

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 14 June 2018

6.30pm to 8.30pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Bhutia (Vice-Chairman), Carr, Etheridge (Chairman), Hicks, Mrs Josie Iles, Osborne, Paterson, Saroy, Shaw, Stamp and Tejan
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Purdy (Substitute for Griffin)
Tranter (Substitute for Williams)
- In Attendance:** Richard Hicks, Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive
Michael Edwards, Acting Integrated Transport Manager
Tomasz Kozlowski, Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration
Anna Marie Lawrence, Head of Performance and Intelligence
Millie Pountney, Legal Adviser
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

75 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Griffin and Williams.

76 Record of Meeting and record of Joint Meeting of Committees

The record of the meeting held on 28 March 2018 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 16 May 2018 were signed by the Chairman as correct.

77 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Paterson to his first Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting since becoming a Medway Councillor.

The Chairman also informed the Committee that Lord Brighouse who had been a Ward Councillor for Rede Court Ward between 2000 – 2003 had recently passed away.

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78 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman drew attention to the supplementary agenda and informed the Committee that he had accepted this item as an urgent item so as not to delay scrutiny and discussion on this matter until August.

79 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Josie Iles referred to agenda item 7 (Member's Item – Co-ordinated approach for initiatives and projects in Rochester) and informed the Committee that she was the Treasurer of the Friends of Medway Archives which was one of the organisations referred to within this report.

Councillor Osborne referred to agenda item 7 (Member's Item – Co-ordinated approach for initiatives and projects in Rochester) and declared an interest in so far as he lives on Rochester High Street.

80 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out a summary of petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee.

Paragraph 3.1 of the report set out a summary of the responses to petitions that had been accepted by the petition organisers.

In accordance with the Council's petitions scheme, two petitions had been referred for discussion by the Committee and the lead petitioners were in attendance and invited to address the Committee.

1) Maidstone Road/Pattens Lane pedestrian access and road safety

The Committee welcomed Mrs E Turpin to the meeting and she set out her reasons for requesting a review of her petition.

She circulated photographs of the junction and advised that pedestrian use of this junction was busy as it abutted a church, a pharmacy and

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several schools. She explained that pedestrians were unsure from which direction cars were coming from and referred to the number of vehicular accidents at this junction and near misses.

Mrs Turpin expressed concern that the central islands at this junction were too small and stated that other junctions of a similar size in Medway had pedestrian crossing facilities.

She commented that nationally people were being encouraged to pursue a healthy lifestyle and increase physical activity and more people would be prepared to walk to their destination if this junction was safer for pedestrians to cross.

She referred to the various options outlined in the Director's response and, in particular, the impact that each of the individual options would have upon the traffic flow at the junction and expressed the view that there may be other options available that would keep traffic flowing.

In response, the Acting Head of Integrated Transport confirmed that pedestrian crossing facilities were not provided at this junction and accident statistics only showed vehicular traffic incidents. He also advised that there were approximately 200 pedestrian movements between 7am – 7pm at this junction.

He reported upon the various options that had been investigated as outlined in the report and advised that traffic modelling indicated that should any of the options be introduced, the junction which was currently operating within capacity would, as a result, operate at over capacity.

He referred to the third option which involved the possible provision of Puffin Crossings on Maidstone Road to the North of the junction, and on Walderslade Road in the vicinity of its junction with Park Avenue. Such crossings would operate independently of the junction but would be located some way from the desire line and therefore may not be used. He reiterated that the road safety data indicated that the current design of the junction was not unsafe for pedestrians.

The Committee discussed the petition and the officer's response and whilst a number of Members had sympathy with the lead petitioner, it was recognised that road safety schemes were prioritised based on road safety data. From the information received, this junction did not rank sufficiently high enough to justify the implementation of a scheme at the current time. It was considered that if the Council were to undertake works at this junction to improve pedestrian access it would be inconsistent with current policy and could create a precedent.

The Committee noted that the third option of providing stand alone pedestrian crossing facilities would most likely be the least expensive option and sought information as to the likely costs involved. In response, the Acting Head of Integrated Transport advised that to date,

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none of the options had been costed but it was likely that each pedestrian crossing would cost several thousand pounds.

A Member sought information as to whether there are any similar schemes ranked on the priority list of road safety schemes. The Acting Head of Integrated Transport advised that he did not have this information available but confirmed that this particular junction would be a low priority due to the accident data available.

The Chairman thanked the lead petitioner for attending the meeting to speak on her petition and advised that from the information presented there were other road safety schemes which ranked higher priority but that dependent upon budgets and available resources, it may be possible to reconsider a road safety scheme at this junction a future date.

Decision:

- a) The Committee thanked Mrs Turpin for attending the meeting and speaking on her petition and agreed that no further action be taken at the present time on the basis that there are other road safety schemes in Medway which have been ranked as a higher priority.
 - b) The Committee noted the petition response and appropriate officer action set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- 2) Objection to potential parking restrictions at Commodore's Hard adjacent to the causeway**

The Committee welcomed Mr P Clarke to the meeting and he set out his reasons for requesting a review of his petition.

He explained the impact that the recently introduced parking restrictions were having upon boating activities at The Strand and advised that Commodore's Hard was the only site from which small boats could be launched.

He referred to the current consultation on the possibility of introducing a 30 minute limited wait period which would provide users of the launching area sufficient time to detach their equipment and vehicles from trailers and then move their vehicles to the Pay and Display parking area. He explained that this initiative was impracticable as to launch a small boat from the slipway resulted in the boat user wading into the river with their boat. They would then need to return to their car wet and covered in mud so as to move it to the Pay and Display car park.

He commended the Council on the way in which it actively marketed the river not only in publicity materials promoting Medway but also in the current issue of Medway Matters where it was stated that 'Enjoying the River' was one of the top 5 things to do in 2018. However, in reality,

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small boat users could no longer use the slipway at Commodore's Hard as a result of the parking restrictions.

Mr Clarke advised the Committee that the popularity of boat ownership was increasing and the majority of boat owners started out with small vessels. He also expressed concern as the lack of investment on the slipway.

The Acting Head of Integrated Transport outlined the background to the introduction of parking charges at The Strand and advised that following the introduction of the charges, some individuals were now parking at Commodore's Hard so as to avoid parking charges. Following discussions with Ward Councillors, it had been decided that the introduction of a 30 minute waiting limit would enable boat users to continue to use the facility.

The Ward Councillor supported Mr Clarke's concerns and the impact that the introduction of parking charges at The Strand was having on boat users. He advised that on occasions, access to the river by boat users was blocked by those individuals who were now using the slipway to park vehicles so as to avoid parking charges. He also shared Mr Clarke's frustrations with the lack of investment in the slipway and the need for dredging.

Arising from discussions, Mr Clarke advised that the duration of the proposed limited waiting period was irrelevant as it was impractical to move a vehicle when wet and muddy after launching a boat into the river. He stated that most boat users would be out on the river for between 5 – 6 hours and therefore he considered that there needed to be a contingency in place for river users.

The Committee discussed the petition and the concerns raised by Mr Clarke on behalf of boat users.

A Member suggested that one way forward would be for boat users to be issued with permits to enable them to leave their vehicles on Commodore's Hard whilst out on the river and for a set number of parking spaces to be set aside specifically for boat permit holders.

The Acting Integrated Transport Manager confirmed that this was one alternative that could be investigated but in doing so it would be necessary to consider all users of the Strand Leisure Park.

The Committee also discussed the enforcement of such parking permit scheme if it were to be introduced.

Mr Clarke suggested that approximately 5 – 6 parking bays would be sufficient to be set aside for boat users and he could see no reason why boat owners would object to paying for a permit to use such bays if they were located near the slipway.

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Decision:

Officers be requested to investigate the possible introduction of parking permits for river users to enable them to park on Commodore's Hard when launching their boats from the slipway.

81 Member's Item - Request for provision of stairwell in Nelson Terrace, Chatham

Discussion:

Councillor Osborne referred to his Member's Item requesting that officers consider the possible provision of a stairwell to help elderly and disabled people gain access to the footpath in Nelson Terrace, Chatham.

A copy of photographs of Nelson Terrace and a staircase plan had been circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Osborne referred to the Director's comments at paragraph 3 of the report and thanked officers for the work that they had undertaken to investigate whether the provision of a stairwell was feasible. He accepted that as a result of investigations, it was not possible for steps to be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act due to the narrow width of the landing area and the maximum depth of each step which also fell below the standards required.

Councillor Osborne accepted that this was now out of the Council's hands and advised that he would follow this up with the housing providers.

Decision:

The Committee thanked Councillor Osborne for his Member's Item and requested that officers make the housing providers aware of the issue in order that they may consider how accessibility between the dwellings and the privately owned path at street level may be improved.

82 Member's item - Co-ordinated approach for initiatives and projects in Rochester

Discussion:

Councillor Paterson thanked the Chairman for agreeing to accept his Member's Item on the agenda at short notice.

He referred to a number of issues affecting Rochester, in particular the proposed hotel, replacement coach park, short and long term car parking and the proposed sale of the Conservancy Board Building and expressed concern that these issues were being dealt with in isolation and without a co-ordinated approach. Whilst he appreciated that the involvement of a number of groups

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and bodies had been referred to within the Director's response in the report, he expressed concern that there was not an over-arching body co-ordinating a strategic vision for Rochester. Therefore, in his Member's item he was seeking provision for bringing together local stakeholders to enable a co-ordinated, joined-up approach so that all projects could be considered in the round.

Councillor Paterson expressed concern that the response from the Director, set out at paragraph 4 of the report, failed to address the question asked and did not provide a response to the issues that would arise in the future affecting Rochester.

In response the Director for Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive stressed the critical role that Rochester plays in the rich heritage of Medway. He set out that the Council's approach to Rochester was underpinned by a strategic view and he referred to the Cultural Strategy which had been recommended to Cabinet for approval by this Committee and subsequently approved by Cabinet and endorsed by the Arts Council and a number of other bodies. In addition, Medway's Destination Management Plan was developed with Visit Kent, the leading destination management organisation in the country. The Council also worked closely with the Medway Tourism Association which represented people across Medway and was independently chaired. All of these were encompassed within a wider strategic approach through the Medway Local Plan which would set out a vision for Medway for the next 20 years. The Council had also been commended on its Strategic approach, its consultation and engagement through the recent Corporate Peer Challenge.

The Director also referred to the free events and festivals programme offered throughout Medway, many of which were held in Rochester, and which is one of the largest in the country.

Cllr Paterson advised that he was specifically concerned with the built heritage of Rochester and therefore any reference to the events and festival programme was irrelevant in this context.

The Director responded by confirming that all Council property holdings in Rochester were currently being assessed so as to identify those that were of specific historic importance following the review announced by the Leader.

The Committee discussed the item having regard to the points raised by Councillor Paterson and the Director.

A Member referred to the existence of the Rochester City Centre Forum and advised that this Forum encompassed a broad range of representation from stakeholders in Rochester and dealt with local issues. Representatives included traders, residents, historic associations, the King's School and the City of Rochester. In the past, meetings had also been attended by the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holders and the Director for Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive. In recent months, the Forum had debated the possibility of setting up a Neighbourhood

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Plan. He was therefore of the opinion that there was a facility in place for local stakeholders to come together to discuss matters of interest in Rochester.

Another Member supported Councillor Paterson in that, as Ward Councillor, Councillor Paterson was reflecting the views expressed to him by residents and those within the local community and he felt that the issues raised had not been sufficiently addressed by the Director in his response. He considered that consultations on matters such as the re-location of the coach park and the pick-up and drop-off points at the proposed hotel were being carried out in isolation and were piecemeal and therefore the public did not have confidence that such proposals were being handled coherently and strategically.

Reference was also made to the loss of a Bank and ATM machine in Rochester High Street. Whilst not a Council service, this was an important facility which should be available in a town where tourism is actively encouraged.

Arising from discussions, a Member expressed a view that in his opinion decisions concerning some issues affecting Rochester were not transparent and open and this was not helped by the fact that Rochester West Ward was represented by two elected Councillors representing two different political parties. This meant that they may not be receiving the same level of information. Reference was made to the Rochester City Centre Forum and it was suggested that perhaps this Forum could be afforded a role in engaging with people on matters affecting Rochester.

Decision:

The Committee thanked Councillor Paterson for his Member's Item and noted the item.

83 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 4 and end of Year 2017/18

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance in Quarter 4 and end of year 2017/18 for the key measures of success and projects relevant to this Committee.

The following was discussed:

- **GH6 CP – Satisfaction with parks and open spaces**

A Member referred to the performance statistics for satisfaction with parks and open spaces and stated that whilst these statistics looked good, there was not the opportunity to scrutinise the challenges presented by those maintaining parks and open spaces. He expressed concern that there appeared to be a lack of both equipment and maintenance of equipment and expressed the view that the performance statistics in Quarter 1 may show a reduction in satisfaction.

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In response the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive advised that this issue had been raised at the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a response provided by NORSE to the Member concerned.

He commented that the weather and growing conditions had been a challenge for NORSE in recent months and that they were now trying to get back on track. He also confirmed that NORSE were acquiring new equipment to assist with this.

- **NI 195a – Improved street and environmental cleanliness: Litter**

A Member expressed concern that there appeared to be a discord between the statistics that the Council were reporting and the general feeling expressed by residents, in particular in areas in Chatham, Luton and Gillingham.

The Head of Performance and Intelligence advised that this performance target related to the inspection of streets as opposed to public satisfaction and she referred to a briefing note which had been circulated earlier in the year at the request of Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee specifically relating to performance indicator NI 195a.

A Member referred to the increased use of social media and digitalisation and drew attention for the need for the Council to be responsive to reports of incidents e.g. flytipping via different media forums.

In response, the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that increasingly, the use of digital and social media was becoming the method of reporting by choice by some members of the public and the Council needed to move forward and ensure that systems were in place to respond to this; a key aim of the Transformation programme.

A Member questioned whether it was possible to have a breakdown of the statistics per area. In response, the Head of Performance and Intelligence confirmed that officers take full account of the demographics in statistical data. She stated that the Council was currently seeking to recruit to the Citizen's Panel via social media and in doing so would ensure that the Panel had a representative mix of respondents.

Decision:

- a) The Committee note the quarter 4 and end of year report on the performance of the measures of success used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities;

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- b) A report be submitted to a future meeting on the systems that have been put in place to capture those requests from members of the public that are received in a digital format.

84 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a copy of its work programme and was advised that a new Forward Plan was published on 11 June 2018. Those additional items on the new Forward Plan, relevant to the work of this Committee were reported.

A Member referred to the item scheduled for 16 August 2018 on the levels of finance needed to be invested in the highways network in order to maintain current levels of technical performance and requested whether this report could also capture problems experienced as a result of the recent severe weather. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive reminded the Committee that this was a long standing item on the work programme and he agreed that if possible, officers would seek to include this additional information in the report.

A Member also requested that the report include reference to the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Survey results. In response the Head of Performance and Intelligence advised that the 2017 NHT survey results were now available and had been the subject of discussion at a focus group on 21 May 2018. She agreed to liaise with the Head of Highways and Traffic to include reference to the survey results in the report.

Decision:

- a) The work programme be noted;
- b) The report on the levels of finance needed to be invested in the highways network in order to maintain current levels of technical performance, due in August 2018, include the following additional information:
- Information on the challenges that the recent severe weather had on the highway network.
 - The outcome of the NHT 2017 survey.

Chairman

Date:

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