

**REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22 JANUARY 2019

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

Report from: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and
Community Services Councillor Doe

Summary

This report sets out progress made within the areas covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services Councillor Doe which fall within the remit of this Committee.

1. Background

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

- Archives
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Events and Festivals
- Greenspaces
- Heritage
- Leisure Services
- Sporting Legacy
- Theatres and Arts
- Tourism

1.2 Achievements for 2018 are detailed by service area below.

2. Recruitment

The Directorate has recruited two new senior staff:

- Dawn Hudd joined Medway Council in December 2018 as the Assistant Director Physical and Cultural Regeneration.
- Jon Hogan joined Medway Council in July as the Head of Festivals, Arts, Theatres and Events.

3. Archives

3.1 The new Medway Archives Centre has continued to thrive in its new location at Bryant Road in Strood. It has received a steady flow of visitors and researchers with increased online and telephone requests following the digitalisation of the Archives onto the Adlib system.

3.2 Exhibitions at Medway Archives in 2018 have covered an array of subjects including World War 1, the history of Strood, the Cabinet of Curiosity, WW1 Paper Toys, and ending with the Rochester Bridge exhibition.

4. Armed Forces Covenant

4.1 Medway Council continues to honour the Armed Forces Covenant, and I am the Armed Forces Champion with Daniel Ratcliff, Skills and Employment Programme Manager appointed as the lead officer. The covenant ensures the council has the policies and practices in place to ensure members of the armed forces are not disadvantaged in their dealings with the Council. An officer group has been established which will work across the council to ensure policies and practices are robust and respected. Medway Council was delighted to receive the Employer Defence Recognition Silver Award for the work that the Council does to support those in the Armed Forces and provide opportunities for staff to join and participate in the Reserves. Engaging with Forces Connect South East and delivering training to front line staff is central to the Council's ambition to move from Silver to Gold.

5. Events and Festivals

5.1 The service area that covers Festivals, Arts, Theatres and Events is responsible for the delivery of the creative and cultural elements of the Division, including one of the largest free events and festivals programme in the country, two professional Theatres, a contemporary art gallery of regional status and an Arts Development service.

Work has begun on the revision and development of the existing Medway Cultural Strategy (which concludes in 2019). Under a new Chair – Liz Moran, Director of Culture from the University of Kent, the Medway Cultural Partnership has re-grouped and an Executive Group formed to take forward specific proposals. The Partnership has agreed that a Medway bid for UK City of Culture 2025 is desirable and will be working towards this aim along with reviewing, refreshing and renewing the Medway Cultural Strategy to follow on from the current strategy.

The service continues to deliver high quality successful activities for the people who live in and visit Medway. The following highlights are an indication of some of the achievements of the service, this year, which is helping to gain the reputation for the area as one of the regional leaders in the creative and entertainment sector.

5.2 The English Festival

The numbers attending represented an increase on previous years with an estimated 15,500 visitors in 2018.

5.3 McCudden Commemoration

This event commemorated the 100th anniversary of Major James McCudden being awarded the Victoria Cross. A plaque was unveiled creating a legacy for years to come of the Major and his connection with Medway.

5.4 Sweeps Festival

Now in its 38th year, the three day Sweeps Festival continues to celebrate Morris dancing and folk music throughout Rochester. The recently added Artisan Produce Fair, which was brought in to supplement the existing Record and Musical Instrument, Psychic and Folk-Art Fairs has proved extremely popular. Approximately 80,000 visitors attended over the 3 days which is the best attendance since 2014.

5.5 Dickens Festival

The 40th Dickens Festival continued the tradition of attracting visitors from as far afield as Japan, Australia and Europe as well as across the whole country. The festival is still regarded as the best tribute to one of the country's greatest writers. This year, the festival returned to its traditional dates of the last weekend of the school half-term. However, restricting the event to two days has allowed the standard of the entertainment to be raised without increasing the budget. Attendance figures were on par with previous years with an estimated 38,500 visitors over the weekend.

5.6 River Festival

In 2018 the River Festival was held at the Chatham Historic Dockyard, 8,500 visitors attended. Entry was free to all visitors and allowed many Medway residents to access the Dockyard and enjoy the exhibition galleries free of charge, but also capturing visitor contact details for future promotions. Both land and water based activities were provided within the Dockyard complex and in the Mast Pond. A return to Chatham Waterfront in 2019 will reconnect the River Festival with much more of a view of the River activities.

5.7 Armed Forces Day

This event is now regarded as the most prominent in the region and is regularly attended by visitors and military personnel alike. The event is used to promote the close and special relationship between the people of Medway and Her Majesty's Armed Forces. It is also used to celebrate the commitment

of Medway Council to the Armed Forces. This was illustrated in a speech by the Leader of Medway Council. An estimated 11,000 visitors attended the event.

5.8 Freedom March – The Princess of Wales Royal Regiment

Freedom of Medway Status was conferred on The Princess of Wales Royal Regiment, which resulted in a ceremonial march through Chatham with a salute being taken by the Mayor of Medway, followed by a civic lunch where the ceremonial casket was presented to the Regiment. The Freedom March took place in Chatham town centre and proceeded along Dock Road, where a salute was taken by The Worshipful Mayor of Medway accompanied by other civic and military dignitaries.

5.9 Castle Concerts

Following five nights of Concerts in 2017, the 2018 programme also provided five nights of live music at the Castle. However, all but one of the acts did not sell out.

5.10 Will Adams Festival

Approximately 3,200 visitors attended which is less than 2017. However the inaccurate weather forecast didn't help. It didn't stop those attending enjoying Japanese culture through demonstrations, performance and hands-on activities, including Martial Arts demonstrations; calligraphy; origami and Taiko Drumming as well as displays, stands and exhibitions of Japanese life and culture.

5.11 Focus On Festivals

Focus On Rainham – Sat 19 May at Cozenton Park
 Focus On Walderslade - Sat 1 September at Hook Meadow Recreation Ground
 Focus On Strood – Sat 15 September at Northcote Recreation Ground
 Focus On Hoo – Sat 22 September at High Halstow Recreation Ground

The above Focus On Festivals were planned as new events for Medway in 2018 to celebrate the individual local areas with community participation at their heart. These events complimented the diverse range of free events produced by Medway Council predominantly in Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham.

Attendance:

Event	Visitor Attendance
Focus On Rainham	5,000
Focus On Walderslade	3,000
Focus On Strood	2,100
Focus On Hoo	550*
Total	10,650

Three out of four of the events had good weather and the Focus On Rainham event also screened the Royal Wedding. * The Focus On Hoo event was subject to wet weather and very poor weather forecasts, which impacted on visitor attendance.

Medway Sport staff also attended all the Focus Festivals this year to support local communities and encourage activity.

5.12 Capstone Festival

This event focusses on a 'celebration of outdoor pursuits'. However heavy rain led to the cancellation of this event.

5.13 Bonfire Night

The build up to the event was beset by very wet weather however the day and night of the event was dry and as the wind dropped the crowds enjoyed the bonfire and traditional firework display. Despite the previous poor weather the event attracted circa 22,000 visitors.

5.14 Dickensian Christmas Festival & Rochester Christmas Market

The 2018 Dickensian Christmas Festival was attended by one of the largest numbers of people, (over 40,000 per day) in the history of the two day festival. Over 150,000 in total attended the Christmas Market, which ran over three weekends prior to Christmas:

- 24 and 25 November
- 30 November, 1 and 2 December
- 7, 8 and 9 December

5.15 WW1 Centenary Commemoration

Throughout the year, Medway Council has run many events and activities to mark the Centenary of WW1. Commemorative events and activities from attendance at Services of Remembrance on Sunday 11 November to exhibitions and creative events.

Some of the on-going commemorative activity was published in Medway Matters. The "5,000 Poppies" project produced thousands of knitted poppies. Rochester Cathedral and Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham displayed the poppies as part of the project, which has become an international tribute of respect and remembrance to those who served in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.

"Men of the Medway Towns. The Ultimate Sacrifice 1918 – 1919" is an exhibition highlighting the men of Medway who gave their lives and was on display until 1 December at Medway Archives Centre, Strood

"On our Streets - Soldiers' Stories" was a project that benefitted from a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project was inspired by the de Caville Index, which was started by Mick de Caville, a local man, who over 25 years ago began to record street by street the men of Medway who died during the

Great War. The index was completed by the Friends of Medway Archives, and made available online in 2014. By using the index, our project aimed to help people find out who volunteered to fight in the Great War and where in Medway they lived.

“Untold Stories: A Celebration of Black People in Kent” was on display at Chatham Historic Dockyard until 2 December and celebrated the Black community of Kent including Walter Tull, the British Army’s first black officer to command white soldiers, who died during WW1.

5.16 100 years of Votes for Women

The Centenary of the passing of the first Act allowing women to vote was marked with the Castle top-most towers floodlit in purple a commemorative lecture, with a choir performance from Rochester Grammar School girls and an exhibition of Vera Conway. The event was financially supported by the Rochester Bridge Trust.

5.17 Major Future Work Streams

- 5.17.1 2019 Castle Concerts and Proms (Wednesday 10 July – Saturday 13 July): The 2019 series has been approached with emphasis on attracting high quality acts with broad appeal and artists that have the capacity to sell-out, with ticket prices pegged so as to cover all costs and generate a surplus with sold-out shows. Returning to four nights and maintaining the no alcohol policy, the Concerts have been planned collectively with FATE and the Comms Team.

We have secured a major named artist for Thursday which is subject to contract currently being pursued and we have offers out for the other 2 nights. The Proms will feature the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra as in previous years with a programme of Bond movie classics and a second half of traditional Proms classics. The Proms in 2019 will also feature the male quartet Collabro – well known from their TV appearances along with local singers – The Rock Choir and the Rochester Grammar School for Girls choir. For the first time since the Concerts began the Proms tickets are on sale before Christmas 2018 so as to be available for Christmas present purchases. To date over 266 tickets have been sold.

- 5.17.2 Focus On Festivals: These festivals are designed to stimulate the community to participate and/or attend, also to strengthen neighbourhoods and will be based on the tried and tested method of utilising a public open space to provide a community based ‘free to attend’ entertainment programme with stalls and stands; food and beverage; sporting and participation activities; live music and demonstration, with the Council playing a major part in promoting the achievements and developments that have taken place over the years in Medway. FATE will work with Ward Councillors and Community Groups to encourage greater participation. The dates for 2019 are:

- Focus On Rainham - Sat 18 May
- Focus On Walderslade - Sun 30 June
- Focus on Strood - Sat 14 Sept
- Focus On Hoo - Sat 21 Sept

5.17.3 Dickens 150: 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of Dickens' death. As such there is opportunity to highlight Dickens connections with Medway and to enliven the Dickens Festival in June and the Dickensian Christmas Festival in December. FATE has drawn together internal Medway Council colleagues from School Improvements, Comms and Libraries as well as Heritage to seek to enlarge the offer, to theme activity in the year and the Festival periods. FATE has also been working with external partners – from the Historic Dockyard to the University of Kent, Nucleus Arts and the Royal Engineers Museums to also seek to collaborate on events with this theme. Work continues with the ambition of approaching funders to support new activity, events, installations, exhibitions and mass participation events.

5.17.4 Creative and Cultural Industries: FATE is working with several other Local Authorities on the South East Creative, Cultural & Digital Support project with European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding over the next 3 years to offer grants and business support for business development in Kent and Medway. This project is supported only by officer time from the Head of FATE and is led by Thurrock Council who have appointed project co-ordinators to work within the Medway & North Kent Area and we are awaiting appointment of a delivery partner. Collectively we will reach out to the freelance, small and medium enterprises, etc. sector to offer support in this area. FATE have been supported by Regeneration colleagues to identify potential beneficiaries and also guide and steer the project.

FATE along with Regeneration colleagues have also been involved in the submission of an Estuary-wide application for funding from the Government Cultural Development Fund through the Thames Estuary Production Corridor. The proposal is for an exciting new Creative Hub 'The Docking Station' at the Interface Land (Chatham Maritime), in partnership with the University of Kent and Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. Partners are hoping that a successful Thames Estuary Cultural Development Fund (CDF) bid will provide feasibility and early design funds for the project.

5.17.5 Partnerships: FATE has been working with Ideas Test – the Arts Council England (ACE) funded Creative People & Places agency on the projects above and with organisational strategy.

5.17.6 New Events: FATE is looking at working with the Cathedral on a "Wine & Wisdom" festival for 2019 and also towards a computer "Gaming Festival" with the University of Kent and Dovetail Games.

6. Theatres

6.1 Central Theatre

The Central Theatre continues to attract internationally famous artistes, delivering very popular and successful shows that would normally be attracted to venues with larger capacity

Some stand out shows were: Russian State Ballet – Swan Lake; Suggs; Rob Brydon; Tim Vine; Ed Byrne; Bill Bailey; Jimmy Osmond; Jasper Carrott, Ant Middleton and Rip it Up. The Pantomimes continue to be successful as well

as renowned for their high quality. The most recent of these was Dick Whittington and his Cat, a critical success that was very well received.

6.2 The Brook Theatre

The Brook Theatre is now firmly established as the 'Creative Factory for Medway' and the professional creative resident companies all continue to contribute to Medway's creative offer. They have been joined by Cosson's School of Performing Arts which offers one or three year diplomas in acting, singing and dancing.

The Brook Theatre continues to provide performing space (either in the Main Theatre or the Studio Theatre) for both community and professional development work. This is augmented by an innovative programme of performing arts across the spectrum such as: Rich Hall; Tom Allen; The Opera Boys; Dulwich Opera Company; Play on Words – Tom Crean. There is also the much admired 'Sundays are for Kids' programme and the much vaunted Christmas productions for toddlers created by three of the resident creative companies. This year the show was Sammy the Sheep Saves Christmas and the feedback and reviews have been excellent. Good attendance has made this the second highest in popularity since these productions commenced nearly ten years ago.

Another new project - the Brook Under Siege which is a Medway Council led event, working with multi-partners (including the universities), and will take place on Sun 10 Feb at the Brook Theatre in Chatham. As a legacy of the popular Under Siege event, The Brook Theatre will be hosting a day of music activities for young children and teens, from 6 months to 17 year olds. There is something for everyone, ranging from musical interactive experiences to workshops and performances.

The morning and early afternoon will be aimed at toddlers (with the main feature being Rave-a-Roo) and then from mid-afternoon to the evening the emphasis will move to teens with a local headline act bringing the event to a conclusion.

6.3 Future Work Streams – Theatres

Possible options to further establish the Brook Theatre as a hive of community, public, private and learning uses and as an incubator of cultural practice, supporting the "Creative city" agenda and also supporting a Capital of Culture bid for 2025, are to be investigated so as to create a sustainable funding base. These options are within the scope of a mapping study that will be commissioned to assess the cultural needs and provision of Medway. This commission would be funded by an ACE project grant and supported by the Council and the University of Kent.

7. **Arts**

7.1 Overview

Medway Council's Arts Development Team supports and works in partnership with artists, companies, organisations and teams across the council, to

enable them to deliver arts projects and activities. These projects form part of the local cultural offer, allowing the community to engage with the arts, and they also nurture and develop the professional practise of the artists, companies and organisations delivering them.

Medway Council Arts Team is well-respected by the local cultural sector, as well as regional and national organisations such as other local authorities, universities, Arts Council, Royal Opera House Bridge and Ideas Test.

The Arts Team's partnership and support grants totalling £17,000 shared between 7 projects across 6 third party organisations enabled them to unlock £182,000 of external funding for the delivery of cultural activities in Medway. These funds have come from sources such as Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, The Baring Foundation, Garfield Weston, Esmee Fairbairn and Rochester Bridge Trust.

Statistics gathered so far this year, through our partnership projects and support, the council has helped to engage 27,452 individuals in arts and culture.

7.1.1 Partnerships projects this year include:

- Black History Live / Untold Stories Project -Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded local history and arts project led by Medway African and Caribbean Association.
- Take On Me - An ACE funded musical theatre show.
- Sea Folk Sing - An ACE and Baring Foundation funded community history and choral project aimed at participants aged 55+.
- Confluence: Plant, Grow, Nurture - An ACE funded literature and spoken-word project delivered by Medway-based wordsmithery. This project included public writing workshops, writing for wellbeing workshops with mental health organisations.
- Cabbage Island - HLF funded arts and heritage project, focusing on the history of the Luton area, led by Icon Theatre.
- Paper Toys of WWI - A HLF and Rochester Bridge Trust funded visual arts and heritage project including installations, exhibitions and community workshops to explore local history related to WWI.

7.1.2 Supporting/Enabling:

- 70,273 Project - A global, mass participation project which acknowledged the number of mentally or physically disabled people murdered during the holocaust.
- Paint The Town Festival - An arts and theatre festival delivered in Medway by Strood-based Lyrici Arts.

- Dancing in Caves - An ACE funded site-specific dance and physical theatre performance at Fort Amherst.
- Sun Pier House/the MESS Room: Open Arts Project - An ACE funded visual arts and research project aimed at providing accessible arts to Blind/VI and Deaf/HI participants.

7.1.3 Direct support for our colleagues/teams across the council

The Arts Team provided talented artists to deliver bespoke activities at some of the Events Team's festivals this year. Below are some examples of how the Arts Team has contributed to the work of other teams/departments this year, such as The River festival, Dickens Festival, Armed Forces Day, Focus On Festivals, Will Adams Festival, Half Term activities to complement the Christmas Panto, Dick Whittington and also deaf workshops at the Guildhall Museum

7.2 Rochester Art Gallery (RAG)

Visitors enjoyed a variety of shows and over 1,000 people participated in gallery workshops and specials events in 2018. The exhibition programme consisted of Pick by Pick, Technofossils, Creative Destruction and Anatomica.

The 3rd Medway Print Festival took place in June and offered the community the chance to participate in 40 events over two weeks including workshops to talks, exhibitions and courses in 12 venues making it Medway's biggest Print Festival to date with over 2,600 people taking part.

The 2019 Rochester Art Gallery exhibition programme includes, Feels Like Forever Ago which has generated much media attention and featured on BBC SE news.

RAG has a focus on contemporary textiles throughout 2019, with exhibitions exploring work by three artists pushing the boundaries of textile art including Painting with Cloth, START Primary Prints, Bizarre & Curious Silks and Flax, Fibre & Botanical Dyes.

7.3 Wigmore Lecture Programme

The Wigmore lectures season runs October to March, reaching an audience of over 900.

The current series includes the now established Wigmore Lectures ON TOUR events at other Medway libraries. To date, every event has sold out.

7.4 Splat!

Splat took place in Rochester Castle Moat on 7 May as part of Rochester Sweeps Festival. An estimated 4,000 people attended the event.

7.5 Dance and Diversity

7.5.1 Dance in the Dockyard 2018 took place as part of the River Festival. An audience of 1,150 attended.

7.5.2 U.Dance Medway 2019 and Community Showcase: A national programme from One Dance UK to encourage children and young people to develop their skills in dance and performance which increases their self-esteem and confidence.

7.5.3 Medway Open Dance Studios 2019: Medway Open Dance Studios (MODS) 2019 is a pilot wrap around programme for U.Dance Medway 2019. A call out to all dance studios, practitioners, facilitators and organisations to offer Medway people and visitors of all ages and abilities the opportunity to access a dance session

7.5.4 Medway and Kent Dance, Arts, Culture for Health and Wellbeing Symposium 2019: The Arts Team in partnership with the University of Kent, Public Health Team and One Dance UK are working collaboratively to co-produce a symposium to highlight the national and local research in relation to how dance, arts and culture can benefit peoples' health and wellbeing.

7.5.5 Medway and Kent Dance, Arts, Culture for Health and Wellbeing Symposium 2019: The Arts Team in partnership with the University of Kent, Public Health Team and One Dance UK are working collaboratively to co-produce a symposium to highlight the national and local research in relation to how dance, arts and culture can benefit peoples' health and wellbeing. Currently being co-designed with partners.

7.6 Major Future Work Streams (Arts general)

- Early support is being offered to Icon Theatre and Fort Amherst Trust/Command of the Heights Project to develop plans for a new site-specific living history project at Fort Amherst.
- Working with Medway African and Caribbean Association to develop a Windrush themed project.
- Arts Team is supporting Ideas Test as they apply for their next round of funding.
- Arts Team will be developing projects that connect to the Dickens150 theme for 2020.

7.6.1 FATE led the Medway Cultural Education partnership along with Ideas Test and Royal Opera House Bridge with an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a Youth Performance Programme Fund bid for £1million over three years from ACE. This EOI submitted jointly with Sheppey Cultural Education Partnership and we have been selected to submit a full application. If successful this project would see a step change in engaging culturally deprived populations with theatre performance projects including stage craft and new writing.

8. Greenspaces

8.1 Greenspace Development were successful in securing all seven of Medway's Green Flag Awards. Judges praised both site management and the continuing community participation and support. The seven Green Flag sites are Hillyfields, Gillingham Park, Broomhill, The Vines, Capstone Farm Country Park, Great Lines Heritage Park and Riverside Country Park. The Management Plans for each Green Flag site had to be reviewed and then updated. The judges were joined by representatives of Medway Norse and the local "Friends of" Group. Work is already underway to ensure the sites achieve similar status in 2019.

The customer experience of Medway's two key country parks remains high. Trip advisor for Riverside Country Park supports 383 reviews, of which 90% were either 'excellent' or 'very good'. Capstone Farm Country Park received 195 reviews, of which 84% were either 'excellent' or 'very good'. Ranscombe Farm Reserve (managed by Plantlife) received fewer reviews of which 67% were either 'excellent' or 'very good', and 33% 'average'. Plantlife officers have worked with Greenspace Development to secure a planning application for additional parking, public access and a small office and education facility. The Trust have secured funds and works will commence in 2019.

Consultants were appointed to complete the Medway Playing Pitch Strategy. This looks at the quality and quantity of Medway's outdoor pitches. The report will be finalised in spring 2019 and will be used to inform the Local Plan.

8.2 Greenspace investments: Engagement in the planning process continues to secure necessary investment in off-site open spaces with £105,000 sought for improvements to the Berengrave Local Nature Reserve. Across Medway, six more sites received investments via s106 funding. These include significant improvements at Barnfield and Copperfields, plus works at Balmoral Gardens, Holding Street and Hillyfields.

The Command of The Heights (a Heritage Lottery Fund project) commenced stage 2 in 2018, working with the Fort Amherst Heritage Trust to deliver £2million of restoration and enhancement to Chatham's defences. Community archaeology days have proved successful with over 225 people volunteering and learning. The funds will enhance the Riverside 1 area (new open space), the Barrier ditch (new arrival space) and the Spur Battery (creation of a new amphitheatre and landscaping). It is anticipated that ground breaking will take place in January 2019, with completion in autumn 2019. A celebratory event is planned for autumn 2019.

8.3 Community engagement: The Team continue to support a suite of "Friends of" Groups including the Medway Urban Greenspace Forum. Particular attention has been given to establishing the Friends of Watts Meadow and to supporting The Vines. This latter group experienced the loss of a number of long standing and effective members but has continued to attract new volunteers to help promote the park. A new support group for Berengrave Nature Reserve has been explored, and over 40 people attended the first public meeting. Similarly, the Friends of Gillingham Park has been relaunched and is now an effective local voice championing the park and its use. The Friends of Broomhill have been assisted in their attempt to secure

more land to grow the open space. This potential growth is linked to an adjacent planning application. In May 2018 the group also completed their funding appeal to purchase the orchard site adjacent to the main park. This was supported by s106 funds covering 50% of the purchase price. The Friends of Broomhill is now being supported to manage both of these areas.

9. Sport and Leisure

9.1 Medway Sport

Medway Sport vision is to encourage everyone to be more active through sport, physical activity and physical education.

The sport and leisure teams offer a range of facilities, programmes, projects and events to maximise opportunities for residents to Play – Compete – Spectate, using sport to:

- encourage active and healthy lifestyles
- maintain and develop quality of sports and facilities
- support and inspire local talent
- cement Medway's reputation as a centre of excellence for sport

9.2 Medway Sports Centres

The council directly operates five sports centres including the Strand, and works in partnership with external providers on a further two community facilities.

9.2.1 Medway Park: Medway Park regional centre of sporting excellence attracts more than 800,000 visitors annually and is the venue for many national and international sporting events including table tennis, wheelchair rugby league, handball, badminton and wheelchair rugby.

A number of improvements have been undertaken at the centre in the past year including refurbishing and relining the main sports hall floor, new group cycle spin bikes, and specialist anti-wave lane ropes to support the successful swimming gala season.

9.2.2 Hoo Sports Centre: Hoo Sports Centre became officially dementia friendly with the introduction of new customer-friendly signage, dementia friendly swim sessions in partnership with Swim England, and specialist training for staff.

The centre also became a theatre venue! Working in partnership with Medway arts team Hoo Sports Centre hosted an immersive theatre event on site during December, offering 4 shows for audiences of 60 people.

An options and appraisal study looking at future sporting needs for the Peninsula is currently being undertaken.

9.2.3 Strood Sports Centre: As part of a wider football development plan Medway Sport are working in partnership with the Football Foundation and Kent FA to increase usage of Strood soccer centre. Among the initiatives introduced has

been the hugely popular man vs fat initiative, a football-based weight loss programme which is one of the most successful in the country.

The hydrotherapy pool continues to extend its group usage offering swim active sessions to promote health and injury/illness recovery, Muslim ladies groups and a disability swim club.

9.2.4 Splashes: An extensive refurbishment programme has been undertaken in the past year, bringing improvements across the building and the swimming pool.

Complementing this, an options and appraisal study looking at future sporting needs for the east of Medway is currently being undertaken.

9.2.5 The Strand: The Strand swimming pool enjoyed a record year with more than 25,000 visitors enjoying the long-lasting summer heatwave.

9.2.6 Major Sports Events: Medway hosts a range of national and international sporting events in line with the Putting Medway on the Map agenda. These include:

- Medway Park hosted GB Wheelchair Rugby National Championships in April. Two day event with 120 competitors.
- Medway Park hosted Wheelchair Rugby League Grand Final hosted on 22 September, alongside Minor Premier Festivals. Event used to showcase MP to world cup bid representatives and live streamed.
- Medway Park hosted EHF Challenge Cup Handball 3rd round weekend 13/14 October between London GD and Livingstone's men's teams. Event live streamed on BBC Online across Europe.
- Medway Sport hosted England Table Tennis international men's and women's match in November 2018
- Vets International Badminton in October run over 3 days, participants from France, Belgium and Netherlands.
- England Handball National University Finals booked in for March 2019
- Supporting Holcombe Hockey Club in hosting Euro hockey Finals April 2019
- England Rugby League World Cup 2021 bid submitted
- In discussions with British Cycling to host events in 2019

9.2.7 Swimming: We continue to offer free swimming to under 16s and over 60's. More than 9,100 residents have signed up since the introduction of the new free swimming card in April.

School swimming is supported by all our swimming pools and offers pupils a lifesaving skill with our swimming instructors on sites. In addition the Medway Sport swim academy offers weekly lessons to approximately 1,870 learners across all our sites.

9.2.8 Senior Sports: We offer a robust and diverse senior sports programme for over 60's at an affordable cost. In the past year we have launched a fitness MOT programme to encourage residents to receive a free health check with us, linked to a recommended exercise programme within our sports centres.

9.2.9 Disability Sport: We are keen to increase sporting opportunities for disabled people, running a series of school competitions and festivals to promote sport, and aiming to link to Medway sports clubs.

We hosted four disability school competitions – in swimming, football, skiing and multi-sports.

Medway Park also hosts a weekly mixed sport disability club as well as blind football sessions every Wednesday.

9.3 Medway Sports Awards 2018

Lizzy Yarnold, the most successful Winter Olympian in British history, was the special guest of honour at this year's Medway Sports Awards.

The two-time Winter Olympic skeleton champion, who won back-to-back golds in the Sochi and PyeongChang games, joined local sporting heroes at Medway Council's Medway Sports Awards at MidKent College in December. The awards are held every other year to celebrate local sporting success and highlight the achievements of Medway's clubs, teams, individuals, coaches, volunteers and schools.

9.4 Medway Mile

The Medway Mile at Rochester Castle in July continues to be a flagship community event with more than 3,000 runners and walkers taking part. The Medway 10k attracted a record 599 runners for the event hosted at Medway Park in June.

9.5 Cycling

9.5.1 During 2018, 13.6km of new cycling routes were constructed as part of the LGF Cycle Action Plan project including routes at Beechings Way, Gillingham Business Park, Rochester Maidstone Road and Railway Street Chatham. Cycle counters have been installed on all completed routes, as well as existing routes, and the resulting data shows an increase in cycle movements across the majority of sites. Riverside Country Park is showing an impressive 71% increase in cycle movements compared with Q2 in 2014 and across 10 sites in Medway, the average number of movements per site is up by 500 since 2014.

The Integrated Transport team showcased the recent Cycling Action Plan achievements at the LGF Strood Town Centre event and at the "Focus On" events in September 2018, by promoting the new and improved cycle routes and distributing a new version of Medway's cycle route map. The updated map has also been made available online.

- 9.5.2 The Medway Cycling Festival, held 9-17 June 2018, staged a nine-day programme with at least one activity each day, tying in with National cycling week and combining services from Public Health, Integrated Transport, club partners, with further support from greenspaces, libraries, tourism and communications. 874 participants took part in the main events including Medway Ride Together event being staged at Riverside/Strand, Sportives plus supporting Ride the Heron Trail, Go Ride Track Cycling and parksport sessions.
- 9.5.3 The Queen Elizabeth Playing Fields BMX Pump Track was launched by the Deputy Mayor in November 2018. The event was well attended by the local community, with people travelling from across Kent. The track is 240m long and was designed and built by Velosolutions (who are held in high esteem by riders). Liaison with Sports Development Team has resulted in a scheme to provide training and support for local users (specifically from The Vineries). An event will be held in early summer 2019 to promote the track for both competition and recreational cycling.
- 9.5.4 2019 HSBC UK National Circuit Championships: Britain's top national cyclists will be competing in Medway following British Cycling's announcement that Rochester will host the 2019 HSBC UK National Circuit Championships.

On Sunday, 21 July 2019, the nation's best male and female cyclists will be racing along Rochester's cobbled streets and past the historic sights to compete to earn the title of national champion.

Crowds from across Britain are expected to descend upon Medway to watch the well-known, talented riders. Previous national circuit champions include Katie Archibald, Tom Pidcock, Joanna Rowsell Shand and Lizzie Deignan.

Medway has a strong track record of hosting national, and international, sporting events. Medway's excellent facilities have hosted pre-Olympic training camps. There are four council-run sports facilities in Medway, and one of them - Medway Park – is renowned for being a centre of sporting excellence. It is home to England Wheelchair Rugby League, and the modern sports facility has hosted international events such as table tennis and handball. The athletics track, swimming pool and diving pit, as well as sports halls are frequently used for training and to host competitions.

Jonathan Rigby, British Cycling's Commercial Director, said: "We're thrilled to award the 2019 HSBC UK | National Circuit Championships to Rochester in Medway. The area is steeped in history, and will provide a wonderfully picturesque backdrop to what will be some fantastic racing.

"The championships are one of the highlights of the road racing calendar, and always prove a huge draw for spectators. Rochester will be no exception, and we look forward to working alongside Medway Council to deliver another truly memorable championships."

9.6 Volunteers

We are proud of our Medway Sporting Ambassador programme, where local residents offer their time to support sporting events and regular sporting activities. This year the volunteers have notched up an impressive 1555 hours in support of the service.

9.7 Tackling Inactivity and Parksport programmes

Medway Sport's community engagement programme uses outdoor sport in community spaces to help tackle inactivity and social behavioural issues with young people. Over the summer there were nearly 700 participants in 20 different venues including:

- Chalk Pit Hill, Luton, Chatham
- Luton Junior School, Chatham
- Hazlemere Drive, Gillingham
- Victory Academy, Chatham
- Oasis Academy, Gillingham
- Saunders Street, Gillingham
- Melville Court, Brompton, Gillingham
- Lordswood Kestrel MUGA, Chatham
- Luton Millenium Green, Chatham
- Parkwood Youth Centre, Rainham
- Cozenton Park, Rainham
- Bligh Way, Strood
- Shelduck Drive, Allhallows
- Jacksons Fields, Rochester
- Hook Meadow, Walderslade, Chatham
- Hillyfields, Gillingham
- Broomhill Park, Strood
- Great Lines, Gillingham
- Rochester Castle, Rochester
- Maidstone Road Rec, Chatham

9.8 PE & School Sport

Medway Sport offer quality PE and in-school coaching sessions to primary schools across Medway.

The Mini Youth Games is Medway Sport's flagship inter-schools sports programme and in 2018 celebrated its 20th anniversary, providing more than 4,000 primary school pupils every year with the opportunity to experience the thrill of friendly, competitive team sport.

Currently 10 schools are part of the Medway School Mile scheme.

10. Tourism and Heritage

10.1 Guildhall Museum

The Guildhall Museum successfully obtained National Portfolio status in 2018 which attracts with it approximately £50,000 Arts Council funding for the next four years. This is a partnership project along with the Historic Dockyard Chatham, Tunbridge Wells museum and Canterbury museum service. This funding has enabled the recruitment of a visitor experience officer to look at staff development within the museum sector and to develop an interpretation and gallery plan for the museum.

An immersive temporary exhibition about the Knights Templar opened in April 2018 telling the story of the Knights Templar, their daily lives and their legacy. This linked to the interpretation projects taking place at Temple Manor. The heritage team also undertook a number of commemorative projects in relation to the centenary of World War 1. A successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund funded the 'Soldiers on our Streets' project looking at adding to the De Caville index with more information on the soldiers from Medway who died during World War 1 and included talks and workshops with schools in Medway. The 'Live bait' painting on the stairs was also draped in flags and poppies made by visiting and local children. The Lost Helmet – a project which has circulated at events throughout Medway has enabled locals to be photographed with a WW1 helmet.

The second part of the museum housed in the Conservancy Board Building was sold in October to Nucleus Arts for £590,000. Two new storage rooms were set up in the main museum and all objects and paintings have been rehomed in the main Guildhall museum. A new Dickens Gallery in the Guildhall Museum will be developed in 2019.

The Museum education service continues to provide an excellent service to schools across Medway and beyond. The service continues to implement the START programme (funding of £40,000) enabling the service to work with local schools engaging them in the museum and its collection.

10.2 Rochester Castle

Repair works have been undertaken to the viewing platforms at Rochester Castle. The Castle has for the main part been kept open to visitors despite the works although this has reduced the number of visitors to the keep. A new Local Management Agreement is being finalised with English Heritage.

10.3 Temple Manor

In July 2018 Temple Manor hosted the launch of a series of new exciting interpretation panels, educational resources and tablets with 3D renditions of the house as it was in 1240. These new improvements have all helped to tell the story of the house and enrich the experience of visitors. This was funded by a successful £50,000 Heritage Lottery Fund bid under the Young Roots programme. The development of the new interpretation was undertaken in partnership with students from Strood Academy.

10.4 Eastgate House

The final elements of the £2.1 million Heritage Lottery-funded scheme to renovate the magnificent Grade 1 listed Eastgate House have taken place with the conservation of two internal walls. Conservators 'in residence' revealed a 16th Century wall pattern on the second floor and intriguing images of fully armoured knights on the third floor.

The house has established itself as a popular venue for events, talks and activities throughout the year. The 2018 Christmas series of events was particularly popular and successful, with performances of a Christmas Carol, and children and adult trails throughout the house.

We are planning to run a rich programme of events and exhibitions throughout 2019, which will include seasonal events such as a flower festival as well as thematic events relating to Charles Dickens, the Buck family and talks and seminars about the recently revealed wall paintings amongst many others.

10.5 Tourism

Visit Kent have published the yearly tourism figures, and we have performed strongly once more. Headline stats:

- Visits 4.9m, up from 4.6m
- Value £333m, up from £313m
- 6500 jobs, up from 6000

The Visitor Information Centre has had a busy year receiving 152,000 visitors from January to October 2018 so far. A new café opened in October 2018 and a free withdrawal ATM was installed within the centre towards the end of the year.

The Open Top Bus ran from 23 July to the 2 September taking 2,752 visitors around Medway's visitor attractions, an increase on previous years.

The current coach park at Anchor Wharf operated until 9 December 2018 with the site thereafter being developed into a new school. A new coach park site with 15 bays is being finalised which will open in April 2019. An interim plan using other available temporary sites will be initiated between December 2018 and April 2019. Once plans are finalised the tourism team will target the travel trade with a marketing campaign.

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Appendices

None

Background documents

None