

Full Council 25 January 2018 – Schedule of Written Responses to public and Members’ questions

Agenda reference	Question	Response
	Public questions not answered at the meeting	
7D	<p>Becca Hufton of Chatham submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>“Nobody wants there to be people homeless but whilst we continue to have a crisis we need to have a far more robust approach. Over the Christmas period public buildings like Euston Station and the Brighton Centre were used to give some short term relief.</p> <p>What buildings will Medway Council be making available to take a similar approach to give some much needed shelter?”</p> <p>As Becca Hufton was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Hufton</p> <p>The approach to providing winter provision for rough sleepers varies depending on the Local Authority and the extent of rough sleeping within their area.</p> <p>In Medway we have worked with charities and voluntary organisations to enable rough sleepers to access winter night shelters. There are 28 beds for rough sleepers, 12 are available every night from 2 January through to 26 March and a further 16 are available when temperatures are 0°C or colder.</p> <p>We will continue to engage with all organisations, working with rough sleepers in Medway, to ensure that as many accommodation and support options are made available as possible.</p>
7F	<p>Lily Madigan of Upper Halling submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>“The Government has asked local councils to give their views on supporting Refuges by allowing housing benefit to be paid to those who have to move into a Refuge.</p> <p>Will Medway Council prevent Refuges who provide safety and shelter in our towns from having to close by giving me a guarantee that funding will continue?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Madigan.</p> <p>We have maintained funding for two refuges during the current contract period covering June 2014-June 2019. We will be beginning our recommissioning programme later this year.</p> <p>Two refuges, comprising 14 individual units of supported accommodation, are commissioned in Medway. These are part-funded by grants from our Strategic Housing Service, partly through Housing Benefit. This is in addition to a variety</p>

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	<p>As Lily Madigan was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>of Domestic Abuse services for Medway residents which are currently being re-commissioned jointly by Public Health and Strategic Housing. We actively seek opportunities to pursue funding opportunities to enhance our Domestic Abuse service.</p> <p>Whilst I am not the Portfolio Holder for Revenues and Benefits, I am able to confirm that the government has committed to ring-fencing this funding to prevent it being spent on other priorities, and has stated its aim to increase the number of supported housing schemes. We have been given no further detail on how long this ring-fence would apply or the size of potential increase in future provision. We will continue to monitor the Government's position on this closely and will engage at the earliest opportunity with any consultation groups we are invited to attend.</p>
7G	<p>Ralph Allison of Gillingham submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>"I would like to request that the Council provide emergency funding in order to repair and replace locks in lockers at Medway Park which were subject to vandalism and criminal damage, prior to the availability of funds in the new financial year."</p> <p>As Ralph Allison was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Allison.</p> <p>Medway Park is our regional centre of sporting excellence, and is an extremely busy centre, with more than 2,000 customers per day on average coming through the doors.</p> <p>While it is regrettable, we do occasionally have incidents of vandalism to lockers and currently we have nearly 400 operational lockers available for customers to use.</p> <p>Our contractor will be undertaking any outstanding repairs imminently.</p>

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7L	<p>Diane Hughes of Chatham submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>“The Council should be aware of the dangerous potholes and lack of sufficient parking around Sturla Road, Glencoe Road, and Otway Street, Chatham. Cars and vans park on the corner of roads because there is nowhere else to park, but this is dangerous for vehicles turning into roads, and emergency vehicles would not be able to access many of these streets.</p> <p>Could the Portfolio Holder assure residents that action will be taken to make this area safe for drivers?”</p> <p>As Diane Hughes was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Ms Hughes.</p> <p>These roads are inspected on an annual basis and this was last undertaken in September and October last year. Following these inspections, some minor repairs were completed in Otway Street but no safety defects requiring repair were identified for the two other roads. Sturla Road was resurfaced in July 2013 and Otway Street was partially resurfaced (from the bridge up to number 36) in December 2012. On the last inspection, it was noted that Otway Terrace would benefit from resurfacing, and this will be considered as part of the Council’s annual programme of works.</p> <p>In relation to Parking Enforcement, these roads are subject to regular enforcement patrols by the Parking Enforcement Team and we have issued a total of 57 PCNs this year. To address the issues of corner parking we will look at putting in place double yellow lines. I will ask my Parking Services team to confirm the timeline for this directly to you as it will need to be added to the Works Programme.</p>
7M	<p>Simon Saunders of Rochester submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>“Please could the Portfolio Holder explain what public consultation has happened as regard any ludicrous proposals to move the coach park to the Esplanade in Rochester?”</p> <p>As Simon Saunders was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Saunders.</p> <p>The requirements for a relocated coach park have been raised and discussed at a number of public forums, including the Medway Tourism Association, Rochester Town Forum and Rochester Riverside consultations.</p> <p>The Esplanade Gardens option is no longer being considered. Having investigated 36 possible sites over the past two years the intention remains to find a site that will keep the coach park in Rochester. This is still under review</p>

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		<p>and further work is being undertaken before a final decision is made.</p> <p>A public meeting is planned to follow a briefing for Members once a final proposal has emerged.</p>
7N	<p>Sue Alexander of Lordswood submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:</p> <p>“Like you I am a resident of Lordswood. Unfortunately the Boundary Commission have indicated they believe this is part of Gillingham and Rainham constituency - I have written to say I believe this is incorrect and Lordswood has more in common with Princes Park and Walderslade.</p> <p>I note that the current MP for Gillingham and Rainham is also a local councillor for Rainham Central ward, works for a Saudi Arabian Think Tank and this month has been made Vice Chair of the Conservative Party.</p> <p>Does Councillor Jarrett, as Leader of the Council, agree with me that having all four of those roles is not sustainable and means residents in Rainham Central are not going to get the representation they need and deserve?”</p> <p>As Sue Alexander was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you Ms Alexander for your question.</p> <p>I must strongly disagree: I have no reason to doubt Councillor Chishti’s ability to serve his community. I am grateful to Councillor Chishti for the excellent work he carries out within the community and I have always found him to be hardworking and diligent. Councillor Chishti has consistently put the interests and needs of the residents he represents first, and I would like to congratulate him on his recent promotion to Vice Chair of the Conservative Party for Communities. I am sure that he will continue to do a good job in his new expanded role.</p> <p>I would also like to reiterate my congratulations to former Councillor Kelly Tolhurst – another hardworking individual – and thank her for all she has done for Medway in her time as an elected Member. Fortunately, through her role in Parliament she is ideally placed to continue to represent the interests of people living all across Rochester & Strood constituency, and indeed the wider Medway area. I look forward to continuing to work with her to fight for Medway’s interests and I wish her every success in her promotion and for the future.</p>

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7R	<p>Lindsey Burke of Rochester submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:</p> <p>“Why are the Council potentially considering getting rid of the children’s playground on the Esplanade when for most weeks of the year the current coach park is nowhere near maximum capacity usage?”</p> <p>As Lindsay Burke was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Burke.</p> <p>The Esplanade Gardens option is no longer being considered. Having investigated 36 possible sites over the past two years the intention remains to find a site that will keep the coach park in Rochester. This is still under review and further work is being undertaken before a final decision is made.</p>
	Members’ questions not answered at the meeting	
10J	<p>Councillor Bowler submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:</p> <p>“We now have confirmation that Medway has the worst record on fly tipping in Kent. Does the portfolio holder agree with me that by stopping free bulky waste collection and reducing the size of the community enforcement team he has made the problem worse?”</p>	<p>No, I do not agree with this statement, Cllr Bowler.</p> <p>Medway’s population is double most of the other Kent districts and this must be taken into account when looking at the figures. If you look at instances per head of population, Medway does not have the worst record in Kent.</p> <p>Fly tipping incidents have been increasing nationally, up by 15.3% in the South East and 7.1% nationally. However in Medway fly tipping has only increased by 2.2%, despite bulky waste charges being introduced in April 2016. In fact, the types of items that are now being charged for in bulky waste - electrical items, white goods and bulky household items like mattresses - has DECREASED by 25.6%, 11.2% and 4.6% respectively.</p> <p>On your final point, following a wider restructure in 2013, the Environmental Enforcement Team was expanded. Also in</p>

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		2017 an additional two officers were added to the team, following a change in service delivery structure.
10K	<p>Councillor Price submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:</p> <p>“The recent closure of Superdrug and Gilberthorpes in Gillingham High Street follows a long line of other national retailers and small independents who have withdrawn from the town in recent years. Many retailers in Gillingham Town Centre feel that Medway Council is focusing all of its resources on Chatham and Rochester, while neglecting Gillingham.</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder therefore justify why Chatham and Rochester’s Town Centre Forums are organised and administered directly by Medway Council, while Gillingham receives no such support?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Cllr Price.</p> <p>I appreciate that the current economic climate is challenging for the vitality of Town Centres and this is further exacerbated by changing retail trends and the advent of on-line shopping.</p> <p>However, in more recent years, due to budgetary pressures and consequently reduced town centre management resources, the Council has facilitated Forums in Chatham, Rochester and Rainham and maintained support for the town centres of Strood and Gillingham through organising the twice-weekly markets that are held in each town. We also support Gillingham by regularly liaising with traders, retailers and businesses on key issues. In addition, where there have been Gillingham Town Forum meetings, the Council has sent relevant officers to support and respond as appropriate.</p>
10L	<p>Councillor Khan asked submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin:</p> <p>“There is a growing perception amongst shoppers and traders that Gillingham High Street is unsafe.</p> <p>Given that last year there were 148 instances of violent crime, sexual offences and anti-social behaviour reported in Gillingham with further incidents unreported, what action is the Portfolio Holder going to take to tackle the fears of Medway residents that Gillingham High Street is an unsafe place to shop, work and visit?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Cllr Khan.</p> <p>Kent Police have reassured me that they are proactively targeting those individuals who are responsible for crime in Medway. A Police Officer and two Police Community Support Officers are tasked to deal with crime and disorder in Gillingham town centre, with an additional PCSO due to be in place within the next few months. The officers’ duty times have been adjusted to provide more visibility into the evening hours.</p>

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		<p>Kent Police have also been undertaking high-visibility patrols and using stop and search powers to target those believed to be involved in ASB, as well as using their dispersal powers to direct people causing ASB to leave the area for up to 48 hours. The dedicated ASB car has been deployed in all of Medway's town centres on a daily basis and at times of high demand.</p> <p>Kent Police have run a number of operations to increase visibility at peak times, as well as Op Raptor, the force-wide response towards preventing and disrupting gang activity.</p> <p>Our Youth Services are also undertaking diversionary, outreach work across Medway. The Community Safety Partnership has been working closely with Medway Street Pastors and Medway Norse to provide a vehicle for use as a high visibility place of safety in Gillingham High Street during the Monday market. In addition, our Safer Communities team is proposing to introduce a team of officers to work with Kent Police to tackle complex ASB problems across Medway.</p>
10M	<p>Councillor Craven submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mackness:</p> <p>"Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether or not they will meet the legal transfer deadline of the 31st March for transferring all statemented children to EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) in Medway?"</p>	<p>I can confirm that currently the final 124 Statements of Special Educational Need are in the process of being converted to Education, Health and Care Plans and that we are confident that the transfer process will be completed by 31st March 2018.</p> <p>Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission recently completed a five day inspection of Local Area SEND across health, social care and education and noted that Medway Council was on track to complete the conversions by 31st March 2018.</p>

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10N	<p>Councillor Godwin submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE:</p> <p>“Residents are raising serious concerns about the proposal to move the existing coach park from its current location to the Esplanade. Could the portfolio holder explain the rationale behind this suggestion which is not likely to carry the support of the community?”</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Cllr Godwin.</p> <p>The Esplanade Gardens option is no longer being considered. Having investigated 36 possible sites over the past two years the intention remains to find a site that will keep the coach park in Rochester. This is still under review and further work is being undertaken before a final decision is made.</p> <p>In order to provide a much-needed new primary school for Rochester, the decision was made to move the coach park from its current location.</p> <p>Residents have made their views known in various forums, and they are keen to keep the coach park in Rochester.</p>

Democratic Services

30 January 2018