

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2018

ATTENDANCE OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Summary

This report sets out activities and progress on work areas within the Housing and Community Services Portfolio, which fall within the remit of this Committee. This information is provided in relation to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services being held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services are:

- All Housing Services (including HRA)
- Homelessness and Housing Options
- Private sector housing
- Adult learning
- Libraries and Community Hubs
- Voluntary sector

2. STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICES

Disabled Adaptations to Housing

Achievements for 2017/2018

2.1 Medway Council undertakes alterations and adaptations to properties in order to assist Medway's residents to remain living independently in their

homes. Over £2.4 million (including commitment brought forward from 2016/17) has been budgeted for disabled adaptations in 2017/18. During April 2017 to December 2017 the Council provided assistance via council adaptations and disabled facilities grants to 118 households compared to 106 households during the same period in the 2016/17.

Homelessness and Housing Options

Achievements for 2017-2018

- 2.2 Medway Council operate a range of services to prevent and resolve homelessness. The number of people approaching the Council for assistance with homelessness is very difficult to predict and certain economic conditions can cause the number of people presenting as homeless to increase at any time.
- 2.3 Where possible the Council will work to prevent households from becoming homeless. Work has continued on refocusing the Housing Options Service (preventions), working with a range of organisations and services. A range of initiatives has been implemented, including schemes to access the private rented sector, interventions to sustain tenancies and closer working with private landlords. The number of households approaching the Council for homeless prevention assistance has reduced from an average of 160 a month in 2016/17 to 137 a month in 2017/18. Between April 2017 and the end of December 2017, 302 cases of homelessness were prevented or relieved, on par with performance compared to the same period in 2016/17 (307 cases).
- 2.4 It is not always possible to prevent households from becoming homeless. The number of households approaching the Council to make a homeless application continued to rise from 536 households during April 16 to December 16 to 573 households during April 17 to December 17. Medway Council accepted 52.3% (200/382 excluding ineligible applicants) of applicants during April 17 to September 17 compared to 53.6% (161/300) during the same period last year. The rate of acceptances during April 17 to September 17 is relatively on par with the regional figure of 51.6%.
- 2.5 The increase in the number of households approaching the Council, coupled with a reduction of social housing lets has resulted in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation increasing. At the end of December 2017, 377 households were in temporary accommodation compared to, 351 households at the end of March 2017. Available national figures indicate that at the end of December 2017 3.54 per 1,000 households in Medway were in temporary accommodation, the same as the national average, but significantly lower than the rate of 16.6 seen in London. Further benchmarking has been undertaken this quarter to identify how Medway compares with other similar sized unitary authorities. Brighton currently has a rate of 13.05 households per 1000 in temporary accommodation and Milton Keynes currently have a rate of 7.16.

3 Housing Management and Allocations

Achievements for 2017/18

- 3.1 The Council's Allocations policy sets out the framework for the approach that will be taken for the allocation of social housing held by the 26 Housing Associations operating in Medway. The service also manages the allocation of specialist supported accommodation commissioned by the council including hostels, extra care and sheltered housing schemes.
- 3.2 From April 2017 to the end of December 2017, 355 households have secured accommodation through the scheme compared to 594 for the same period last year. This reduction has largely been due to the low levels of house building.
- 3.3 Each application to join the register is assessed against the criteria set out within the Allocations Policy. At the end of December 2017 there were 3,858 active applicants on the register placed in bands A to D, of which 1,526 had a low housing need but were eligible for sheltered or extra care housing only. The number of active applicants has reduced by 33% compared to December 2016 in which there were 5,829 active applicants in bands A to D. This reduction has largely been due to work undertaken to improve the management of records as well as a national initiative to tackle fraud.

4 Housing Strategy

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team works with Housing Associations, developers and the Homes and Communities Agency to identify opportunities to develop additional affordable housing. The Council forecast to deliver a total of around 200 new affordable homes by the end of the financial year, with several developments due for completion in Q4 such as the extra care housing development Rogallo Place in Horstead Park, which will deliver an additional 63 units. There are currently 477 affordable housing units under construction in Medway and a further 223 with detailed planning permission.
- 4.2 Two Extra Care schemes are currently in development, the Horstead Park scheme will be completed this financial year and the St Mary's Island scheme will follow in mid 2018/19. An additional 110 units will be delivered at the former Southern Water site on Capstone Road in Chatham. Brooke Homes, working with London and Quadrant, have utilised off-site modular construction to bring forward this 100% affordable housing development.
- 4.3 The service also works with other partners including Children's and Adults Social Care, Public Health, charities and other organisations in to identify opportunities for joint working to help meet housing needs across Medway. This year has seen the roll out of a pilot to provide early intervention for cases that will impact upon housing and children's services utilising a joint assessment process.
- 4.4 A range of Housing Related Support services are commissioned to help meet client groups with specific housing related needs. This includes floating support, specialist domestic abuse advice and accommodation,

hostels, schemes for offenders, young people and other vulnerable client groups. The Council has a programme of service reviews and all of the services have been validated. The review programme ensures that the funding allocated to these services is being used effectively to benefit vulnerable people living in Medway and means that service providers can see where they are performing strongly and where they can focus their efforts to improve their services further.

- 4.5 The service has reviewed its approach to tackling Rough Sleeping in the area. The last year has seen the launch of a revised homelessness prevention strategy, the implementation of a Rough Sleeper task group that runs alongside the Blue Light Project, and the first meetings of a rough sleeper forum that will engage directly with those that are street homeless to seek their views as to how services can be delivered to them.
- 4.6 Work has been undertaken with partners to develop a Homelessness Charter for Medway. Partners involved in the Homelessness Forum have been consulted on the charter and provided feedback. The Charter sets out the activity of each of the organisations working with Rough Sleepers in Medway as well as setting out the principles that we believe are important for addressing the root causes of homelessness.

5 Private Sector Housing

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 5.1 The majority of housing in Medway is privately rented or owned and the private rented sector continues to expand locally, with one in five households now renting privately. In partnership with national and local landlords associations the council's housing service provides training and advice to landlords on effective property management through the Landlords Forum. The Council also operates one of the largest and well respected accreditation schemes for landlords in the southeast and continues to expand our tenants Accreditation Scheme. This scheme supports vulnerable clients with a poor track record of renting and provides them with targeted advice and training along with a period of supervision and on-going advice when in a tenancy. The scheme has been well received by landlords, tenants and support agencies.
- 5.2 Year to date the Housing Service has received more than 1,000 requests for assistance in respect of housing conditions in private sector housing. In all cases appropriate advice is provided and in some cases it is necessary for the Council to intervene to secure improvements. During April 2017 to December 2017 593 private sector properties were improved as a result of the Council's intervention compared to 394 during the same period last year.

6 Housing Landlord Services

Overall achievements for 2017/2018

- 6.1 This year the Landlord Services service has achieved a total of 6 awards as follows:-

- Centenary Gardens Bungalow Development – Best Small Development Award – Medway Design and Regeneration awards
- Kent Housing Group Awards – Centenary Gardens Bungalow Development – best small development
- Kent Housing Group Awards – Highly commended Income Management Team
- Directorate Awards – Best Partnership award – Mears Plc and Medway Repairs Service
- Directorate Awards – Long Service award – Housing Officer Steve Trevena – 50 years service
- Medway MaD awards – Overall winners – Partnership award – Mears Plc and Medway Repairs Service

6.2 In addition to this both Strategic Housing and Landlord Services have jointly achieved the following:

- Successful retention of the ISO 9001:2008 standard and a recommendation to transition to the 2015 standard. At the inspection in December 2017 the auditors noted the great team spirit within the service and commended the robust procedures and process maps the service has in place.
- Recertification of the Customer Services Excellence award. The June 2017 inspection highlighted areas of good practice around resident involvement, complaints learning and the Multiple Occupation licensing process.

7 Repairs and Maintenance

Achievements for 2017/2018

7.1 Medway Council and Mears successfully completed the third year of the current repairs contract. The 3rd year of the new contract ran from September 2016 to August 2017, figures reflect this contract period.

7.2 Performance across the repairs service continues to be strong. National benchmarking against other similar sized housing organisations identifies that the following were in the top 25%:

- % of customer satisfaction with overall repairs service (of those that returned a survey) - 99.3% (1,289/1,298) compared to 99% in 15/16.
- % of telephone calls answered - 98.5% compared to 97.8% in 15/16.
- % of repairs completed at first visit - 98.6% (7,282/7,919) compared to 92% in 15/16.
- % of appointments kept (urgent and routine only) - 99.5% (4,393/4,414) compared to 99.2% in 15/16.

7.3 The repairs service continued its excellent performance in terms of completion rates as follows:

Out of the 6,994 responsive repairs completed in this period:

- 99.8% (1,167/1,169) of emergency repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 99% (99.9% in 15/16).
- 99.8% (2,457/2,461) of urgent repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 99% (99.8% in 15/16).
- 99.0% (3,332/3,364) of routine repairs were completed on time, against a local target of 98% (99% in 15/16).
- 99.5% (4,091/4,112) of repair appointments were kept, against a local target of 99% (99.2% in 15/16).
- 0.4% (31/6,994) of responsive repair recalls against a local target of <=1.5% (0.6% in 15/16).
- 98.9% (1,285/1,298) of customers that returned customer satisfaction surveys were satisfied with the quality of the repair work (99.2% in 15/16).
- 9.3 calendar days on average to complete a responsive repair against a target of 13 calendar days (10 in 15/16).

7.4 Additionally as at 31 August 2017 the Council had a 100% gas compliancy record.

7.5 The Councils capital works programme improves the quality of council residents' homes leading to improvements in fuel poverty and the sustainment and compliancy of the Decent Homes standard. At the end of March 2017 Medway Council had 0% of properties that were non decent, which was top quartile in comparison to peers.

7.6 During the financial year 2017/18 the council have invested £5.7 million into the planned and capital works programme. Between January 2017 and 31 December 2017 approximately £1.4m of this money has been spent on completing the following traditional capital works to council housing stock:

- Kitchens - 67
- Bathrooms - 80
- Boilers - 173
- Doors - 94
- Electrical tests -812
- Asbestos surveys - 68
- Smoke detectors - 77
- Co2 detectors - 576
- Re wires - 37
- Pitched roof replacements - 39

7.7 At the end of March 2018 HRA Housing will conclude its three year programme of fire risk assessment works. Over this three year period a significant investment of £6.1m has been made into fire safety works, further improving over 1,000 homes.

7.8 As a result of the fixed price model with Mears Plc and a reduction in the number of voids, the voids budget, for works to bring properties to the lettable standard, has been reduced by £85,000 for 2018/19. These savings will be reinvested into the HRA business plan for future service improvement and service delivery.

8 Re-letting Void Properties

Achievements for 2017/2018

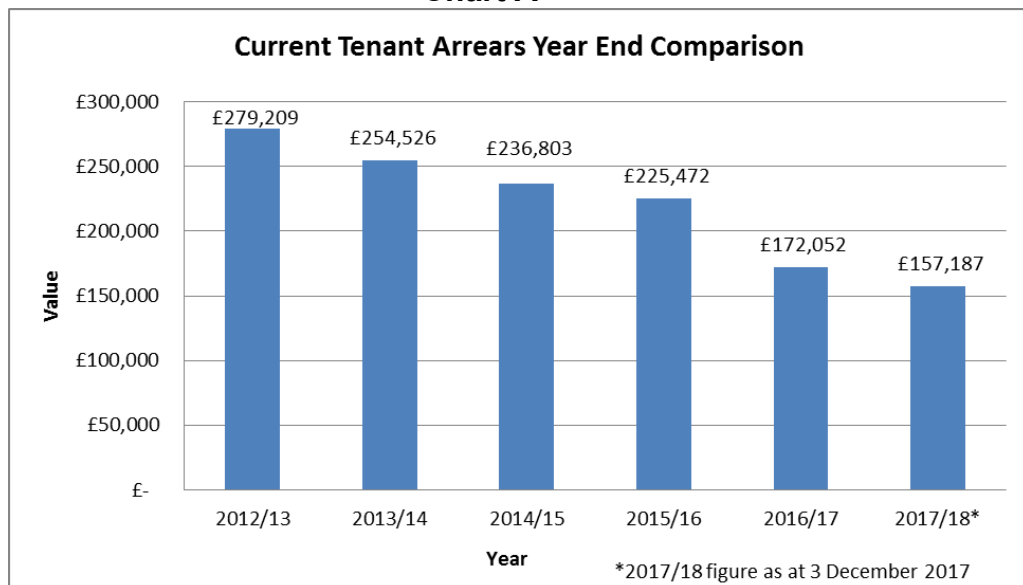
- 8.1 During April 2017 to November 2017 it took on average 11 calendar days to let normal voids against a target of 19 calendar days. This is comparable with performance during the same period the previous year.
- 8.2 Recent benchmarking results identify that Medway Council are in the top 25% compared to other providers with a similar stock size for the average time to re let council dwellings and the percentage of rent lost through dwellings being vacant. Additionally Medway Council are in top quartile for the percentage of properties vacant and available to let, which means that our properties are let quickly once they are refurbished.

9 Income Management

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 9.1 Positive work by the Housing Officers and Welfare reform team has meant that rent arrears have reduced from £172,052 on the 2 April 2017 to £157,187 on 3 December 2017, a reduction of £14,864.
- 9.2 The Chart A shows the on-going reduction over the past 6 years with current tenant arrears.

Chart A



- 9.3 The percentage of current tenant rent arrears against the annual rent roll as at the 3 December 2017 stood at 1.12% against a target of less than 1.65% (1.23% at same point of time 2016/17). In comparison to other organisations with a similar stock size Medway Council are in the top quartile for current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit.

- 9.4 The overall HRA debt owed by current and former tenants has reduced from last years forecast debt of £623,000 to a forecast this year of £532,000.

10 Tenancy Management

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 10.1 The HRA undertake estate inspections to ensure that our estates are maintained to a good standard. Between January 2017 and December 2017 60 estate inspections were undertaken, all of which passed to either a green or amber standard.
- 10.2 Following the successful pilot in 2016, a summer programme of 6 evening estate inspections took place between June and August. In addition to the front line staff, managers attended each inspection, providing an opportunity for Officers to meet and discuss with both ward members and residents issues which are important to them on their estates.

11 Evictions

- 11.1 During April 2017 to December 2017 8 evictions were conducted, 5 for arrears and 3 for other reasons (2 property abandonment and 1 use and occupation). Details of previous year's evictions' are highlighted in the table below. The eviction rate for arrears shows that that the arrears are reducing without the ultimate sanction of evicting tenants and therefore sustaining tenancies.

	ASB	Arrears	Other	Total
13/14	2	11	0	13
14/15	1	9	0	10
15/16	0	11	2	13
16/17	0	11	2	13
17/18 YTD	0	5	3	8

- 11.2 The HRA Welfare Reform team continues to assist tenants facing the challenges of the Welfare Reform and support the work done by the Corporate Welfare Reform board. As of 3 January 2017 there are 25 known active recipients of Universal Credit living in council owned properties. The HRA have written to approximately 900 tenants thought to be affected offering the support of the Welfare Reform Team. In October 2017 the HRA launched weekly surgeries for tenants at the Twydall Hub. The surgeries provide tenants on one to one advice and support on Universal Credit and other welfare reform issues. These surgeries have been extremely beneficial for residents, especially our more vulnerable tenants. Since 11th October 2017 a total of 33 tenants have used the Welfare Reform Drop-In Surgeries.
- 11.3 In the New Year the Council will increase the publicity campaign around Universal Credit and during the spring the HRA will be holding information and advice roadshows at locations in and around our stock.

- 11.4 From the start of the financial year the Welfare Reform Team has assisted tenants in gaining £56,814 as a result of their direct intervention. See income table below.

Financial Outcomes For Welfare Reform Clients										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Totals
Number of clients	10	10	3	5	3	7	10	17	9	
Lump Sum	£6,058.28	£7,031.19	£459.06	£2,111.69	£1,243.02	£6,252.67	£2,716.73	£4,613.66	£22,908.51	
Weekly Award	£210.20	£507.82	£239.54	£235.81	£226.26	£246.09	£509.61	£520.62	£723.26	
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE	£6,268.48	£7,539.01	£698.60	£2,347.50	£1,469.28	£6,498.76	£3,226.34	£5,134.28	£23,631.77	£56,814.02

- 11.5 The Welfare Reform Team also supports customers in other areas of financial wellbeing. In one specific case £313 was achieved through a grant from British Gas Energy Trust for a tenant that could not heat their home. In other cases the team have assisted to apply for a range of benefits including Disabled Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP), and Attendance Allowance (AA).

12 Estate Services

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 12.1 The second year of the Estate Services contract provided by NORSE has been completed at the end of September 2017. The profit share contract between Norse and The HRA saw a surplus / profit in year two, of approximately £8,000, to be received by the HRA. This will ultimately bring savings to our Customers as reduced costs will be reflected in future year's service charges.
- 12.2 In late summer 2017 the service level agreement with Environmental Services was revised to include the investigation and removal of abandoned Vehicles on HRA land. This enhancement ensures that estates are maintained to a good standard and improves the appearance of them which has been an important aspect of tenant feedback.
- 12.3 On the 1 May 2017 the Scheme Cleaners were TUPEd to Norse. This gave the HRA a small cost saving as well as freeing up management time of the scheme for officers to focus on resident support. There has been no drop in service standards and no customer complaints.

13 Community Development

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 13.1 Much work has been done this year to engage with residents on estates and in the community, recognising that some tenants and leaseholders do not always come to traditional resident involvement meetings. This work includes the following:
- Publication of two editions of Housing Matters, the newsletter for Medway Council tenants. Housing Matters is now published online only and this transition is estimated to have saved the service around £5,000 per annum in printing and delivery costs.
 - Partnership with Age UK Medway to hold a scam buster's event run by Barclays Bank.

- Mix Mingle events at our homes for independent schemes in order to reduce social isolation.
- A 5 week sports programme delivered at Hazlemere Drive to offer diversionary activities for ASB.
- The Big Lunch event at the Woodlands Youth Centre in Gillingham, which had over 100 people attending.
- Housing workshops delivered at the Princes Trust for national housing day.
- Repair and leaseholder surgeries held at the Gillingham, Twydall and Rainham community hubs.
- Weekly tenant surgeries held at the Twydall hub.
- Saunders/James Street Cages sports event held in partnership with Sports Development, the Community Safety Partnership team and Youth Services.

14 Development of the Council's Housing Stock

Achievements for 2017/2018

- 14.1 Work has been undertaken to encourage the delivery of homes through investigation of new financial models and release of Council owned sites.
- 14.2 The Council has created a housing company, the Medway Development Company Limited, and appointed a Head of Operations to lead the initial work of the organisation. The Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Resources have been appointed to the Board and two other non-executive board members are in the process of being appointed. The purpose of the company is to build housing for profit. This will also mean improving the number of affordable homes available in Medway. The company has a 5 year plan of sites for development with the delivery of approximately 600 units planned.
- 14.3 Architects have also been appointed to design a third small phase of direct HRA new build properties which the review of the HRA Business Plan identifies can be funded from within the existing financial capacity of the HRA reserves and Right to Buy 1-1 receipts.

15 LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY HUBS

- 15.1 Medway Library Service has had another very successful year, showing significant achievements in many areas, and continuing to make a huge difference to the lives of Medway residents. Through its branch network of 15 buildings and two mobile libraries, the Service continues to be the public face of the Council in all of Medway Communities.
- 15.2 The Service reported a particularly strong year in 2016/2017, bucking the national library trend for statistics. Where nationally the trend is downwards, Medway's figures saw visits to Libraries of 1,151,251 an increase of 2 %, and items borrowed were up 0.25 % to 934,575. Customer satisfaction continues at over 90%.
- 15.3 In this current year (2017-18) so far, figures continue to remain encouraging, with particular growth in the on-line areas. For example loan of eBooks is up 17%, use of online resources is up over 57% and

over 23% more Wi-Fi sessions have been made use of. These particular figures underline the role that the Service has in supporting digital transformation generally as well as its major contribution to providing assisted digital support to those that require it.

- 15.4 With a clear vision the service is building on its vital role in all local communities and aims to support the delivery of Council priorities. We have a special focus on children and older people, and on promoting and developing reading as the gateway to learning.
- 15.5 Nationally, the Society of Chief Librarians has identified 6 “universal offers”. These provide a platform for good practice, reflecting key national themes and priorities. The Offers cover Health, Learning, Reading, Information, Culture and Digital. These are being developed locally and provide a focus for libraries to support Council priorities.

Community Hub development

- 15.6 A major part of the strategy for the development of Libraries and part of their continued success has been the development of Community Hubs. This is an approach that has gained national recognition within the library world. So far the Council has 5 community Hubs at Gillingham, Chatham, Rochester and more recently at Strood and Twydall. Their distinctive feature is the inclusion of a Customer Contact desk which provides a gateway to a whole range of Council services. But the hubs are so much more; they are a vibrant place for local community and partnership activity.
- 15.7 Whilst our branch libraries do not have the Customer Contact staff present, they act as Hubs in all other respects by providing partnership space for community organisations, as well as leading or hosting workshops and activities. Where investment has taken place branches are being called Neighbourhood Community Hubs, as at Hempstead.
- 15.8 Earlier new build and refurbishment investment has been very favourably received by residents: for example at Strood, Twydall and Hempstead statistics continue to be very impressive, with the numbers of items borrowed at these three buildings continuing to show an upward trend. For example the number of items borrowed at Strood is currently showing a 12.3% increase, Twydall 11.3% and Hempstead 13.7% over the previous year.
- 15.9 The Council continues to support the community hub approach by pursuing plans for further development at Rainham, Walderslade Hook Meadow and Wigmore, subject to opportunity and availability of funding.

Supporting reading and literacy

- 15.10 The service has a major role to play in helping people to develop and enhance their literacy skills by fostering a love of reading from infancy and throughout life. We provide a whole range of activities, including a programme of regular weekly in-library fun activities for babies and toddlers:

- Baby bounce and rhyme
 - Story time
 - Toddler, shake and boogie
 -
- 15.11 The average monthly pre-school events attendance is 1,950 babies/toddlers.
- 15.12 Teenage reading groups, homework clubs and chatterbooks sessions are provided for older children.
- 15.13 The children's mobile library is taking the service to Medway primary schools. Every month 22 schools are visited and each child is given the opportunity to borrow books.
- 15.14 The library service ran three reading challenges during the summer:
- the Summer Reading Challenge for children, had over 3000 participants and with a 55% finisher's rate. National evidence is very clear on the value of this activity to schools, in that it has a major impact on maintaining children's reading skills over the long summer break.
 - the Teen Reading Challenge saw 80 teenagers complete the challenge
 - a new scheme for adults was started: the Rewarding Reading Challenge. This was open to any resident over 17 and was a challenge to read 6 books over the summer; 292 completed the challenge and were entered into a prize draw. As a result of the take up and the feedback received about the Rewarding Reading Challenge, this will now become a core yearly offer for Medway Libraries.
- 15.15 Medway Libraries also runs another reading challenge in partnership with Medway Adult Education: the Reading Ahead Challenge. The challenge this year started in December 2017 and runs to the end of June 2018 and is aimed at helping participants improve their reading skills or for those who want to get back into reading.
- 15.16 The yearly Children's Book Festival ran in June 2017 and was very successful. 1105 children aged 6-16 attended with 11 authors/illustrators running 18 events. All feedback was positive, like that from an Assistant Head teacher at one Medway School, '*We absolutely loved the author visit last week; I thought she was so inspiring.*'

Expanding our digital offer

- 15.17 An increasing number of customers want to access services online and Libraries play a vital role. Medway libraries offer public computers in all 15 static libraries. There are currently 147 public computers in libraries. Between April 2016 and March 2017 there were 144,901 public computer sessions used across the 15 branches, an 18% increase in active computer users.

- 15.18 This long standing offer gives residents free access to the Internet, with trained Library staff and volunteer computer buddies able to assist customers to get online and complete the ever increasing amount of transactions that are available over the internet.
- 15.19 Medway Libraries also offer a managed public Wi-Fi solution, giving the public free access to the internet for their mobile devices in 15 branches. Residents made use of 33,571 public Wi-Fi sessions between April 2016 and March 2017. This year the use of Wi-Fi continues to grow and we are currently forecasting a 11.49 % increase compared to the previous year.
- 15.20 This digital offer is extended further by the availability of eBooks, eAudiobooks and an online reference library.
- 15.21 A recent exciting new addition to this portfolio is eMagazines, bringing 136 titles that the public can access for free from their local library or from a mobile device. This new service is only in its first few weeks but already has been favourably received with 188 customers downloading 1187 magazines.
- 15.22 eBooks continue to be very successful. This year the service is forecasting further growth of 17% compared to last year. Feedback from customers tells us this is bringing new or lapsed users to the service.
- 15.23 Use of our online reference library continues to grow, the service is forecasting a 57% increase for this year. A notable example of this use is that in July 2017 Encyclopaedia Britannica online was used 7388 times.
- 15.24 The Service is at the forefront of the Council's assisted digital support service. As more services go online, there is a thorough consideration of the support needs that users might require. Libraries and Customer Contact staff are trained on these new applications to offer support to residents.

Working in partnership

- 15.25 The Community Hub strategy places a great importance on partnership working; this approach can be evidenced firstly by the development of partnership buildings with Customer Contact in the Community Hubs, Medway Adult Education at Rochester and the Youth Service at Lordswood and Hoo.
- 15.26 Many partnerships also exist with other Council departments, including Public Health who use Libraries to provide advice, information, and support and to facilitate the many well attended walking groups that run out of these venues.
- 15.27 Other recent Council partnership work includes working with the Adoption team, Deaf Services and the Medway Register office.
- 15.28 Libraries also work with many other community groups and both local and national organisations. These include the Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Society (running Dementia café at Chatham Community

Hub,) RNIB (support our visually impaired readers group at Chatham) and Victim Support.

Events and activities

- 15.29 The service runs a whole range of events and activities and we have already mentioned the events for young children in Baby, Bounce and Rhyme, and Toddler, Shake and Boogie.
- 15.30 Our author events have attracted a national profile, recent high profile author events include Val McDermid, Peter Robinson, John Connolly, Angus Donald and Jack Sheffield. As Medway is able to guarantee a large audience (often up to 200 residents) publishers are happy to provide these authors at no cost. They are events that provide excellent marketing opportunities both to new and to loyal library users.
- 15.31 Reading Groups continue to capture the imagination of the residents of Medway and the library service provides a whole range, including crime readers, plays, poetry, visually impaired customers, those customers that are hard of hearing, and of course many general readers' groups.

Inward investment and creating best value

- 15.32 The Friends of Medway Library Service group who have just celebrated 10 years of support for the service not only provide advocacy for the Service, but practical help at events and activities.
- 15.33 The Home Library Service continues to thrive. Volunteer couriers deliver books to over 200 housebound customers and this clearly helps with the growing issue of social isolation for these residents.
- 15.34 Volunteer computer buddies provide much appreciated support for those residents who require support using computers and getting online.
- 15.35 The service also has benefited by recruiting and training 'Reading Hacks.' *Reading Hack* is a programme led by young people aged 13 to 24 who complete reading activities and volunteering to gain skills and experience. The *Reading Hacks* will be running teen readers' groups and providing teen services at Walderslade Hook Meadow, Chatham, Strood and Gillingham libraries.
- 15.36 In terms of external investment the service was delighted to receive £40,000 in 2017 from the Arts Council to support a year long BME events project entitled Legacy. Through a partnership between Medway Libraries, Medway Arts Team and the Lyrici Arts Group, we provided a whole range of literature and theatrical events to explore and develop effective ways to encourage new BME community audiences for cultural events in Medway. The take up was excellent with for example over 40 residents attending an African storytelling session 'How music came to the world,' over 80 attending 2 Caribbean rhyme times and over 60 attending a MOBO (music of black origin) through the ages music session.

Challenges and new and innovative ways of working

- 15.37 Libraries, like all council services, have contributed to the need for efficiencies. In August 2017, after extensive public consultation, Thomas Aveling Community Library was closed to the public due to low use and the inflexibility of opening times and access to the school site.
- 15.38 Grain Library was transformed into a community volunteer led library, with local residents showing their support by providing volunteer time to open the service to the public.

Performance information including Customer Service Excellence Award

- 15.39 This award was developed by central Government to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation. It tests in detail those areas that research has indicated are a priority for the customer, with a focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.
- 15.40 A recent inspection in November meant that this award was successfully regained with improved performance. Being one of only four Council departments to hold this award, Libraries and Community Hubs were again recognised for providing outstanding customer service. The assessor wrote:

"Effort is focused on 'bringing libraries to life'. E-books, events and use of IT by customers have received added focus. Online resource enquiries have increased by 62% this year. This service recognises that customers must be at the heart of service delivery."

16. MEDWAY ADULT EDUCATION

A Comprehensive Programme

- 16.1 Medway Adult Education (MAE) continues to offer a wide ranging programme for local people looking to improve their work skills, retrain for a different career, return to employment, or to simply make friends and enjoy their leisure time. The key components of the programme are:
- Skills for work – a programme of courses helping people to learn new industry standard skills and providing pathways to higher professional qualifications
 - English & Maths courses from beginners through to GCSE.
 - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and English as a foreign language (EFL).
 - Languages – French, Italian, Spanish and British Sign Language classes suitable for complete beginners to achievement of a high level of fluency.
 - Supported Learning. A programme of courses specifically for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities.
 - Be creative – huge range of classes for the hobby enthusiast: from floristry to cake decorating, pottery & ceramics to drawing &

painting, jewellery making to fashion textiles & needlecraft and so much more.

- Fitness, Health and Wellbeing – yoga, tai chi and meditation courses.
- Family learning activities across Medway’s Children Centres .

2016/17 Academic Year Programme Performance

16.2 The Service’s own self-assessment against the Common Inspection Framework, which was moderated by a specially commissioned current Ofsted inspector, concluded that if the service was inspected tomorrow it would continue to be rated a good provider with key strengths being:

- Good achievement, attendance and retention rates with the vast majority of learners making good progress
- 89% of tutors achieving a good or better teaching, learning assessment outcome.
- Effective systems and practice giving timely and complete visibility of learner progress and supporting continuous improvement across the service.

Achievement, Attendance and Retention

16.3 5974 learners enrolled over the year against 6201 enrolments over the previous academic year (2015/16). This decrease was primarily attributable to the profile of Adult Skills Budget learners presenting and while there were slightly fewer learners the needs of those enrolling meant that some followed qualifications attracting higher ESFA formula funding. This meant that the service again fully utilised its ASB allocation.

16.4 Overall attendance and retention rates are excellent and are as high as realistically achievable with the reality being that there will always be a small percentage of learners who will fail to complete their course for personal reasons outside the services influence or control, e.g., bereavement, ill health etc.

16.5 The year further saw an improvement in learner outcomes with an across programme improvement in achievement rates against last year's already strong performance.

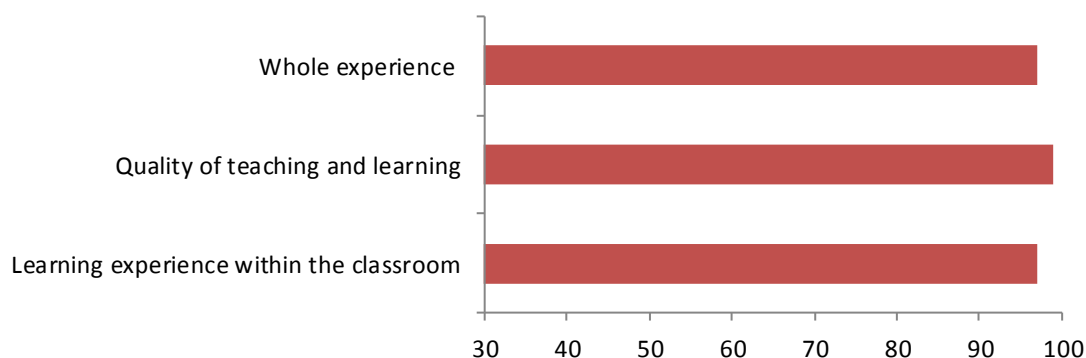
16.6 The full statistical picture of a successful year is set out in the table below.

	Adult Skills Budget Equipping People for Work		Community Learning		Non-Funded	
	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17
Learners	2,447	2,182	3,571	3,672	183	120
Retention Rate	94.0	95.0	97.1	96.9	91.2	95.9
Achievement Rate	88.8	90.4	95.3	96.0	89.6	94.2
Attendance	84.7	86.6	88.1	89.0	90.4	92.7

Learner Satisfaction

- 16.7 Overall learner satisfaction across the service is very high and learners continue to evaluate their experience at MAE as being either satisfactory or above. Over the year 2,664 end of course learner satisfaction surveys were completed with the results being presented below:

Learner Satisfaction End Of Course Survey Outcomes 2016/17



Teaching and Learning

- 16.8 To ensure effective Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) the observer team attended an OTLA training event through the South East Quality Improvement Network (12th July 17) to refresh practice and review observations in line with the updated Common Inspection Framework. Over the year 50 out of 82 tutors were observed and graded. 89% of observations were graded as good or better after moderation with 30% graded as outstanding.

New Initiatives and Partnerships

- 16.9 The Service's volunteer programme continues to grow and it is currently working with 27 volunteers. All Volunteers receive comprehensive training before entering the classroom, e.g., Safeguarding, Prevent and Data Protection, and each is offered the opportunity to qualify as a Learning Support Assistant.
- 16.10 The new apprenticeship programme has made excellent progress during 16/17 with 30 apprentices now on programme. The overall achievement rate over the year was 88.9%, a significant improvement from the 40% in 15/16.
- 16.11 The LLDD cohort (Learners with Learning Difficulties and / Disability) further grew over the year and now accounts for 22% of the offer. A new partnership with Vanquis/Mencap for Supported Learning further provided for the provision of three further LLDD Skills for Work courses followed by an LLDD Independent Living Skills & Prep for Employment course.
- 16.12 Partnership work to promote healthy eating continues with Public Health, supporting Medway Council objectives of reducing health inequalities Little Chefs courses have been delivered from January 2017 along with a

variety of MAE healthy eating courses with plans to deliver within a number of Medway schools for 17/18.

- 16.13 MAE continues to work within the local jobcentre on a weekly basis to promote our offer and work with the JCP to offer opportunities to upskill clients and improve their employment prospects. In June 2017, a 6 week pilot scheme was conducted 'Maths Skills for Work', designed to engage with low level JCP literacy and numeracy learners. This proved very successful and has now been fully incorporated into the main programme.
- 16.14 In support of its targeted Learning agenda work with Medway Libraries delivered the Luton, All Our Voices project. Also, in targeting reducing social isolation, workshops were run on the theme of The Battle of Medway, which engaged several local knitting groups, including libraries and Dementia groups, in completing a tapestry.
- 16.15 Three 'taster' workshops were run over the summer at Eastgate House, to help celebrate and promote its opening, as well as providing an interesting hook to the service's longer crafts courses.
- 16.16 Events as part of the Dickens Festivals continue to provide opportunities for our learners to sell the craft work they have created on our courses. We have also established a very positive relationship with Demelza House, which includes sharing of resources and joint promotions.
- 16.17 For the first time the service ran an event as part of British Science Week, in which all Supported Learning groups were invited to take part in projects and exhibitions up to and including the week itself. This provided an excellent space for English, maths and science to be embedded and included environmental awareness activities, including the impact of global warming presented by a guest scientist from Medway Bee Keepers.
- 16.18 For the Festival of Learning throughout June, highlights were the sketching courses at the Guildhall, where museum staff sourced interesting, historic artefacts and gave short talks before the learners then worked with the art tutor to draw them. Also, we ran Tai Chi sessions in The Vines and the Castle gardens.
- 16.19 We continue to work in partnership with The Rochester Literature Festival, in joint promotional work, hosting events and exploring ways of further engaging the local creative community.
- 16.20 We established a new partnership with Lyrici Arts (*addressing diversity inclusion via arts programming*), which has involved hosting a theatre performance, shared promotional work and exploring bids to deliver a project aimed at reducing social isolation. Under this collaboration joint workshops were further organised at The Brook Theatre as part of the Paint the Town Festival in October.

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Appendices:

None

Background documents

None