Governance Consultation
<b>Client</b>	Medway Council
<b>Project number</b>	17036
<b>Client reference</b>	David Holloway
<b>Author</b>	Clare Rapkins

We would like to thank the residents, businesses and amenity groups of Rochester who took part in this consultation.

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# Executive Summary

## Background

A petition, signed by 7.6% of local people, was submitted to Medway Council requesting that a Community Governance Review (CGR) was undertaken. Subsequently a consultation was undertaken to better understand local opinion about Community Governance in Rochester and explore issues regarding the possible introduction of a Rochester Town Council.

## Method

The Council designed and distributed a postal survey to 23,002 residents, businesses and amenity groups across Rochester, which comprised of the following:

- 59 Amenity groups
- 857 businesses and other organisations
- 22,086 electors (residents on the electoral register for Rochester).

The option of completing the survey online was also made available to everyone on the mailing list.

M·E·L Research was only commissioned for the analysis and reporting elements of Medway Council's Corporate Governance consultation.

Overall, there were a total of 2,594 surveys completed, equating to a response rate of 11%. This represents a confidence level of +/-1.81%.

## Headline Results

- Around half (55%) said they were happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects them personally and their local area.
- Only 36% agreed that there should also be town councillors to represent their views.
- Nearly half (46%) agree with the proposed boundary for the town council.
- Only 22% would be willing to pay a "precept" on top of their existing Council tax to cover the running costs and local investment of the proposed town council.
- Around two thirds (65%) said they prefer Option A (keep the current community governance arrangements), whilst around a third (35%) prefer Option B (change the current community governance arrangements to create a town council in Rochester).

# Introduction

## Background

A petition, signed by 7.6% of local people, was submitted to Medway Council requesting that a Community Governance Review (CGR) was undertaken. The purpose of this consultation was to better understand local opinion about Community Governance in Rochester and explore issues regarding the possible introduction of a Rochester Town Council. This information will be used by Councillors, along with other research and information, to make an informed recommendation regarding the future community governance arrangements in Rochester.

## Method

The council was responsible for designing, printing and dispatching the postal surveys as well as hosting an online version of the survey. The survey was sent to a total of 23,002 residents, businesses and amenity groups across Rochester, which comprised of the following:

- 22,086 electors (residents on the electoral register for Rochester)
- 857 businesses and other organisations
- 59 Amenity groups.

The Council provided return envelopes for the completed surveys to be returned to M·E·L Research for data entry at the end of weeks 3, 6, 9 and 12. Responses to the online survey were provided at the end of week 12. Please note: M·E·L Research was commissioned to conduct the analysis and reporting elements of this consultation only.

## Response and statistical reliability

A total of 2,594 surveys were obtained (excluding 30 respondents who were either not eligible, did not appear on the electoral register for Rochester or refused/returned the survey blank). This produces a margin of error of  $\pm 1.81\%$  at the 95% confidence level. This would mean that we can be 95% certain that had every registered elector been surveyed, the overall results would be 1.81% above or below the figures that were reported (e.g. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 48.19% to 51.81%).

However, where base sizes are smaller, for example due to sub group analysis or questions being skipped, the confidence interval would be wider and so results should be treated with greater caution.

Table A breaks the number of responses by completion method.

**Table A: Response breakdown by method**

Method	Mailing size	Number of responses	Overall response rate	Confidence interval
Postal survey	-	2,190	-	-
Online survey	-	404	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,002</b>	<b>2,594</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>+/-1.18%</b>

## Notes on reporting

This report details the results from both the postal and online returns combined. Where deemed relevant, and where base sizes are sufficiently large (50 and above), data has been analysed by age using z-tests. A z-test is a type of statistical test used to compare two groups in order to determine whether differences between the two are due to chance, or due to a “real” or statistically significant difference (at 95% confidence level). Where there is a statistically significant difference between groups, this has been noted in the report and is referred to as a “significant difference”. However, a significant difference may not always mean that the difference is ‘important’. It will also need to be considered in practical terms i.e. does the difference matter? For example, whilst there may be a significant difference, it may not matter because the response is still very positive for both groups.

Where appropriate, results have also been broken down by ward, polling district, Lower Super Output Area and displayed in tables within the report. However, where the base size of a geographical area is particularly small, they should be treated as indicative only.

Owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on graphs in the report may not always add up to 100% and may differ slightly when compared with the text. The figures provided in the text should always be used as the authoritative results.

Both individuals and organisations have been given a chance to participate in the survey, but as we only received responses from 24 organisations, all responses were amalgamated and analysed as a single group. Table B breaks the number of responses by response type (individual or organisation).

**Table B: Response breakdown by type**

Response type	Number of responses
Individual	2,564
Organisation	24
Unknown	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,594</b>

For the open-ended questions, quotes have been included (including don’t know responses) for illustrative purposes only.

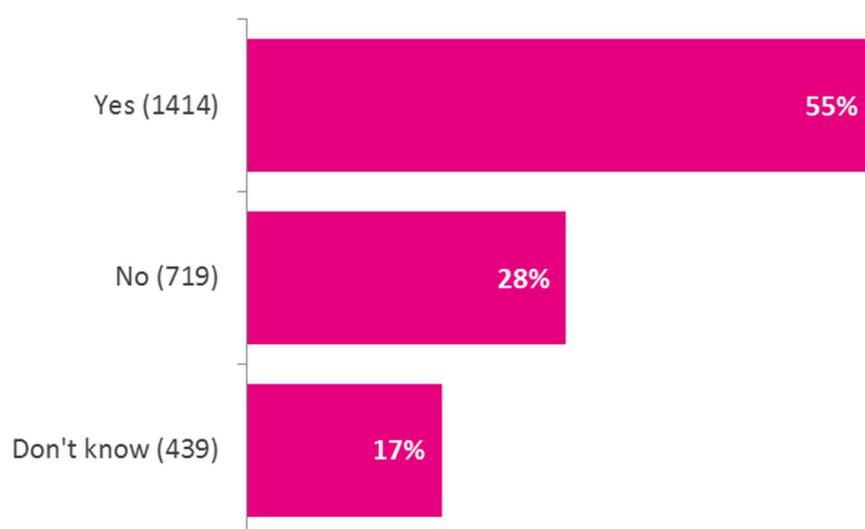
# Findings

## 1. Current Arrangements for decision making

Respondents were asked to state whether they were happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects them personally and their local area. Around half (55%) said yes and just over a quarter (28%) said no. A further 17% stated don't know.

**Figure 1: Current Arrangements for decision making**

Percentage of respondents- base size 2,572



Sub-group analysis shows that there are some significant differences in satisfaction between certain demographic groups:

	<p>Breakdown by age shows that respondents aged 55+ (58%) were more likely to say they are happy with the current arrangements for decision making. This compares to 51% of respondents aged between 17 and 54.</p> <p>Also, 17-54 year olds (23%) are more likely to say they are unsure about the current governance arrangements than those aged 55+ (14%).</p>
	<p>Women were significantly more likely to be unsure about the current governance arrangements (20%) compared to men (14%).</p>

	<p>Respondents from a white background (56%) are significantly more likely to say they are happy with the current arrangements compared to those from a BME background (44%).</p> <p>Also, respondents from a white background are significantly less likely to be unsure about the current governance arrangements (17%) compared to those from a BME background (30%).</p>
	<p>Respondents living in Rochester South and Horsted (64%) are significantly more likely than respondents from Rochester East (52%) and Rochester West (51%) to be happy with this aspect.</p> <p>They are also less likely to disagree (21%) with the existing Medway Council processes, compared to residents from Rochester East (28%) and Rochester West (32%).</p> <p>Respondents in Rochester East (21%) are more likely to say they were unsure about the current arrangements than those in Rochester South and Horsted (15%) and Rochester West (18%).</p> <p>Respondents living in polling districts RRS4 (67%), RRW3 (64%), and RRS2 (61%) are more likely than those in RRW5 (45%), RRE1, RRE2 (both 44%) and RRW1 (41%) to be happy with the current arrangements.</p> <p>Respondents living in polling districts RRW1 (41%), RRE2 (35%) and RRW5 (39%) are more likely likely to disagree with the existing Medway Council processes than those in RRE3 (20%), RRS2 (22%), RRS3 (21%) and RRW2 (26%).</p> <p>Also, respondents living in polling districts RRE3 (21%) are significantly more likely to be unsure about the current governance arrangements compared to residents in RRS4 (13%).</p> <p>In addition, respondents from LSOA Medway 033B (71%), Medway 026C (67%), Medway 026D, Medway 024A (both 65%), Medway 026B, Medway 024C ( both 64%) are more likely to be happy compared to respondents living in Medway 014A (49%), Medway 014B (50%), Medway 014C (42%), Medway 014D (50%), and Medway 017B (39%).</p> <p>Also, respondents from LSOA Medway 014C (40%), LSOA Medway 017B (39%) and LSOA Medway 014D (36%) are more likely to disagree with the current governance arrangements compared to those living in other areas such as Medway 017C (19%), Medway 024A (20%) and Medway 024C (18%).</p>

All respondents were asked to explain why they were happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects them personally and their local area. Table 1 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who said 'yes' they were happy with the current arrangements. In total, there were 1,060 valid responses (excluding no comments, not interested or comments that were not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt that the present arrangements were working well/ changes were not required (778 respondents). This was followed by 95 respondents stating it would lead to increased bureaucracy and duplication of roles that the new arrangements may bring with it. 71 respondents also mentioned they were happy with how the services are currently run. 71 respondents also mentioned they were happy with how the services are currently run.

**Table 1: Reasons for saying 'yes' to being happy with the current arrangements**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Present arrangement are running well / changes not required (e.g. having a town council)	778
Increased bureaucracy and duplication of roles	95
Already happy with how local services are currently run	71
Don't want Council tax to increase/introduction of "precept"	48
Local issues are sorted out well currently	36
Other (e.g. don't understand the decision making process)	32
<i>No comment/ not interested/comments not relevant to question (e.g. support the town council proposals)</i>	83

Illustrative quotes for the three most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**Present arrangements are running well/any changes not required:**

I think they generally do a good job - pretty good with all they do.

I am happy with the current arrangements for decision making because it is fair (and) correct.

Happy with current council arrangements as (I) only have to deal with one authority (and) having a 2nd one would complicate things.

**Increased bureaucracy and duplication of roles:**

I do not agree with adding a further tier of local Government at all.

I feel that there are no obvious problems and that another layer of bureaucracy could be a hindrance rather than a benefit.

It would be an unnecessary tier of bureaucracy and dilute the benefits of being a single tier authority area.

**Happy with how current services are currently run by the Council:**

All local services are provided to a good standard under the existing arrangements.

Medway Council are doing the best they can with council tax receipts. The services in general are good especially refuse and street cleaning.

Local services and upkeep of area is satisfactory and meets our needs.

Respondents who said they were not happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects them personally and their local area were asked to explain why. Table 2 below shows the key themes that emerged. In total, there were 767 valid responses (excluding no comments, doesn't apply to me or comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt that greater representation/involvement in decisions was needed (413 respondents). This was followed by 90 respondents mentioning that Rochester's city status/identity has been lost since the amalgamation of the Medway towns.

**Table 2: Reasons for saying 'no' to being happy with the current arrangements**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Greater representation/involvement in decision making needed	413
Rochester city status/identity has been lost	91
Local council is not very effective/poorly managed	66
Support proposed town council	36
Problems with roads/infrastructure/traffic	30

Problems with bins/dog fouling/graffiti	20
Problems with planning decisions (e.g. too many shops, restaurants, coffee shops etc.)	18
Too much bureaucracy	11
Problems with ASB	8
Problems with car parking	7
Not enough information provided	6
Other (e.g. Council is too large, not enough consideration given to residents)	61
<i>Comment not relevant to question (e.g. Happy with present arrangements and how current services are run, no comment or no interest)</i>	32

Illustrative quotes for the two most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**Greater representation/involvement in decision making needed:**

I would like more opportunity to be involved in decisions, new initiatives & new processes that involve my local community.

Medway Council is too large. Councillors do not properly represent or understand local issues which affect Rochester.

Medway council could do much more to involve residents in decision making such as allowing them to speak at meetings and holding more open question sessions to enable the public to hold elected Members to account.

**Feel Rochester's city status/identity has been lost:**

Although I do appreciate Medway Council has to take into consideration all of Medway when allocating resources and when making strategic decisions, I feel there has been a lack of understanding of the specific requirements of Rochester. An example being the loss of City Status.

Rochester's history has always shown it to be a city - we have lost city status. There are many ancient buildings which need specialised knowledge. We have many famous people within our history.

I believe Rochester should never have lost its city status in the first place - Rochester is Medway's 'City'.

Table 3 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who responded to this question with 'Don't Know'. In total, there were 185 comments provided. The most common reason for providing this response was because they were unable to comment; namely due to the lack of information provided or lack of awareness about the current arrangements (102 mentions). 41 respondents also provided 'other' responses which covered more general points such as issues within the local area and 20 people felt that insufficient consideration was given to their views.

**Table 3: Reasons for saying 'Don't know' to being happy with the current arrangements**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Unable to comment (e.g. lack of awareness with current arrangements)	102
Other (e.g. problems in the local area such as homeless and parking)	41
Residents views not considered	20
Happy with existing arrangements	12
Rochester city status lost/Rochester should be a city/Should nurture Rochester	5
Not sure of benefits	5

Illustrative quotes for the most frequently cited reason are provided below:

**Unable to comment:**

As I am uncertain of the processes involved, I am unable to give a positive or negative response to the question.

Don't have enough information or knowledge on what the council does.

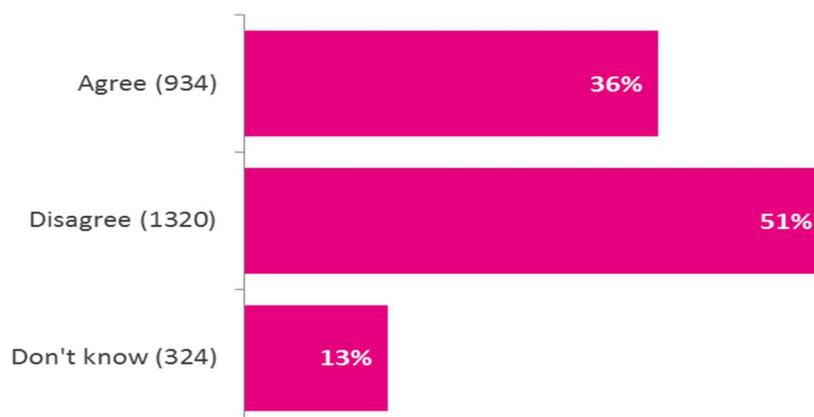
I have no idea what the current arrangements are so I can't comment.

## 2. Provision of town councillors to represent views

Respondents were asked whether they agreed that there should be town councillors to represent their views. Nearly four out of ten agreed (36%) and just over a half (51%) disagreed. A further 13% responded with don't know.

**Figure 2: Agreement with having a town councillor**

Percentage of respondents- base size 2,578



Sub-group analysis shows that there are some significant differences in satisfaction between certain demographic groups:

	<p>Men were significantly more likely to agree (39%) that there should be town councillors to represent their views. This compares to 35% of women.</p> <p>Still, women don't disagree more with the idea. They are just significantly more unsure (16%) about the current governance arrangements, compared to men (9%).</p>
	<p>Breakdown by age shows that respondents aged 55+ (54%) were significantly <b>more likely to disagree</b> that there should be town councillors to represent their views. This compares to 45% of respondents aged between 17 and 54.</p> <p>Also, 17-54 year olds (17%) are more likely to say they are unsure whether there should be town councillors to represent their views compared to those aged 55+ (11%).</p>
	<p>Respondents with a long standing health problem or disability were more likely to say they are unsure whether there should be town councillors to represent their views than those without a health problem (16% compared to 12%).</p>

	<p>Respondents from a white background (50%) were significantly <b>more</b> likely to disagree that there should be town councillors to represent their views. This compares to 39% of those from a BME background.</p> <p>Also, respondents from a BME background are significantly more likely to be unsure about the current governance arrangements (21%) compared to those from a white background (12%).</p>
	<p>Respondents living in Rochester West (41%) are significantly more likely than respondents from Rochester East (34%) and Rochester South and Horsted (30%) to agree that there should be town councillors to represent their views.</p> <p>Respondents in Rochester East (16%) are more likely to be unsure about the current governance arrangements than respondents in Rochester South and Horsted (11%) and Rochester West (12%).</p> <p>Respondents living in polling districts RRW1 (55%) and RRW5 (52%) are more likely to agree than most other polling districts such as RRE3 (24%) and RRS4 (28%).</p> <p>Respondents in RRS4 (65%), RRW3 (63%) and RRE3 (59%) are more likely to disagree than most polling district areas such as RRW5 (39%) and RRW1 (38%).</p> <p>In addition, respondents from LSOA Medway 014C (55%) and Medway 017B (53%) are significantly more likely to agree that there should be town councillors to represent their views. This compares to Medway 017C (22%), Medway 024A, Medway 026D (both 23%) and Medway 024C (24%).</p> <p>Respondents in Medway 024A (60%), Medway 024C (63%), Medway 026D (72%) and Medway 033B (68%) are more likely to disagree than most other areas such as Medway 014B (47%), Medway 014C (37%), Medway 014D (41%) and Medway 017D (47%).</p>

All respondents were asked to explain why they agreed that there should be town councillors to represent their views. Table 4 overleaf shows the key themes that emerged from those who said they '**agreed**'. In total, there were 555 valid responses (excluding no comments, not interested or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt that having town councillors would increase the political representation for the Rochester area (523 mentions).

**Table 4: Reasons for agreeing with the need for town councillors to represent their views**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Improved representation for Rochester	523
Other (e.g. greater budget & planning capacity etc.)	32
<i>No comment/Not interested/comments not relevant to question (e.g. No need for increased layers, costly etc.)</i>	71

Illustrative quotes for the three most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

#### Improved representation for Rochester:

I feel that councillors representing Rochester's interests would make the necessary improvements to make Rochester a place to be proud of and a pleasure to visit - which it deserves.

Rochester requires more councillors to represent its community, better run increased funding, investment in more jobs, housing etc. which currently is lost within Medway.

I feel that the size of Rochester justifies having its voice heard instead of lost within the Medway group.

Town councillors are more closely aligned to the needs of the 'town' and will be in a better position to champion the requirements of the smaller area.

All respondents were asked to explain why they disagreed with having town councillors to represent their views. Table 5 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who said they '**disagreed**'. In total, there were 1,105 valid responses (excluding no comments or comments not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt that increasing the number of town councillors would increase bureaucracy and the duplication of roles (370 mentions). This was followed by 290 respondents stating they felt it would be too costly/expensive or an unnecessary expense for the community.

**Table 5: Reasons for disagreeing with the need for town councillors to represent their views**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Bureaucracy and duplication of roles	370
Too expensive/costly/unnecessary expense	290
Unable to recognise the benefits	193
Happy with the way things are	183
Money should be spent on services	47

<i>No comment/Not interested/comments not relevant to question (e.g. will increase representation for Rochester etc.)</i>	37
Other (e.g. Lack of understanding with proposal and issues with borough as a whole)	22

Illustrative quotes for the three most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

#### **Bureaucracy and duplication of roles:**

Unnecessary - duplication of current roles and responsibilities.

They will more or less be duplicating the decisions made by existing councillors.

I don't think this is the right time - with reduced budgets to be considering other layers of management. I would prefer money to go into social care.

#### **Too costly/expensive and an unnecessary expense:**

Too costly. It would just be another talking shop. Its services would be too limited & we would be paying for them twice!

If this is going to put an additional cost on residents, I don't want it. Our councillors are already representing us.

#### **Unable to recognise the benefits:**

In line with parish councils those persons are not 'real' councillors. They don't in effect have any powers. All they can do is refer complaints to Medway Council to deal with as the 'local authority'; it's just another layer to get past, delaying the inevitable.

Having read the attached leaflet there is no additional benefit gained by setting up a town council. Just additional costs.

Table 6 overleaf shows the key themes that emerged from those who responded to this question with 'Don't Know'. In total, there were 99 comments provided. The most common reason for providing this response was

because they were unable to comment (33 mentions), namely due to the lack of information provided or lack of awareness about the current arrangements. 41 respondents also provided 'other' responses which covered more general points such as issues within the local area and 25 people felt unsure of the benefits.

**Table 6: Reasons for saying 'Don't know' to whether there should be town councillors**

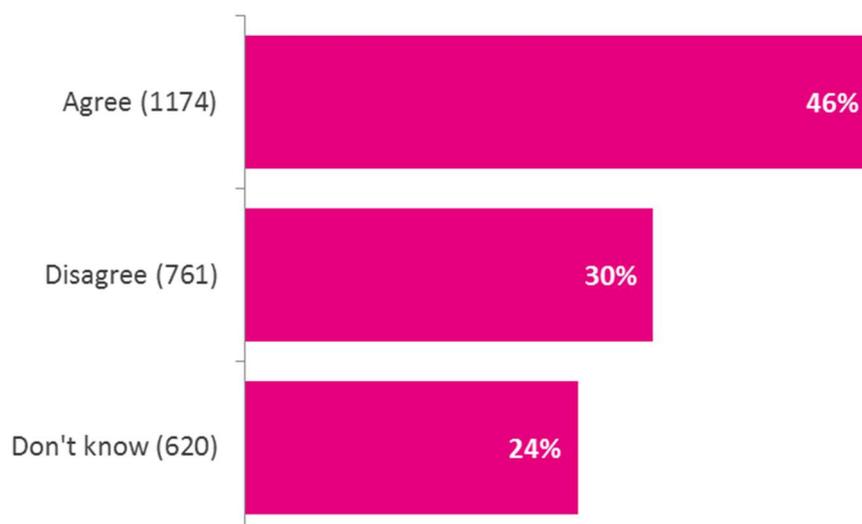
Key Themes	Number of mentions
Unable to comment (e.g. unaware of existing arrangements)	33
Not sure of benefits	25
Other (e.g. don't need extra tier of government and against proposals)	41

### 3. Agreement with the proposed boundary

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposed boundary for the town council. Nearly half of respondents (46%) agreed and 30% disagreed with the proposed boundary. Around a quarter (24%) stated they did not know.

**Figure 3: Agreement with the proposed boundary**

*Percentage of respondents- base size 2,555*



Sub-group analysis shows that there are some significant differences in agreement between certain demographic groups:

	<p>Breakdown by age shows that respondents aged 17 to 54 (52%) were more likely to agree with the proposed boundary for the town council. This compares to 43% of respondents aged 55+.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a long standing health problem or disability were more likely to agree with the proposed boundaries than those without a health problem (49% compared to 44%).</p> <p>Respondents with a long standing health problem or disability were more likely to say they didn't know compared to those without a health problem (28% compared to 22%).</p>
	<p>Respondents living in Rochester West (26%) were significantly less likely than respondents from River (37%), Rochester East (33%) and Rochester South and Horsted (32%) to disagree with the proposed boundary.</p> <p>Respondents living in polling district RRE2 (54%) and RRW5 (53%), are significantly more likely to agree with the proposed boundary for the town council. This compares to 36% of respondents from RRE3, 39% of respondents from RRW3, 40% from RRS2, 43% from RRW2 and 45% from RRS4.</p> <p>In addition, respondents from LSOA Medway 017B (64%) are significantly more likely to agree with the proposed boundary for the town council. This compares to Medway 017A (36%), Medway 033B (35%) and Medway 024A (31%).</p>

All respondents were asked to explain why they agreed with the proposed boundary for the town council. Table 7 overleaf shows the key themes that emerged from those who said they **'agreed'**. In total, there were 887 valid responses (excluding no comments or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt the boundary covered the correct area (i.e. Rochester).

**Table 7: Reasons for agreeing with the proposed boundary for the town council**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Boundary covers the correct area/covers Rochester	805
Other	41
Distinctive and efficient to manage area	34
Better representation	4
Don't need more expenses/Waste of money	3
<i>No comment/comments not relevant to question (e.g. Don't think it covers the right area/too big/small etc.)</i>	117

Illustrative quotes for the most frequently cited reason are provided below:

**Boundary covers the correct area/covers Rochester:**

I agree with the boundary. My property lies within its boundary. We hope to have more of a say as to the proposals put forward with Rochester Town Councillors acting on our behalf.

It appears to cover the Rochester boundary well.

I agree because it covers the area that I have always understood to be 'Rochester'.

Respondents who said they disagreed with the proposed boundary for the town council were asked to explain why they did not agree. Table 8 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who said they '**disagreed**'. In total, there were 708 valid responses (excluding no comments or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt there was no need for new boundaries or a town council (444 mentions). This is followed by 228 respondents stating that the boundary does not cover the correct area (too big or too small).

**Table 8: Reasons for disagreeing with the proposed boundary for the town council**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Don't need new boundaries or a town council	444
Does not cover the right area (i.e. too big or too small)	228
Don't need more expenses/Waste of money	23
Other	13
<i>No comment/comments not relevant to question (e.g. Boundary covers the correct area)</i>	52

Illustrative quotes for the two most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**No need for new boundaries or a town council:**

Boundaries should not be altered  
I am happy as they are.

I cannot see need for town council so  
therefore proposed boundary makes no  
sense!

As I do not support the proposal of having a  
town council I do not agree with the proposed  
boundary.

**Does not cover the right area:**

The boundary should go straight down City  
Way and on the other side, to the M2.

Boundaries should be reset by using M2  
bridge & the A229 as extent of proposed new

The boundary should be re-determined & use the  
M2 bridge & the B2097 / St Williams Way as the  
limits of the proposed new parish.

It's too big - a "town" council that includes  
rural areas isn't very practical. I would prefer  
it to be just for the town's central area.

Table 9 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who responded to this question with 'Don't Know'. In total, there were 66 comments provided (excluding no comment etc.). The most common reason for providing this response was they had queries with the proposed boundary (54 mentions). 118 people also felt unable to comment; again this could be due to a lack of understanding/ awareness or they don't know enough about the proposals to make an informed response.

**Table 9: Reasons for saying 'Don't know' with regard to the proposed boundary for the town council**

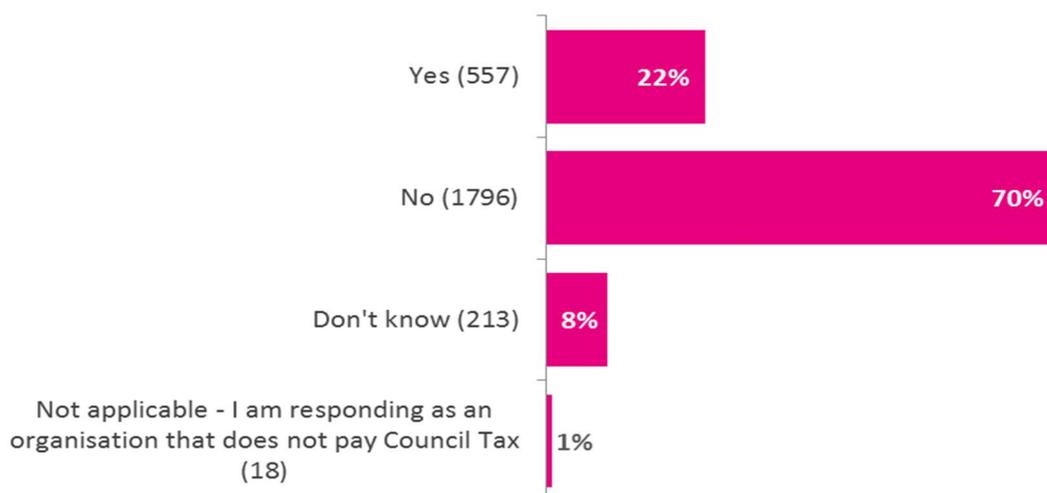
Key Themes	Number of mentions
Boundary queries (e.g. Don't think it covers right area/Too big or too small)	54
Other	12
<i>No comment/comments not relevant to question (e.g. Boundary covers the correct area, does not support town council proposal)</i>	118

## 4. Willingness to pay an extra charge (“precept”)

Respondents were asked whether they would be willing to pay an additional charge (called a “precept”) on top of their existing Council Tax Bill to cover the running costs and local investment of the proposed town council. Figure 3 below shows that seven out of ten (70%) respondents would not, and less than a quarter (22%) would be willing. A further one in ten said they didn’t know (9%) or that it was not applicable to them as they are responding as an organisation which does not pay council tax.

**Figure 3: Willingness to pay a “precept”**

Percentage of respondents- base size 2,584



Sub-group analysis shows that there are some significant differences in satisfaction between certain demographic groups:

	<p>Males were significantly more likely than females to be willing to pay a ‘precept’ (24% compared to 20% for females).</p>
	<p>Respondents without a long standing health problem or disability were more likely to be willing to pay a “precept” than those with a health problem (23% compared to 19%).</p> <p>Respondents with a long standing health problem or disability were more likely to say they didn’t know than those without a health problem (11% compared to 8%).</p>



Respondents living in Rochester West (27%) are significantly more likely than respondents from Rochester East (20%) and Rochester South and Horsted (15%) to be willing to pay a “precept”.

Respondents living in Rochester South and Horsted (79%) are significantly more likely than respondents from River (67%), Rochester East (70%) and Rochester West (64%) to be unwilling to pay a “precept”.

Respondents living in polling districts RRW1, RRW5 (both 35%) and RRE2 (31%) are more likely than most other polling districts to be willing to pay a precept, including: RRW3 (10%), RRE3 (12%), RRS2 (14%) and RRS4 (15%).

Respondents from LSOA Medway 017B (41%), Medway 014C (36%) and Medway 014D (33%) are significantly more likely to be willing to pay a “precept”. This compares to Medway 026B (4%), Medway 024C (7%) and Medway 017C (8%).

In addition, respondents from Medway 024C (82%) and Medway 026D (85%) were more likely than Medway 014C (50%), Medway 017B (55%), Medway 014D (58%), Medway 014B (61%), Medway 015D (67%) and Medway 017D (68%) to be willing to pay a “precept”.

Respondents were asked to explain why they said they would be willing to pay an additional charge (called a “precept”) on top of their existing council tax, to cover the running costs and local investment of the proposed town council. Table 10 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who said ‘Yes’. In total, there were 471 valid responses (excluding no comments or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common response was that respondents felt the cost was worth it if the charge was manageable (240 mentions). 199 respondents also mentioned that the additional charge would be worth it if local issues received more funding and were addressed (199 mentions).

**Table 10: Reasons for being willing to pay an additional charge**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Cost is worth it/agree to pay a manageable charge	240
Worth it if local issues receive more funding and are addressed	199
Other	32
No comment or response not relevant to the question (e.g. pay enough council tax already, proposal not needed etc.)	36

Illustrative quotes for the most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**Cost is worth it/agree to pay a manageable charge:**

I believe Rochester should be independent of 'Medway Council' - therefore have its council tax paid to Rochester ... Not Medway. I know this can't happen so I am willing to pay a little extra for a Rochester Council.

A modest precept would generate a useful sum of money to do things within the area.

I would happily pay extra Council Tax to ensure that Rochester is better governed.

**Worth it if local issues receive more funding and are addressed:**

If the area is improved and facilities improved/ updated then it will be worth the investment. You cannot keep doing more with less!

A small amount extra would be acceptable, if it all goes to improving all the current problems with Rochester.

Funding needs to be provided to enhance local area. Happy to pay slightly more for better decisions and services in the area.

A small extra charge would hand local residents greater authority and ownership of local services.

Table 11 overleaf shows the key themes that emerged from those who said they were **'not willing'** to pay an additional charge on top of their existing Council tax bill. In total, there were 1,717 valid responses (excluding no comments or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common theme was that respondents felt they were paying enough Council tax already or they couldn't afford to pay any more. This is followed by 537 respondents mentioning that the proposal was not needed or they were happy with the way things were currently.

Table 11: Reasons for being unwilling to pay an additional charge

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Pay enough already/can't afford to pay more	951
Proposal not needed/ happy with how things are currently	537
Council provided services have reduced in quality and quantity/should be spent on existing services	90
Council tax covers /should cover everything already	73
Other (e.g. money needs to be managed better, unsure how extra money will be used)	39
Wouldn't change anything	27
<i>No comment or response not relevant to the question (e.g. pay enough council tax already, proposal not needed etc.)</i>	53

Illustrative quotes for the two most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**Pay enough already/can't afford to pay more:**

No pay rise in the past 5 years these extra costs would put a lot of pressure on already overburdened payments of council tax, electricity, gas etc.

Council tax is high enough for everybody specially pensioners not on benefits. Why pay more for extra committees and premises and expenses.

The council tax bill is already really expensive and to have to pay more for an unnecessary service would be insulting.

I do not want to pay any more money to any council then I already do.

**Proposal not needed/ happy with how things are currently:**

With the town council having limited scope of power and the final decisions resting with Medway Council it seems like we will be paying double the money to double up the bureaucracy without any obvious advantage!

I don't believe that the extra money would actually show any benefit or improvement in Rochester.

I see no good reason why I should pay more council tax for services I am currently happy with.

Table 12 below shows the key themes that emerged from those who responded to this question with 'don't know'. In total, there were 113 comments provided. The most common reason for providing this response was they had queries about the charges/benefits (57 mentions). 18 people also felt unable to comment; again this could be due to a lack of awareness or that they don't know enough about the proposals to make an informed response.

**Table 12: Reasons for saying 'Don't know' to paying additional charges**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Query about charge / benefits	57
Other (e.g. like more information on how the cost will be calculated)	19
Pay enough already/can't afford to pay more	9
Cost is worth it/Agree to pay a manageable charge	9
Do not support town council proposal	1
<i>No comment or response not relevant to the question (e.g. don't pay council tax etc.)</i>	18

## 5. Preferred option for future governance arrangements

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred option for future governance arrangements for the Rochester area. Figure 4 below shows that Option A (keep the current community governance arrangements) was the preferred option with nearly two thirds (65%) of respondents selecting this. Around a third (35%) of respondents selected Option B (change the current community governance arrangements to create a town council in Rochester).

**Figure 4: Preferred option for future**

*Percentage of respondents- base size 2,518*



Sub-group analysis shows that there are some significant differences in satisfaction between certain demographic groups:



**Option A:**

Respondents living in Rochester South and Horsted (76%) are significantly more likely to select **Option A**. This compares to 60% living in River or Rochester West and 65% living in Rochester East.

Respondents living in polling districts RRW3 (77%), RRS4 (76%), RRS2 (75%) and RRE3 (74%) are more likely to agree with **option A** compared to RRW5 (51%) and RRW1(45%).

In addition, respondents from LSOA Medway 026D (79%), Medway 024C (78%), Medway 026A, Medway 026B and Medway 017C (all 75%) were significantly more likely to select option A. This compares to around 50% of respondents from LSOA Medway 014D (51%), Medway 017B (50%) and Medway 014C (49%).

<p><b>Option B:</b></p> <p>A significant proportion of respondents living in Rochester West and River wards (both 40%) supported <b>Option B</b>. This compares to only 24% living in Rochester South and Horsted.</p> <p>Respondents living in polling districts RRW1 (55%) are significantly more likely to prefer <b>option B</b>. This compares to around a quarter of respondents in RRW3 (23%), RRS4 (24%), RRS2 (25%) and RRE3 (26%).</p> <p>In addition, a significant proportion of respondents from LSOA Medway 014C (51%), Medway 014D (51%) and Medway 017B (50%), selected <b>option B</b>. This compares to around a quarter of respondents living in LSOA Medway 017C, Medway 026A, Medway 026B (all 25%), Medway 033B (23%), Medway 024C (22%) and Medway 026D (21%).</p>
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All respondents were asked to explain why they had chosen their preferred option. Table 13 shows the key themes that emerged from those who preferred 'Option A'. In total, there were 1,169 valid responses (excluding no comments or where comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common response was that residents felt there was no need to make any changes as they were happy with the current arrangements (552 mentions). This was followed by 230 respondents stating the alternative option was too expensive or they did not want to pay any more Council tax. 289 respondents were also unable to provide a comment, did not know or the response was not relevant to the question. This could be due to the fact that respondents did not feel they had enough information to make a choice.

**Table 13: Reasons for preferring option A**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
No need to change/current arrangements work / don't want town council	552
Don't want to pay extra/too expensive	230
Would be duplicating jobs / creating bureaucracy	172
Don't think it will make a difference/ no benefit/waste of money	155
Make existing process more effective / better service	36
Other (e.g. issues in local area etc.)	24
No comment or response not relevant to the question (e.g. pay enough council tax already, proposal not needed etc.), don't know etc.	289

Illustrative quotes for the most frequently cited reasons are provided overleaf:

**No changes needed/ current arrangements work:**

My needs are fully met by the current arrangements. The streets are clean, litter is collected on time, local amenities are very good, there is sufficient green space, and there are good options for recreation (tennis courts, gym, areas for walking). We have a range of GP surgeries to choose from and there is a good selection of schools.

The current arrangements are sufficient and meet my needs & that of those I know who live in the area.

The current arrangements are on the whole working for me. We do not need another tier of representation I do not believe that this is required.

**Don't want to pay any extra/too expensive:**

Existing arrangements are satisfactory; a change would result in additional costs which are unaffordable.

We do not want the extra expense of paying for an unnecessary Town Council.

This is just another level of bureaucracy where the cost will be funded by local council taxpayers.

I disagree because it will soon cost a lot more in taxes for something we don't want or need.

Table 14 below shows the key themes that emerged from those said that they preferred 'Option B'. In total, there were 636 valid responses (excluding no comments or the comments are not relevant to the question asked). The most common response was that changing the current community governance arrangements would provide more local representation for the Rochester area (488 mentions).

**Table 14: Reasons preferring option B**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
More local representation for Rochester	488
Would benefit the local area / help it to regain city status	105
Other (e.g. like the Rochester area)	36
Make existing process more effective / better service	7
<i>No comment or response not relevant to the question (e.g. pay enough council tax already, proposal not needed etc.), don't know etc.</i>	123

Illustrative quotes for the most frequently cited reasons are provided below:

**More local representation for Rochester:**

We would have more "local on the doorstep" representation as High Street residents.

Rochester needs its own individual representation, not just as part of the Medway towns.

Rochester differs very much from the rest of Medway - this needs to be represented politically.

I think having a town council on a smaller scale will enable us to focus on the things affecting us on a day to day basis.

**Would benefit the local area/help it regain its 'City' status:**

I think having a town council would benefit local people and could help to improve the area as having more councillors would give the town more say and enable Rochester to raise money for its own initiatives.

I feel a town council could be of benefit for Rochester. It would be useful if we could get back the City Status that was foolishly lost when we became a Unitary Authority.

Rochester deserves particular attention as a historic city. Having a town council to represent it would also give us the opportunity to regain city status, lost as a result of an apparent administrative error!

## 6. Any other comments relating to the proposals

All respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comments which the Council may wish to consider before making a final decision. 1,076 valid comments were provided. The key themes are presented in Table 15 below.

**Table 15: Key themes from 'any other comments'**

Key Themes	Number of mentions
Leave it as it is/Happy with current arrangement/Change not worth it	166
Cost too high for the community	153
Listen to people's needs/better communication/involve people in the decision process	98
Other (e.g. suggestions for how town council should be run)	95
Make existing services more effective/stop cutting services	89
Local issues need addressing	87
Want Rochester City Status back	79
Proposal / consultation is a waste of money / only 7.6% wanted it/issues with survey	61
Should nurture Rochester	55
Don't need another tier of government / don't need more councillors	44
Generally good idea to create town council	39
Councillors should be accessible/transparent/ honest/representative etc.	37
More information needed	24
Volunteer councillors/make use of resident groups already present in the area	22
Don't want changes to be made	20
Issue with boundary	7
<i>No comment/ don't know</i>	372

## Summary of findings

Results from the consultation showed a greater level of support for keeping the current governance arrangements as they are, rather than introduce any changes, with 65% in support of Option A (keeping the current community governance arrangements) and 55% saying they were happy with the current arrangements for decision making. Around a third (35%) of respondents supports Option B – to change the current governance arrangements to create a town council.

The common themes throughout the consultation for keeping arrangements as they are, are that respondents feel things are working well currently, they don't want an increase in bureaucracy, feel it is too expensive a price to pay or are generally happy with the services that they currently receive. Of all respondents, the following groups were generally more in favour of keeping the current arrangements: the over 55 age group, those living in the Rochester South and Horsted ward, those living in polling areas RRW3, RRS2, RRS4 or RRE3 or those living in LSOA areas Medway 017C, 024A, 024C, 026B, 026D or 033B.

A common theme for those who support a change in governance is that there will be more local representation and therefore more local issues addressed as a result. The following groups were generally more in favour of a change than others: the 17-55 age group, those living in the Rochester West ward, those living in polling areas RRW1, RRW5 or those living in LSOA areas Medway 017B or 014C.

# Appendices



## **Appendix A: Survey**

## **Appendix B: Respondent Profile**

## Appendix A: Survey

Please enter your Unique Survey Reference Number, this can be found on the front cover of the survey sent to you:-



### Rochester Community Governance Review

#### Introduction

A valid petition, signed by 7.6% of local people, has been submitted to Medway Council requesting that a Community Governance Review (CGR) be undertaken to consider the establishment of a Town Council for Rochester. As the Principal Council in the area, Medway Council is obliged to conduct a CGR in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Review) Order 2015).

This survey gives you the opportunity to give your opinion on whether a town council should be created for Rochester.

#### Where can I find out more information?

Information about the proposals can be found in the leaflet sent to you with your paper survey. Information is also available online on the Medway Council website.

#### Completing the survey

This survey runs from **Wednesday 2 August 2017 to 5pm on Monday 30 October 2017**. Only surveys received back during this period will be considered.

To access this survey you will need to enter your unique survey reference number, this can be found on the front cover of the paper survey sent to you.

#### How we will use your information

We are asking you to provide your name and full address because we need to ensure we take into account the views of electors directly affected by the proposals and organisations within the area. Responses without a completed name and full address will not be accepted. Your information will be used to determine if you are registered to vote in, you live in or are an organisation in the affected area. Your information will also be used as part of quality assurance checks e.g. that multiple responses have not been received from the same individual. Address information will be used for analysis purposes and will be used to derive further information such as ward and may be mapped to a postcode level. No responses will be attributed to individual respondents and aggregated data will be anonymised where there are low numbers.

By submitting this survey with a completed name and address you are consenting to your information being used as stated above. Your responses will be held separately from your name and address and will only be linked to allow the activity described above.

Responses from individuals or organisations outside of the affected area will not be considered as part of this review.

Your personal data will be processed in accordance with Medway Council's Data Protection Notice.

### Unique Survey Reference Number

If you do not have a unique survey reference number please email [Rochesterreview@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Rochesterreview@medway.gov.uk) giving your name and address or organisation name and address. If you are registered to vote or are an organisation within the area you will be issued with a new unique survey reference number.

### Your name and address

**Q1** Please provide your name and full address - responses without a completed name and full address will not be accepted.

Name (First name and surname)	<input type="text"/>
Organisation Name (if applicable)	<input type="text"/>
Address Line 1	<input type="text"/>
Address Line 2	<input type="text"/>
Town	<input type="text"/>
County (Optional)	<input type="text"/>
Postcode	<input type="text"/>

### Community Governance Review

**Q2** Thinking about the existing Medway Council processes, community groups, trusts, resident and tenant associations in your local area, are you happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects you and your local area?

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

- Q3 Please explain why you are happy / unhappy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects you and your local area

#### Community Governance Review

- Q4 There are currently nine Medway ward councillors representing people living in the proposed town council area. Do you agree or disagree that there should also be town councillors to represent your views?

- Agree  
 Disagree  
 Don't know

- Q5 Please explain why you agree or disagree that there should also be town councillors to represent your views

#### Community Governance Review

- Q6 Do you agree with the proposed boundary for the town council? The area outlined by the black boundary shown in the map.

- Agree  
 Disagree  
 Don't know

- Q7 Please explain why you agree or disagree with the proposed boundary for the town council

#### Community Governance Review

Q8 Would you be willing to pay an additional charge (called a “precept”), on top of your existing Council Tax bill, to cover the running costs and local investment of the proposed town council?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Not applicable - I am responding as an organisation that does not pay Council Tax

Q9 Please explain why you agree or disagree that you would be willing to pay an additional charge (precept) on top of your existing Council Tax bill

### Community Governance Review

Q10 Please indicate your preferred option for the future governance arrangements in the Rochester area (as indicated on the map)

- Option A – keep the current community governance arrangements
- Option B – change the current community governance arrangements to create a town council in Rochester

Q11 Please explain why you have chosen your preferred option

Q12 Is there anything else we should consider about community governance in Rochester before making a final decision?

DQ12 **IMPORT:** Is there anything else we should consider about community governance in Rochester before making a final decision?

### About you / Your organisation

Q13 Are you responding as

- An individual  
 An organisation

### About you

#### An individual

We collect the following information to help us better understand the communities that we serve so that services and policies can be delivered to meet the needs of everybody. Please feel free to leave questions that you do not wish to answer. All of the information gathered in this questionnaire is confidential.

Q14 Sex - are you?

- Female                       Male                       I prefer not to say

Q15 How old are you?

- 17 to 24                       45 to 54                       65 to 74  
 25 to 34                       55 to 59                       75 and over  
 35 to 44                       60 to 64                       I prefer not to say

Q16 Do you have a long-standing health problem or disability? Long-standing means anything that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes  
 No  
 I prefer not to say

**Q17 If yes, what is the nature of your health problem or disability?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health diagnosis    | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing impairment  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sight impairment    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other               |

If other, please specify below

**Q18 What is your ethnic group?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British | <input type="radio"/> Black / Black British - Caribbean                                  |
| <input type="radio"/> White - Irish   | <input type="radio"/> Any other Black African/Caribbean background, please specify below |
| <input type="radio"/> White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller                              | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British - Indian                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Any other White background, please specify below              | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British - Pakistani                                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - White and Black Caribbean                             | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi                                |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - White and Black African                               | <input type="radio"/> Asian / Asian British - Chinese                                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - White and Asian                                       | <input type="radio"/> Any other Asian background, please specify below                   |
| <input type="radio"/> Any other Mixed/multi ethnic background, please specify below | <input type="radio"/> Other - Arab   |
| <input type="radio"/> Black / Black British - African                               | <input type="radio"/> Any other ethnic group, please specify below                       |
|   | <input type="radio"/> I prefer not to say  |

If other, please specify below

Thank you for taking the time to give your views about Community Governance in Rochester.

All surveys should be completed by **5pm on 30 October 2017**

Completed surveys will be kept until 31 October 2022 and will then be destroyed.

Your personal data will be processed in accordance with Medway Council's Data Protection Notice.

**Please press submit to send us your views**  
**After pressing submit you will be taken back to the Rochester CGR pages on the Medway Council website.**

Metho Data Collection Method - Added by M-E-L

- d
- Postal
- Online

## Appendix B: Respondent Profile

Gender	Number of responses	Percentage
Male	1269	50%
Female	1189	47%
Prefer not to say	91	4%

Age	Number of responses	Percentage
17 to 54	998	41%
55 and over	1424	59%

Long term health condition	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	572	23%
No	1681	67%
Prefer not to say	274	11%

Ethnicity	Number of responses	Percentage
White	2162	93%
BME	152	7%

Ward	No of electors consulted	Number of responses	Percentage of electors responded	Percentage of all respondents
River	911	99	11%	4
Rochester East	7,912	704	9%	27
Rochester South and Horsted	5,198	687	13%	26
Rochester West	8,064	1,104	14%	43

Polling district	Number of responses	Percentage
RR3	99	4%
RRE1	115	4%
RRE2	238	9%
RRE3	351	14%
RRS1	13	1%
RRS2	274	11%
RRS4	400	15%
RRW1	118	5%
RRW2	305	12%
RRW3	145	6%
RRW4	146	6%
RRW5	390	15%

	Number of responses	Percentage
Medway 014A	106	4%
Medway 014B	149	6%
Medway 014C	268	10%
Medway 014D	235	9%
Medway 015D	99	4%
Medway 017A	148	6%
Medway 017B	101	4%
Medway 017C	111	4%
Medway 017D	122	5%
Medway 021D	-	-
Medway 024A	116	4%
Medway 024B	147	6%
Medway 024C	101	4%
Medway 024D	204	8%
Medway 026A	223	9%
Medway 026B	92	4%

Medway 026C	118	5%
Medway 026D	132	5%
Medway 033A	-	-
Medway 033B	112	4%

Status	Number of responses	Percentage
An individual	2564	99 %
An organisation	24	1%

\* Please note that counts of fewer than ten responses are suppressed and replaced with '-'.

## Survey questions by ward

**Question 1: Thinking about the existing Medway Council processes, community groups, trusts, resident and tenant associations in your local area, are you happy with the current arrangements for decision making that affects you and your local area?**

Response/ward	River	Rochester East	Rochester South and Horsted	Rochester West
Yes	55%	52%	64%	51%
No	34%	28%	21%	32%
Don't know	11%	21%	15%	17%

**Question 2: There are currently nine Medway ward councillors representing people living in the proposed town council area. Do you agree or disagree that there should also be town councillors to represent your views?**

Response/ward	River	Rochester East	Rochester South and Horsted	Rochester West
Agree	41%	34%	30%	41%
Disagree	51%	50%	59%	47%
Don't know	8%	16%	11%	12%

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed boundary for the town council? The area outlined by the black**

Response/ward	River	Rochester East	Rochester South and Horsted	Rochester West
Agree	45%	45%	44%	48%
Disagree	37%	33%	32%	26%
Don't know	18%	22%	24%	26%

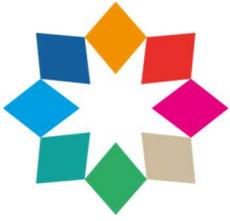
**boundary shown in the map.**

**Question 4: Would you be willing to pay an additional charge (called a “precept”), on top of your existing Council Tax bill, to cover the running costs and local investment of the proposed town council?**

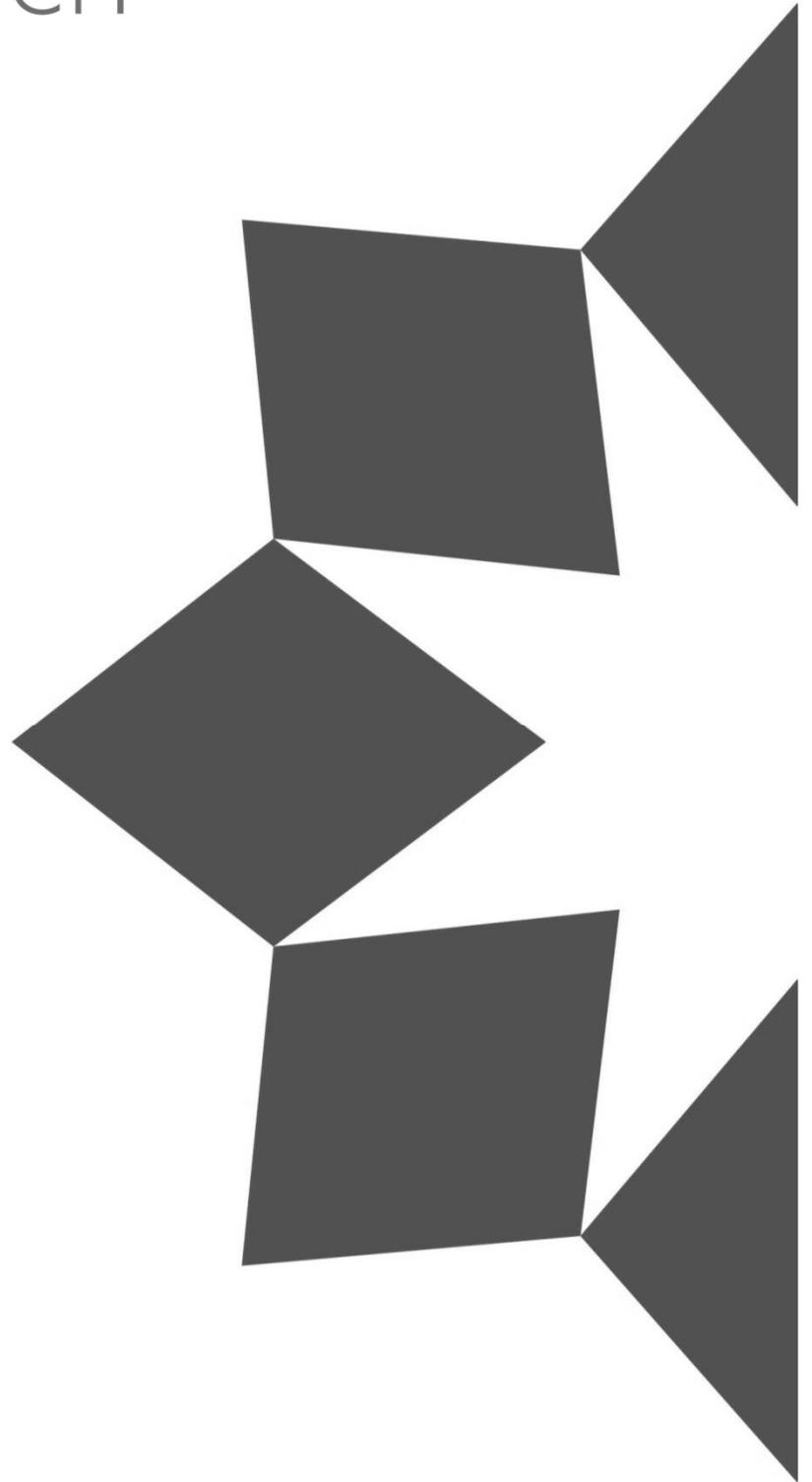
Response/ward	River	Rochester East	Rochester South and Horsted	Rochester West
Yes	24%	20%	15%	27%
No	67%	70%	79%	64%
Don't know	7%	9%	6%	9%
Not applicable - I am responding as an organisation that does not pay Council Tax	2%	1%	1%	1%

**Question 5: Please indicate your preferred option for the future governance arrangements in the Rochester area (as indicated on the map)?**

Response/ward	River	Rochester East	Rochester South and Horsted	Rochester West
Option A – <u>keep</u> the current community governance arrangements	60%	65%	76%	60%
Option B – <u>change</u> the current community governance arrangements to create a town council in Rochester	40%	35%	24%	40%



m.e.l  
research

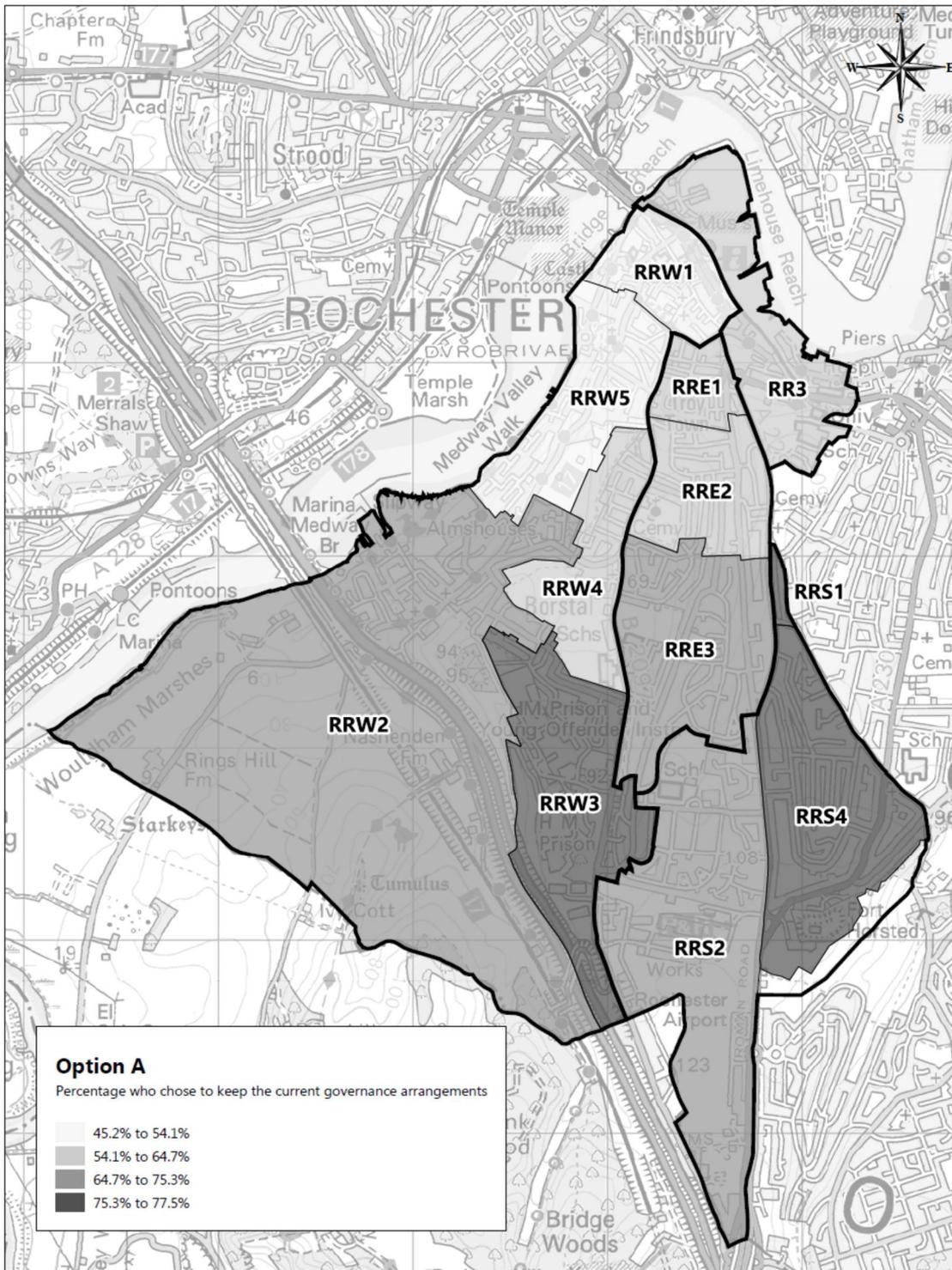


Community Governance Review - notes on deliberations of working group of evidence	
	<b>Evidence collected</b> Existing ward boundaries since 2003 so well-known and easily identifiable See list of groups below
1	<p><b>Are the existing community governance arrangements effective &amp; convenient?</b></p> <p>Association of Men of Kent &amp; Kentish Men and Fair Maids of Kent Medway Branch Borstal Social Club Chatham Historical Society Chatham Synagogue Castle Trust City of Rochester Society Cornerstone City Church Dickens Fellowship Rochester Pickwick Club Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association East Kent Freemasonry (9 lodges) Families, friends and Travellers Friends of The Vines Friends of Copperfields Friends of Horsted Park Friends of Eastgate House Friends of Medway Libraries Friends of Rochester Cathedral Friends of the Guildhall Museums Friends of the Huguenot Museum Friends of The Wisdom Hospice</p>
2	<p><b>How are the existing community governance arrangements in terms of:</b></p> <p>Historic Rochester Residents Association Kent Autistic Trust Kent Family History Society Medway Afro Caribbean Association Medway Aircraft Appreciation Society Medway and Swale Boating Association Medway Inter Faith Action Forum Medway Local Access Forum Medway Neighbourhood Watch Association Medway Pensioners Forum Medway Towns Rowing Club Medway Towns Gurudwara Sabha Medway Urban Parks and Green Space Forum Medway Voluntary Action Moat Housing Group Motorcycle Action Group New Road PACT Rochester Baptist Church Rochester Business Association Rochester Cathedral Rochester Cathedral Trust</p>
a	<p>fulfilling own potential and overcoming difficulties including community conflict, extremism, deprivation and disadvantage</p> <p>St Peter's parish centre in the Deace hosts many groups - a toddler group, mental health support group, dementia cafe, carers' support group, bereavement support group and a Saturday breakfast club every summer. The satellite St Matthews hall at St Peter's hosts playgroup and a youth group. There are two scout groups in Rochester East ward who between them provide meaningful activity for 300 children and young people and help them to fund raise as well as encouraging families to join. The Sikh temple committee works on projects and initiatives that benefit constituents, and the Rochester east ward Councillors have good links with the Afghan community who look over the temple. All Saints Community Project run range of groups and provide range of facilities from depression and anxiety support groups, after school care, computer training and improvements to local area as well as a direction service to other resources available New Road PACT has focussed on a broad range of issues from prostitution and drug and alcohol abuse, as well as on cleanliness and hygiene, dog fouling and cycling on pavements. They have brought to the attention of the authorities other issues such as unsightly premises, obstruction of roads and footpaths, poor signage. Meetings are well attended because residents know their concerns will be heard and addressed. Money has been made available from the EU to revitalise the southern part of the ward and the PACT ensures that the voice of local people is heard and that local people are involved in how this money is used ABC are a registered charity based in Borstal. Rochester set up in 1995 in reaction to the need for services to support young families. The community centre delivers many activities weekly including toddler groups, baby massage training, and cooking courses. Weekly health visitor sessions provide privacy for parents/carers and computer equipment is available with help or support and free internet access and printer/scanning facilities.</p>
b	<p>contributing to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and built environment as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities e.g. neighbourhood renewal</p> <p>Catalpa Tree</p>
c	<p>successfully "place-shaping" through offering a sense of place of local identity for all residents</p> <p>Jacksons Fields Recreation Ground Skate Park Park &amp; Ride open space, Curtis Way Medway Council offers 8 days of Festivals centred on attractions in Rochester, as well as 17½ days of other events which celebrate Rochester as a place steeped in history and a cultural and heritage site. Attractions immediately within the proposed Town Council area include Rochester Castle, Rochester Cathedral, Huguenot Museum, Guildhall Museum, Open Top Bus, The Six Pool Travellers, Restoration House. The Festivals, events and attractions contribute to the 1,013,600 visitors to the area over the last 3 years.</p>

	<p><b>Evidence collected</b></p> <p>Waste inspections monitor the standard of cleansing (removal of litter) carried out by the Council's Contractor. Inspections in 2016-17 of over 200 locations in the wards of Rochester East, Rochester West, Rochester South &amp; Horsted and River found that 48% were found to be predominately free of litter and refuse apart from some small items, 51% were found to be predominately free of litter and refuse apart from some small items and only 1% were found to have widespread distribution of litter and/or refuse with minor accumulations.</p> <p>Analysis of Citizen's Panel responses from Rochester residents show that between August 2013 and May 2017, taking all surveys into consideration Rochester has a similar perception of the council compared with other Medway areas and the margin of error found with Rochester's results mean that differences are indicative. In terms of the extent to which Citizen Panel members felt satisfied or dissatisfied with the way Medway Council runs it's services, for all respondents, the satisfaction level was between 60% and 80% over the 4 year period. Generally satisfaction levels amongst Rochester residents to the Panel were higher, at between 70% and 80%. Asked whether they thought Medway council provides value for money, those respondents who agreed ranged between 45% and 65% over the period of time and residents in Rochester on the Panel generally followed the same trend. When asked if they thought Medway Council provide high quality services for people, the general trend over the 4 year period across the Panel was for those who agree representing between 50% and 60% of respondents, with those in Rochester following the same trend. Between July 2014 and August 2016 Rochester and other Medway residents had very similar rates of residents thinking the council makes the local area a better place to live. Between August 2013 and early 2015 the percentage of Rochester residents who felt they could influence decisions matched other Medway areas. Between July 2015 to July 2016 Rochester had higher levels of agreement than other Medway areas, by eight percentage points but this has since cooled, with Rochester residents now feeling they could influence decisions in Rochester less than wider Medway residents.</p> <p>Councillors for the relevant Wards have reported that they deal with several hundreds of cases each year, including those met at ward surgeries and street campaigns. They deal with range of issues such as parking, litter, dog waste and refuse, immigration appeals, benefit appeals, a school place or school transport appeals, inadequate housing, council tax disputes, anti social behaviour and dissatisfaction with health and social care services. Issues range from those that are relatively simple to more complex issues requiring the liaison and co-ordination with other organisations such as traffic and speed management issues, highways issues, parking, adoption of roads, funding and support of Early Learning centre, environmental issues such as the refurbishment of the catalpa Tree, and looking after the interests of our wildlife including Horsted Valley, the upgrade in Memorial Garden, issues in The Vines and other heritage sites, noise nuisance, fly tipping and street lighting. The Councillors also liaise with developers with respect to major planning works and represent residents on minor works. Councillors have also assisted local traders and other organisations to get the support and resources required to enable them to improve and contribute to the development of responses to begging, homelessness and Traveller incursions as well as helping individuals to obtain the support and resources they needed for their particular needs. They are also actively connected with most of the groups and associations listed in 2a above.</p> <p>Between 2013 and 2016 the percentage of all Public Council questions asked by people from Rochester has varied from 47.8% to 18.4%</p> <p>Since 2015, the percentage of formal petitions submitted to the Council by people from Rochester or about issues in Rochester has ranged between 5.8% and 10.3%</p>
<p>e giving users quality services</p>	
<p>f giving users a democratic voice in decisions that effect them</p>	<p>Rochester Community Hub, based at the newly refurbished Eastgate House in the High Street provides a range of services for the people of Rochester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abandoned vehicles</li> <li>Adult and Community Learning Service</li> <li>Bus passes</li> <li>Drainage</li> <li>Debit/Credit Card payments</li> <li>Environmental health</li> <li>Food Safety</li> <li>Greenspaces - parks and play areas</li> <li>Highways</li> </ul> <p>Public Transport Radar Keys Recycling Schools Safer Communities Stray dogs Trading Standards Traffic management Trees Unidly land Waste services Waste services The building also houses the Rochester Library Last year Rochester Community Hub had 199,196 visitors</p>
<p>g providing local services conveniently (in one place) and accessible</p>	<p>Parish elections 2011 - 20 out of 108 seats contested = 18.5%</p> <p>Parish elections 2015 - 40 out of 108 seats contested = 37.03%</p> <p>At least 25 Parish vacancies arose between 2011 and 2015 and at least 21 Parish vacancies since 2015 elections</p> <p>Turnout in Local elections 2015 varied between 63.43% and 68.56% in Rochester East, Rochester West and Rochester South &amp; Horsted wards, against an average of 61.24% for the whole of Medway. There has been one by-election in Rochester South &amp; Horsted ward in 2008 where the turnout was 40.94% and 5 candidates for one vacancy.</p>
<p>h being accountable</p>	<p>invested in Rochester by the Council or brokered by the Council for the benefit of Rochester - approximately £90,000,000 invested by the Homes &amp; Communities Agency and the Council in the Rochester Riverside development of 1400 homes, a school and two hotels which is due to start later this year.</p> <p>£26 million invested by Network Rail in the new Rochester train station which opened in 2015 together with the £4 million invested by the Council in the new adjacent multi-storey car park.</p> <p>£2.2 million invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund in the historic Eastgate House on Rochester High Street.</p> <p>£4.2m investment in Rochester Airfield including Enterprise Zone status</p> <p>New Fire station facilitated by Council sale of land - has become regional centre for road safety</p> <p>Rochester and Strood constituency has received almost £64million from lottery funds through 505 grants since 1995. Major awards include £4.6 million to Rochester Cathedral in 2011, £1.5 million to restore Eastgate House in 2010 and £1.3 million to create a Huguenot Heritage Centre in 2012. The area has received £515,000 from the lottery funders since 2015.</p> <p>Collaborations between the local community and the Council on such initiatives as the Vines Park upgrade in central Rochester carried out this year and funded through Section 106 monies from a local development (£33k) and xx number of hours dedicated by volunteers.</p> <p>See list above (2a)</p>
<p>i facilitating a strategic, visionary leadership (place-shaping)</p>	<p>enabling an inclusive and effective participation by individuals and organisations</p> <p>allowing effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence</p> <p>being a positive impact on community cohesion</p>
<p>j enabling an inclusive and effective participation by individuals and organisations</p>	
<p>k allowing effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence</p>	
<p>l being a positive impact on community cohesion</p>	

3 Will the RTC proposal:		Evidence collected
a	Offer an opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
b	generate positive impact on community cohesion - i.e. recognising the impact of changes from migration/diversity and responding to it	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
c	improve integration - what must happen to enable different groups of people to get on well together	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
d	improve levels of people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
e	provide a shared future vision and sense of belonging	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
f	provide a focus on what new and existing communities have in common	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
g	provide strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
h	provide increased levels of people feeling they have a stake in the local area and influence on decisions affecting their lives	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
i	provide a sufficiently representative arrangement for people living across the whole community and not just discrete cross-section	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
j	undermine community cohesion	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
k	be effective, convenient and viable in terms of size, population and boundaries	Petitioners proposal does not include whole of Rochester South, & Horsted ward nor whole of polling districts - most of RRS1 excluded - those on north side of Patters Lane and non-inclusion of RRS3 including Davis Estate. This is confusing for those on the outside of area in the east, meaning that the boundaries are not easily identifiable in all places. The proposal also only includes a small part of River ward but doesn't follow polling district boundaries. Area does not follow boundaries of previous Rochester upon-Medway/city council which would have included most of RRS1 but less of RRS4. Administratively difficult to conduct elections where polling districts are split - would require another review exercise to try to make polling district boundaries mirror Parish boundaries. Difficult to confirm whether all the residents in the proposed area have a distinctive and recognisable community of interest and sense of identity around "Rochester". The pattern of daily life in each of the communities, the local centres for education, and childcare, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication will have an influence on the extent to which all of the residents in the proposed area share a sense of community although the focus of people's day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity, if for instance overweighing historic loyalty is to "Rochester" as a town
l	be based on natural communities	See above
m	reflect natural communities	See above
n	reflect community identity and interests	See above
o	be a viable size as an administrative unit of local government	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
p	provide some basic services	No specific evidence provided by proposers of new Parish Council or by respondents to consultation
q	reflect "no man's land" between areas in its' boundaries - are they easily identifiable	See comments above about proposed area not including whole polling district boundaries
	Are there any other arrangements that could be made for the purposes of community engagement or community representation in the area as an alternative to a Parish Council	There are non-parish forms of community governance that the Council could introduce. Many of these exist across the county and their status, format and management arrangements differ widely. Area committees enable authorities to fulfil their community governance roles and deliver policy on issues such as social inclusion. The local authority provide resources and Councilors are usually integral to their constitution. They can be set up to advise on issues such as parks, off-street parking, public toilets, street cleaning, abandoned vehicles and planning applications as well as contributing to shaping council services and improving local service provision. Some Councils (e.g. LB Southwark) have established community councils which in addition to advising on local issues, manage funds and allocate money for local projects and activities. Neighbourhood management bodies offer similar opportunities for residents to work with local agencies, usually facilitated by a neighbourhood manager, to improve services at neighbourhood level through implementation rather than advising or making decisions on better management of local environment, increasing community safety etc. These bodies usually cover smaller geographical areas than area committees. Area or community forums can be set up to comment on a specific project or initiative that will impact on the local area. They aim to influence decision making rather than having powers to implement services. Community associations offer a particular and widespread democratic model for local residents and local community-based organisations in a defined neighbourhood to work together for the benefit of that neighbourhood. They usually manage a community centre as a base for their activities and local councillors are often represented on the committee. Partners and Communities Together (PACTs) are a relatively recent initiative which allow the community to identify and focus on issues of importance and concern to them. PACT processes have been established across Medway, including at least one in the area of the proposed Parish Council.

Map showing breakdown by polling district of those in favour of existing arrangements



Percentage of respondents who chose Option A - keep the current governance arrangements by polling district



Serving You

Scale: 1:27500 15/12/17

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## Diversity Impact Assessment

<b>TITLE</b> Name / description of the issue being assessed	Community Governance Review (CGR) – proposal to create Rochester Town Council
<b>DATE</b> Date the DIA is completed	18 December 2017
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b> Name, title and dept of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.	Jane Ringham, Head of Elections & Member Services

### 1 Summary description of the proposed change

- What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?
- How does it compare with the current situation?

There is currently no Parish (Town) Council for Rochester and a valid petition was submitted that required the Council to conduct a CGR. The Council conducted the CGR including a consultation exercise involving all the registered electors in the proposed area, and relevant businesses and organisations, and gathered evidence of existing community governance arrangements in the area. An informal working group of members and council officers have considered the results of the consultation.

### 2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.
- Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

22,085 electors, organisations and businesses in the proposed area were consulted. The main outcome of which was that 56% of respondents preferred to keep existing arrangements, 55% of respondents indicated they were happy with the current arrangements and only 22% of respondents indicated they were willing to pay the additional precept a new Town Council would levy.

50% of the responses were from men, and 47% from women with 4% preferring not to say. 41% of the respondents were in the age group 17-54 and 59% were in the age group 55 and over. These figures reflect generally Medway's demographic profile. 23% of respondents indicated they had a long term health condition. This is not greatly different to the 16.4% of the overall population who indicated they had a Limiting Long Term Illness in the 2011 census.

7% of respondents indicated that they were of black or minority ethnic origin which compares with 10.4% of Medway's population in the 2011 census.

Evidence gathered by the working group shows that the local population has an aptitude to form organisations and associations to represent them, and their interests, including those for people of different faith groups, groups of people of particular ethnic backgrounds or cultures and to allow them to identify and resolve issues and improve community cohesion.

### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age			✓
Disability			✓
Gender reassignment			✓
Marriage/civil partnership			✓
Pregnancy/maternity			✓
Race			✓
<i>Religion/belief</i>			✓
Sex			✓
Sexual orientation			✓
Other (eg low income groups)			✓

### 4 Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

The results of the consultation indicated that most residents would prefer to keep the existing arrangements and not implement a town council. This is, therefore, the recommendation of the working group.

Since there is no change, no adverse impacts are anticipated.

## 5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Are there alternative providers?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?

As above there are at least 60 local associations and groups in the local area which enable local people to share interests, identify and resolve issues and improve community cohesion. The local population already make use of the arrangements to submit questions to Full Council and formal petitions.

The Council already provides a range of services locally to the population via the Community Hub in Eastgate House. Ward Councillors have contact with significant numbers of residents at their Ward surgeries or through direct contact and deal with a wide range of issues.

Turn out at local elections in the Wards included in the proposed area are higher than the average for the whole of Medway.

56% of respondents preferred to keep existing community governance arrangements and 55% of respondents indicated they were happy with the current arrangements.

## 6 Action plan

- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date

## 7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

Having considered all the evidence an informal working group of members and officers are recommending that no change is made to the existing arrangements, i.e. – that no Town Council is created.

The report of the working group will be submitted for consideration at the meeting of Full Council on 25 January 2018.

## 8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that:

- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

**Assistant Director**

Perry Holmes, Chief Legal Officer

**Date**

12 January 2018