

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

**Tuesday, 22 January 2019**

**6.35pm to 8.53pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Bhutia (Vice-Chairman), Etheridge (Chairman), Griffin, Mrs Josie Iles, Osborne, Paterson, Saroy, Shaw, Stamp and Tejan

**In Attendance:** Richard Hicks, Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive  
Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE, Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships  
Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services  
Dawn Hudd, Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration  
Millie Pountney, Legal Adviser  
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

**723 Chairman's Announcements**

At the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman referred to the recent sad passing of Councillor David Carr.

He informed the Committee that Councillor Carr had represented Rainham North Ward since 2007 and had served on many Council Committees and represented the Council on a number of outside bodies during his time as a Councillor.

The Committee held a minute's silence in memory of Councillor David Carr.

The Chairman also welcomed Dawn Hudd, Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration to her first meeting of the Committee.

**724 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hicks and Williams.

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

### 725 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 6 December 2018 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

A Member referring to Minute 594 (b) commented that the information requested from Medway Commercial Group (MCG) had yet to be circulated to the Committee. In response, the Chairman advised that officers were pursuing this with MCG as a matter of urgency.

### 726 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

### 727 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

#### Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

#### Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

#### Other interests

There were none.

### 728 Attendance of the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

#### **Discussion:**

Members received an overview of progress on the areas of work within the terms of reference of this Committee and covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe as set out below:

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

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Armed Forces Covenant/Employer Defence Recognition Award** – In response to a question as to how the Council could move from a Silver to Gold Employer Defence Recognition Award, the Portfolio Holder outlined initiatives currently being pursued. He also outlined the importance of promoting the work of the armed forces and in particular referred to the Freedom of Medway bestowed upon C Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment in 2018 and the HMS Medway due in 2019.
- **Castle Concerts** - A Member commented that the information supplied within the report on the Castle Concerts contained less detail than in previous years and, in particular, lacked information on ticket sales. He referred to the low level of ticket sales in 2018 and questioned whether the Portfolio Holder considered that the format of the concerts had become stale.

In response, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that although ticket sales had been disappointing in 2018, one concert had sold out and therefore the concerts were still popular. Unfortunately, attendance at the other concerts in 2018 had been affected by inclement weather and World Cup fixtures. He did not support the view that the format of the event had become stale.

The Portfolio Holder pointed out that the limited capacity of the Castle grounds meant that it was not possible to attract artistes that command a high performance fee as this would make the ticket prices exorbitant. He assured the Committee that high quality acts were being approached for 2019, one of whom had already signed.

The Director for Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive advised the Committee that a briefing note providing full information on ticket sales at the 2018 Castle Concerts had previously been circulated and he offered to re-circulate this to all Members of the Committee.

A Member expressed concern that the dates of the World Cup fixtures would have been known in advance of the Concerts and therefore it would have been prudent to change the dates of the concerts so as to avoid a clash.

A Member questioned why the Portfolio Holder had not acknowledged that the Council's decision to ban individuals from taking their own alcohol to the Concerts in 2018, with the exception of the Proms, had likely affected ticket sales and he asked whether this ruling would be reversed in 2019.

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that the decision to ban individuals from taking their own alcohol to the concerts in 2018, with the exception of the Proms, complied with industry standards for the organisation of concerts of this nature. He confirmed that alcohol continued to be on sale at all of the concerts and by controlling the availability of alcohol, staff were able to ensure that individuals did not become intoxicated.

A Member expressed concern that as individuals were permitted to bring alcohol into the Proms, this decision was inconsistent.

In response to a suggestion that consideration be given to engaging local bands to perform at the Castle Concerts, the Portfolio Holder stated that there were a number of music venues in Medway actively promoting local bands through the year. However, the Castle Concerts brought high quality, popular acts to Medway to perform in a unique venue. He also stated that whilst he would be happy to receive suggestions as to how to make the concerts a success he did not consider that permitting individuals to take their own alcohol to the concerts would necessarily make them so.

- **Greenspaces** – A Member questioned whether the Council was now reliant solely on Section 106 funding for investment in greenspaces and asked whether other funding streams were being sought.

In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that in the light of financial constraints, all local authorities were now reliant on utilising funding opportunities such as Section 106 funds for investment in greenspaces. However, he stressed that if there was an identified need for financial commitment at a particular site, then this would be considered along with other funding priorities. There were very limited external sources of funding for Greenspaces.

He reminded the Committee that Medway had seven Green Flag sites and he praised the work of volunteers in helping the Council retain Green Flag status for these sites.

A Member requested that future reports include information as to the number of volunteer hours spent on Greenspaces in Medway and, referring to the Friends of Gillingham Park, requested that officers provide assistance to the volunteers in helping them apply for lottery funding.

- **Splashes** – In response to a question as to the future of Splashes Leisure Pool, the Portfolio Holder advised that Splashes Leisure Pool required considerable investment as this facility was nearing the end of its life. The Council was currently investigating various alternative models and was in discussion with the private sector concerning potential joint ventures.

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

- **The Strand** – A Member referred to the high level of attendance at Strand Leisure Pool in 2018 and asked whether there were plans to extend the opening hours of the pool in 2019.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that attendances during the 2018 season at the pool had been very good when compared to previous years, owing to the exceptional weather but stressed that the Council could not make available any further funding for the Pool than already allocated. However, he was willing to discuss with the Friends of the Strand Pool the possibility of extended hours. The Portfolio Holder also referred to information provided by the Chairman of the Friends of the Strand Pool concerning the costs of operating the Pool in 2018 and advised that the financial information contained within that correspondence had not been correct.

- **Creative Hub “The Docking Station”** – The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that this project was in partnership with the University of Kent and Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust and aimed to increase the artistic/creative output in Medway.
- **U.Dance Medway** – The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the popularity of dance was increasing and therefore the opportunity had been taken to increase dance activities in Medway. The U.Dance Medway and community showcase was a national programme from One Dance UK to encourage children and young people to develop their skills in dance and performance which increased their self-esteem and confidence. He also advised that a dance studio had been provided at Strood Leisure Centre as part of the refurbishment works.
- **Senior Sports** – The Portfolio Holder advised that the Fitness MOT programme, encouraging residents over the age of 60 to receive a free health check linked to a recommended exercise programme had commenced in 2018.
- **Vending machines in Leisure Centres** – At the suggestion of a Member, the Portfolio Holder agreed that officers be requested to review the types of snacks in vending machines located in leisure centres with a view to replacing unhealthy snacks with healthy options.
- **Strood Leisure Centre chlorine leak** - In response to a request for information on an incident involving a chlorine leak at Strood Leisure Centre, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that this had been an error and management action had been taken. He was currently awaiting the HSE investigation report and this would be circulated to Members of the Committee when received.
- **Tourism** – A Member asked the Portfolio Holder how Medway would ensure that it could retain current levels of tourism after Brexit. The

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

Portfolio Holder stressed that the Council would seek to address any potential impact on tourism whatever the outcome of Brexit.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the availability of hotel accommodation in Medway was continuing to increase and Medway was a Member of Visit Kent.

- **Cultural Development Fund** – The Portfolio Holder advised that information was not yet available on the Cultural Development Fund announced by the Government on 18 January 2019 but agreed to circulate details when more information was available.
- **Dickensian Christmas Festival and Rochester Christmas Markets** – A Member expressed concern that during the weekend of 24 and 25 November, Rochester had become gridlocked as a result of the Dickensian Christmas Festival and the Rochester Christmas Markets. In addition, he considered that the decision to allow free parking during that weekend had contributed to the congestion and had resulted in a loss of income to the Council.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that this be drawn to the attention of the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services.

- **Business Rates** – A Member expressed concern as to the effect that Business Rates was having on independent businesses and he suggested that if the Council wished to acquire City of Culture status, it should consider reducing Business Rates for creative and cultural businesses. The Portfolio Holder advised that he didn't think it was possible to reduce Business Rates for certain sectors of business but he requested that the Director for Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive provide information directly to the Member concerned on this issue.
- **Cycling** – The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council was investing in a network of cycleways in Medway and where possible actively encouraging the provision of off-road cycleways within developments so as to encourage safe cycling.
- **BMX Pump Track** – A Member referred to the success of the BMX Pump Track at the Queen Elizabeth's Playing Fields and commented that these types of facilities attracted individuals from a wider area and she suggested that officers tap into the BMX community on-line to promote the facility.

**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22  
January 2019**

**Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) noted that the briefing note on the 2018 Castle Concert ticket sales will be re-circulated to all Members of the Committee.
- b) noted that Members of the Committee will be provided with a copy of correspondence with the Chairman of the Friends of Strand Pool concerning the finances and costs of running the facility in 2018.
- c) noted that further information will be circulated to Members of the Committee on the Cultural Development Fund when available.
- d) noted that a copy of the HSE investigation report into the chlorine leak at the Strood Leisure Centre will be circulated to Members of the Committee when received.
- e) requested that officers undertake a review of the products available in vending machines at Leisure Centres with a view to replacing unhealthy snacks with healthy options.
- f) noted that the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive will provide information on Business Rates direct to the Member concerned.
- g) requested that the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services be advised of concerns that during the weekend of 24 and 25 November, the availability of free parking not only resulted in gridlock of Rochester but also a loss of income to the Council at a time when there were many visitors to Rochester for the Dickensian Christmas festival and the Rochester Christmas Market.
- h) requested that future reports include the number of volunteer hours which contribute to Medway's Greenspaces being awarded Green Flag status.
- i) requested that officers investigate further promotion of the BMX Pump track via the BMX on-line community.
- j) requested that officers provide assistance to the Friends of Gillingham Park in applying for Lottery Funding.
- k) thanked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services for his attendance and the answers he had provided.

**729 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic  
Regeneration and Partnerships**

**Discussion:**

Members received an overview of progress on the areas of work within the terms of reference of this Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE as set out below:

- Inward investment
- Strategic Regeneration and Planning
- Strategic Partnerships
- Local Growth Fund
- Medway Ambassadors
- Heritage Champion

The Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Future High Streets Fund** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder outlined the basis of the Government's Future High Streets Fund and explained the process by which Unitary Authorities, Metropolitan Boroughs and London Boroughs could bid for funding to support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.

He stressed that each local authority was only permitted to place one bid in the first tranche with the potential of placing a second bid in 2020. The maximum level of funding available was £25 million per scheme but it was anticipated that the majority of individual schemes would be supported by funding in the region of £5 - £10 million.

The Portfolio Holder advised that both Chatham High Street and Gillingham High Street met the scheme's criteria. However, as only one bid was permitted, Chatham High Street which had ranked highest on the Fund's eligibility criteria would be promoted.

The Fund was not retail centred but provided opportunities for housing development and changing the cultural offer, including the generation of an evening economy.

Final bids were due to be submitted in August 2019 and the outcome was expected in late 2019/early 2020.

A Member commented that Medway had a number of High Streets and was therefore at a disadvantage in being restricted to one bid. In response, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that Gillingham High Street



## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

would be submitted in the second round of bids. He also confirmed that Rochester High Street would be eligible for consideration under the Heritage High Street element of the Fund but the criteria on this element of the Fund had yet to be released.

- **Britton Farm Mall Gillingham** – A Member requested an update on the bid for funds for Britton Farm Mall.

The Portfolio Holder advised that two bids had been submitted for funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership, one of which related to Britton Farm Mall, which he hoped would be successful and a response was expected in mid-February.

- **Strategic Regeneration and Planning** – A Member referred to the various strategic regeneration schemes in Medway and advised that residents were concerned as to the effect that these schemes would have on congestion. The Portfolio Holder advised that whilst he noted these concerns, there was a need to provide housing and regardless of whether or not individuals lived in a town or close to public transport links, people wanted use of a car.

A Member referred to the development of Rochester Riverside and expressed concern that the access into and out of the site at Gas House Lane would be inadequate for the number of vehicular movements when the residential development was fully occupied, and he suggested that further consideration be given to the impact that this development would have on the highway and access.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would ask officers to give further consideration to the issues raised and would also arrange for a copy of the Rochester Riverside Masterplan to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

- **Chatham Placemaking** – A Member referred to the works undertaken at Chatham Railway Station and expressed concern that the access widening and provision of a lift was no longer being progressed. He expressed concern that the removal of these elements of the refurbishment scheme disadvantaged those with reduced mobility, disabilities and families with prams.

In response, the Portfolio Holder and the Director of Regeneration, Culture Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive advised that whilst the provision of an infill raft structure to accommodate a wider pavement between the railway station and the bus terminus and provision of a lift had originally been proposed by Network Rail, these works had been removed from the current scheme. As there was a requirement to utilise funding set aside for this project by the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Council had undertaken works to the forecourt at the Station. However, it was understood that disabled

## Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22 January 2019

access at the Station had been identified by Network Rail for future funding bids.

The Portfolio Holder stated that whilst the decision of Network Rail not to progress these elements of the Chatham scheme had been disappointing, Network Rail had invested substantial funding to improve stations across Medway over the past 10 years.

- **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and its relationship with the Medway Local Plan** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that all three Members of Parliament had provided support for the Council's HIF bid. The Council was likely to receive the result of the HIF bid in May/June.

He advised that the success of the HIF bid was important for the delivery of the Medway Local Plan, and in particular the delivery of infrastructure on the Peninsula. Should the HIF bid not succeed, this would increase pressure on other areas of Medway such as the Capstone Valley and North Rainham.

- **Strategic Regeneration in Chatham** - In response to a question concerning the stability of the retail sector in Chatham High Street, the Portfolio Holder advised of discussions currently taking place with various retailers.
- **Rochester Airport** – The Portfolio Holder reminded the Committee that in December, the Planning Committee had approved planning applications for works at Rochester Airport. He confirmed that Highways England had now removed its holding objection and therefore the decision notices for both schemes had been issued.

### Decision:

The Committee:

- a) requested that it's disappointment be expressed to Network Rail that it had not progressed provision of the infill raft structure and lift at Chatham Railway Station as part of the recent refurbishment works.
- b) requested that officers investigate the concerns highlighted by Members around access into and out of the Rochester Riverside development and noted that a copy of the Rochester Riverside Masterplan will be circulated to all Members of the Committee.
- c) thanked the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships for his attendance at the meeting and the answers he provided.

**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 22  
January 2019**

**730 Petitions**

**Discussion:**

The Committee received a report advising of those petitions received by the Council, which fell within the remit of the Committee, including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organisers by officers. No petitions had been referred to the Committee for consideration by the lead petitioners.

It was noted that one petition referral request had been withdrawn as the issue had been resolved following a site meeting with the Assistant Director Front Line Services and Ward Councillors.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the petition response and appropriate officer action set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.

**731 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of 2018/19.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the current work programme and agreed that Medway Commercial Group Ltd be invited to attend the meeting of this Committee in October 2019 for further scrutiny.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

**Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer**

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