

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 APRIL 2019

ATTENDANCE OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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Summary

This report sets out activities and progress on work areas within the Portfolio of the Leader of the Council, which all fall within the remit of this Committee. This information is provided in relation to the Leader of the Council being held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Leader of the Council are:

- Strategic leadership of the Council
- Communications and marketing
- Finance

2. Strategic Leadership of the Council

Achievements for 2018/2019

2.1 Putting Medway on the Map is one of my key ambitions, and over the last year I believe we have progressed this considerably, promoting Medway as a great place to live, work, learn and visit.

2.2 A significant milestone for 2018/19 was submitting our Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid in March 2019, worth £170m. The funding will provide significant improvements to road and rail connections, as well as providing investment to support healthcare, leisure, education and greenspace facilities for the Hoo Peninsula. We will create a new

community at Hoo and this funding will help to unlock the potential for new homes. We have been co-producing our bid with Homes England, Network Rail and other key stakeholders, including the Hoo Consortium. We hope to hear the outcome in Spring 2019.

- 2.3 Our monumental regeneration programme continues with pace and we are working to our '*Growth for all*' ambition, ensuring all our residents benefit from regeneration wherever they live in Medway and that regeneration reaches everyone in the community.
- 2.4 Starting with our city centre, Chatham. We have completed the Chatham Placemaking works (£4m), improving the sense of arrival for visitors and commuters. The train station improvement works are being undertaken by Network Rail and this will complement our improvements through to the city centre. The former fire station arches are being redeveloped into a café/restaurant and this new offer will open in summer 2019.
- 2.5 The £9m placemaking project in Strood town centre continues to progress, with the initial works being completed at the Tolgate Lane car park. The Flood Defence works, a £3.5m scheme, have completed ahead of schedule, and this will support future development on our prestige regeneration site, the former Civic Centre site. We will shortly bring that site to the market.
- 2.6 Countryside, the developer for our flagship regeneration site at Rochester Riverside, is continuing to build the first phase of the development which will see 1,400 new homes built on the site. The marketing suite was officially opened by myself on 3 November, and Countryside have experienced a high level of interest and a number of sales following the launch.
- 2.7 Medway Development Company Limited has been progressing the proposals for Chatham Waterfront and Whiffens Avenue, and work is scheduled to commence on both sites by summer 2019.
- 2.8 We are currently reviewing options to use HRA headroom funding to provide additional homes, working with Savills, with a number of opportunities being explored.
- 2.9 In the last year, Medway's economy has risen from £4.8bn to £5.2bn according to the latest available Gross Value Added (GVA) figures. This rate of growth is higher than the South East and the national average. We continue to focus on Skills here in Medway, supporting students and residents to extend their skill-set, working with our Universities, Mid Kent College and the UTC. As I mentioned last year, we have established a Cabinet Advisory Group to progress the agenda around Skills, with the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships taking the lead on this. Over the last year we have implemented the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge which gave a ringing endorsement of the Council's regeneration programme and partnership working. In particular, we have given focus to the skills agenda which will culminate in a Skills

Summit later this year involving education providers and key businesses. My Cabinet recently approved Medway's Skills Plan, setting out our key sectors and priorities to deliver against.

- 2.10 We successfully launched Innovation Park Medway, maximising the benefits of Enterprise Zone status, providing incentives for businesses to relocate, we will deliver over 1300 high value, high GVA employment opportunities in advanced manufacturing and in the engineering supply chain, focused around BAE, adding to the vibrancy of Medway's economy. The planning application was submitted in December 2018 and was approved by the Planning Committee. We have now secured almost £9m of external funding to progress our ambitions.
- 2.11 We continue to manage 7 Green Flag sites across our greenspaces, and we continue to invest in our play areas. We know that sport and play are important to people as they strive for healthy lifestyles and with this in mind we continue to offer free swimming to under 16s and over 60s. Our Sporting Legacy is nationally recognised. Indeed we will be hosting the national cycling championship over the summer.
- 2.12 We held the Medway1 Launch last year in June in London, and this was extremely successful in terms of new businesses looking to relocate in Medway. Following the success of the Medway1 Launch, a number of investors visited Medway for a tour to see what we have to offer. We will meet with investors for this year's Medway1 Launch, again in London, in the summer.
- 2.13 We have hosted a number of tours this year, which have included: UCA, Berkeley Homes, Locate in Kent, Network Rail, Southend-on-Sea Council, Mellors Group, Centre for Cities and Grosvenor Estates.
- 2.14 We successfully launched our Medway Story, as part of our placebranding project with Thinking Place. At the event, held on 7 June, we launched our shared narrative and the Medway branding toolkit for our partners to use on their promotional material. We invited Martin Reeves, Chief Executive at Coventry City Council, who is originally from Gillingham, to share his experience of the placebranding project, together with his memories of Medway.
- 2.15 We have since held a further two Place Board meetings, chaired by Simon Cook, Principal at MidKent College, and these have continued to bring a number of our key stakeholders together to discuss the future aspirations for Medway, which include a commitment to bid for City of Culture 2025 as well as future opportunities to attract national events and conferences to Medway. The Place Board is proving to be a significant strategic driver for Medway.
- 2.16 We officially launched our new Place Ambassador scheme, known as the Medway Champions and held the first meeting on 9 November, with over 50 businesses and charities attending to hear more about Medway – The Place. We have held a further two meetings since then, with both AC Goatham and the Royal Engineers kindly offering to host these events.

- 2.17 We have successfully appointed a Place Manager, who is working with our Champions and Place Board to look at opportunities to support our ambition of Putting Medway on the Map.
- 2.18 We entered into a sponsorship deal with Gillingham Football Club, resulting in very positive promotion of the Council, supporting the development of the club. There was extensive coverage of the sponsorship following Gillingham's win against Cardiff City in the FA Cup Third Round match on 5 January 2019. Coverage was across the national press, including the Sunday Times.
- 2.19 We held four new festivals, known as the Focus on Festivals in 2018 to celebrate 20 years since the establishment of Medway. These new festivals were held in Rainham, Walderslade, Strood and High Halstow and were extremely well received by the resident communities. We also put together a Medway showcase exhibition, highlighting what Medway has achieved over the last 20 years. We have also been working with Instinctif, a Public Affairs company, to support our Medway20 campaign and Putting Medway on the Map ambition.
- 2.20 Medway has been represented at the National Infrastructure Projects Conference, held in London, and Sitematch London, where Medway was alongside London Boroughs showcasing to an investor audience.
- 2.21 Our Transformation Programme achieved the ambitious and stretch target of £5m, a significant achievement for 2018/19, and the team is now progressing the next phase, identifying additional savings through transformation and new ways of working.
- 2.22 Representing Medway's interests, we are actively involved in the health sector discussions through the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP). Our aim is to ensure that the needs of Medway's adult and ageing population are fully supported. Our stance on Stroke provision continues to be robust, serving Medway's interests.
- 2.23 We continue to invest in our schools. In Medway more than 80% of schools are either good or outstanding.
- 2.24 We are committed to supporting older people living more independently in their own homes, through the greater use of technology and over the forthcoming period, a range of significant changes and innovations will be brought forward in how we deliver Adult Social Care.
- 2.25 We are continuing to work with the newly branded Greater North Kent Leaders (previously known as the North Kent Cluster) which involves Dartford, Gravesham, Maidstone and Swale Councils to identify opportunities for shared services and other joint initiatives, offering cost reductions and efficiencies.
- 2.26 County and regional meetings are attended in order to influence others and build relationships which may be of value to Medway, such as the SE7; Transport for the South East; meetings of Kent MPs and Kent County Council (KCC); meetings of Kent Leaders, including KCC and

Medway, and informal meetings of District Councils. Medway has also joined the Key Cities Group, including authorities such as Wakefield, Coventry and Portsmouth, to discuss how as a collective group the cities can play a key role in the regional economy.

- 2.27 We are continuing to work with external partners on developments outside Medway which will have an impact here. We meet with London Resort colleagues on a regular basis to support their development, as it will see 33,000 jobs created, providing opportunities for Medway people. We have also submitted our response to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation and continue a strong relationship with colleagues at Highways England, identifying the opportunities for North Kent as well as the potential impacts on our local road networks. This development will bring £8bn to the regional economy and 6000 jobs.
- 2.28 As a recent edition of Kent Profile stated on the front page: “The sky’s the limit for Medway”.

3. Communications and Marketing

Achievements for 2018/2019

- 3.1. Over the past year the Communications and Marketing Team has continued to deliver a large number of campaigns and marketing initiatives. These include the examples detailed below.

3.2 Medway on the map

Place Branding

- 3.2.1 The Place Branding project has continued this financial year. Following a large number of stakeholder engagement events and subsequent research and development, the new Medway Place story and visuals were launched at the Chatham Historic Dockyard in early June 2018. Speakers included Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council, and the Leader. 130 people attended from a broad range of Medway community and business organisations and the evening included a wide range of speakers. There was strong engagement from all those attending and a real energy and enthusiasm to progress the Champions scheme.
- 3.2.2 The Medway Champions scheme was launched in November 2018 and each of the subsequent meetings have been attended by more than 45 Medway businesses. A new website - wearemedway.co.uk - is currently being built as a platform for our story to be told and for our Champions to promote themselves.
- 3.3.3 The Medway Place branding programme is gaining momentum with all four universities using the branding on their impact reports and at their open days last summer. The branding has also been simplified for businesses to use so that it does not clash with their own brand.

Innovation Park Medway

- 3.3.4 Innovation Park Medway was launched in the new air ambulance hangar in Rochester in September 2018, with more than 100 people in attendance. The aim of this event was to raise awareness of the new park and what it can offer businesses looking to relocate or locate in Medway. Speakers included The Leader, Paul Jackson from Dovetail Games, and Kelly Tolhurst MP. The new branding for the park and a film celebrating innovation in Medway was also launched at the event.

Medway 1 Launch

- 3.3.5 We launched our annual Medway 1 publication at the offices of BNP Paribas in Central London on 27 June 2018. The event was attended by 80 attendees from a wide range of developers and investors as well as key Medway ambassadors and businesses. In addition to presentations from the Leader and Richard Hicks, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation, Paul Jackson, Chief Executive of Dovetail Games, spoke passionately about why Medway is the perfect location for his business. Andy Fancy, Managing Director of Countryside Properties spoke about the flagship Rochester Riverside project and was positive about their working relationship with the council.
- 3.3.6 Feedback on the event was very positive with more than 80% saying that the work currently underway in Medway is inspiring their confidence in the region as an investment destination. More than 70% believe that the event changed their perception of the potential of Medway as an investment opportunity. 100% of the attendees would now consider working in Medway following the event.
- 3.3.7 Quarterly e-newsletters are also sent to a wide range of investors and developers, keeping them in touch with Medway development.

Medway 20

- 3.3.8 This year was the 20th anniversary of the founding of Medway and Medway Council. We took this opportunity to mark the huge transformation that has taken place across Medway over the past 20 years and to look forward to the firm future that is planned for the area.
- 3.3.9 Our aim for the year was to encourage people to celebrate the best of Medway, what they love about the place and understand all the achievements that have taken place over the past 20 years. We accomplished this through a major presence at our festivals and events throughout the spring, summer and autumn.
- 3.3.10 At these festivals and events we asked people what they love about Medway, discussed achievements and encouraged them to have their photos taken in our #We Are Medway selfie frames. People engaged with us really well at all the events and their feedback was really positive.

3.3.11 We created a Medway 20 exhibition which launched in Military Road, Chatham on 21 July 2018. The exhibition featured a number of magnificent images of the great things that have taken place across Medway over the past 20 years.

Gillingham Football Club sponsorship

3.3.12 As part of our agreement to be the shirt sponsors for Gillingham Football Club, we had the opportunity to offer 50 free, standard admission Gillingham Football Club tickets to schools, charities and community groups in Medway for each home league game. Feedback from these groups has been positive and we have communicated this via social media. Nearly 700 free tickets have been allocated for the 20 home matches, although at the time of writing we are still awaiting confirmation on take up from the ballots for the final games of the season so the number will increase.

3.3.13 As part of the partnership, we include an A5 advert within their home game programme. We have maximised this opportunity to promote events and health messages.

3.4 External campaigns

Regeneration projects

3.4.1 A new section of our website has been created to engage with the public and to provide ongoing updates on the progress of the widespread regeneration works happening across Medway. Further public updates on the progress of all projects are included in Medway Matters and digital and social media.

Rochester Riverside

3.4.2 Following a ground-breaking event we worked with partners to implement a marketing campaign in Rochester and Strood. Lamp-post advertising banners were installed in Rochester and Strood. This development has been further supported by a public launch of the sales suite in November, with a Topping Out ceremony which took place in March.

Gillingham Master Plan

3.4.3 During Quarter 2 there was more localised support given to the Gillingham Master Plan which included a public exhibition, supplemented with leaflets/posters and social media.

Chatham Placemaking

3.4.4 Communications activity to support the public realm works included a sustained output of social media and digital news to keep the public informed of ongoing progress. This project, including a family fun day on the completion of Military Square was supported in the form of radio, print, digital media and merchandise.

Strood Town Centre

- 3.4.5 Following completion of the main public realm works a family launch event was held on 28 August 2018. This event coincided with the relaunch of the commercial market. The project had been extensively supported throughout with a public information leaflet, delivered to 22,000 properties, at the start of works, followed by an exhibition at the local hub, and ongoing updates via digital and social media. A project update leaflet is proposed to go out in March/April 2019, this will outline progress to date and future activity.

Strood Waterfront

- 3.4.6 We have been working with the contractor to agree the installation of graphics and interpretation boards at two key locations surrounding the site. The boards have been designed to inform the public of the activity undertaken to date and give an indication of future usage.

Christmas in Medway

- 3.4.7 A major marketing campaign supported all Christmas activities to attract people to our various events. We promoted Rochester Christmas Market heavily in spring 2018 in order to attract stallholders. As a result, we welcomed 60 stalls this year and have expressions of interest for further stalls next year. We also heavily promoted the Friday market days this year, and saw an increase in footfall from 9000 people in 2017 to 14000 in 2018.
- 3.4.8 The Christmas in Medway Facebook page reached 4 million people and saw over 135,000 engage with the posts (liking, commenting, posting pictures etc.) Our emailers have achieved nearly double the industry standard open rate.
- 3.4.9 We distributed the Christmas in Medway booklets across the South East with an extremely good pick-up rate.

Open Top Bus

- 3.4.10 We assisted with this campaign this year and our external partners were delighted with it, with the Royal Engineers Museum reporting their busiest August ever and Fort Amherst keen to work with us on future promotions.

Getting married in Medway

- 3.4.11 We have launched a campaign to support the council's assets as wedding venues, including Upnor Castle, Eastgate House, The Guildhall Museum, The Corn Exchange, the Register Office and Rochester as an overall destination. We have taken photos and produced a wedding booklet that will be distributed to our target audience. We also have a double page feature in Wedding Day magazine, which has been given out across Kent at high-profile wedding fairs, wedding venues and relevant establishments. Weddings in Medway has also featured in two editions of Medway Matters to supplement the campaign.

Sports

Swimming Lessons

- 3.4.12 Last autumn we launched the first ever DAX campaign (adverts through music sites such as Apple music, radio apps etc.) supplemented with a DVN campaign (videos that automatically play when surfing the internet) to maximise our target audience. This campaign resulted in over 6,500 people visiting the website in a five-week period, which is a very positive result.

Leisure Offer

- 3.4.13 We launched a gym offer marketing campaign: £20 per month for 20 weeks in order to celebrate 20 years of Medway. Our assistance in this resulted in 826 memberships being sold.

Social Worker recruitment

- 3.4.14 To support our corporate drive we have been running an intensive qualified social worker recruitment campaign. This included updates to the web pages and supporting three major events. This support included designing brochures, exhibition stands and marketing via digital and social media. Google AdWords have proved very successful in attracting visitors to the events, along with a number of printed materials and merchandise. Social Worker recruitment numbers have continued to increase.

Shared Lives campaign

- 3.4.15 We have worked with colleagues to refresh and relaunch the service recruit Shared Lives carers. The updated service was fully launched at the end of Quarter 3 with an updated website and graphics and a staff awareness event that attracted over 100 people.
- 3.4.16 We have supported this via a digital and social media campaign, including an ongoing google ad campaign that is driving over 50% of all traffic to the website. This has been further supported with a five-week radio advertising campaign, completed on 27 February 2019. Further activity is planned at selected Medway festivals and public information events.
- 3.4.17 Enquiries in the first three quarters were up 18% on the whole of the year 2017/18.

Adult education

- 3.4.18 A fully integrated campaign was implemented on the launch of our online service, including radio, 48-sheet roadside, paid social media, Medway Matters and digital. We have also run four large campaigns during the year. Online enrolments as a percentage of total recruitment reached 20% at the end of last year and continues to grow and the new £5 workshops have proved popular.

3.4.19 There has also been a refresh to the graphics and messaging at Gillingham centre, to create a more inclusive, welcoming and informative impression.

Libraries

3.4.20 The main marketing campaign each year is the Summer Reading Challenge, which has continued to attract young readers and active participation with libraries.

Waste campaigns

3.4.21 We have transformed our waste and recycling communications, developing a new brand 'Medway Recycles' and we have had an array of success stories through an ongoing programme of campaigns tackling specific areas of focus to improve recycling figures, along with long-term projects. Highlights have included:

Chatham Bus Station

3.4.22 Our six-month litter project at Chatham Bus Station tackled cigarette litter (one of the biggest causes of litter in Medway) with a new brand created 'Love Medway, Hate Litter'. We created a multi-channel campaign including an array of onsite signage across the station. The project was a great success. We saw a 25% improvement in satisfaction, a 25% reduction in cigarette litter and a 34% reduction overall in litter.

3.4.23 The 'Love Medway, Hate Litter' brand has also been featured on the latest Council Tax flyer.

Christmas kerbside collections

3.4.24 We undertook a pre-awareness campaign for residents to inform them that there would be no brown bin service between 24 and 29 December 2018. Local residents were subsequently well informed of changes.

Luton Road: Resident engagement

3.4.25 To tackle the issue of Luton Road residents not putting their waste and recycling out on time, we created a bespoke visual-led postcard, which helped to better engage the range of different populations living in Luton Road. We have seen a 20% increase in residents putting their collections out on time and the activity was nominated for a national LARAC award for 'Best New Idea'.

Improved recycling materials

3.4.26 We undertook regular activity to communicate the redesigned re-usable bags and clear sacks and new and improved caddy liners. This has helped to lay the foundations for encouraging more Medway residents to recycle.

Waste news

3.4.27 Our new monthly environmental services emailer is proving increasingly popular with more than 2,000 subscribers. Our open rate is one of the best for council e-newsletters, with an average of 41% (above the industry average of 24%).

Housing

3.4.28 We have launched a number of initiatives this year, including:

Universal Credit

3.4.29 The roll out began at the end of May and we ran a major campaign titled “Could Universal Credit Affect You? “ aimed at raising awareness of the changes and preparing affected residents for the changes. The campaign has been praised nationally and was highlighted by the Department for Work and Pensions as best practice.

Welfare Services Booklet

3.4.30 A new services booklet was introduced to highlight all of our welfare services, including homeless support. The new booklet has received praise from rough-sleepers and other people in need as a great place to find out what help is available to them.

Leaving Home campaign

3.4.31 A booklet was introduced for our Leaving Home service, which provides advice and guidance for people starting to live independently and help them avoid becoming homeless. This has received great feedback from those who received the booklet via partners connected to the Young Persons Forum Group. We also created online content and an advertising campaign to direct users to the new homepage. We will shortly be introducing a follow-up campaign (led through the Medway Matters magazine) to highlight our support to anyone who is moving out for the first time.

Public Health

3.4.32 We have run a number of Public Health campaigns throughout the year aimed at empowering people to take control of their health and promoting take up of the support we offer. Major campaigns included:

Alcohol Awareness and Domestic Abuse

3.4.33 Our linked alcohol awareness and domestic abuse campaign, which ran throughout the World Cup, received an overall reach of 71,748 across our social media platforms. This included strong interaction levels; one domestic abuse post received an 80% response from women with high interactions in the 35-44 age bracket. The campaign ultimately saw an increase in the number of visiting our ‘One Stop Shop’ location in Gillingham High Street with 58 visitors in June, our highest visitor rate for 2018.

Smoking in Pregnancy

3.4.34 We launched a new smoking in pregnancy brand in the summer, to tackle the higher-than-national average in Medway. This included a new video and print materials to support Public Health’s Blooming Bumps programme for pregnant mothers. The programme has helped 10 mums quit smoking so far while in general, our smoking in prevalence rate among mums has gone down in the last quarter.

Health Checks

- 3.4.35 We created a successful social media campaign with supporting materials to help encourage more people aged 40 to 74 to have a health check. Subsequently, this year has seen the highest number of health checks within Medway.

Sugar Smart Medway

- 3.4.36 Our Sugar Smart campaign launched last autumn, encouraging residents to make small changes which can make a big difference, including reducing health risks such as obesity and type 2 diabetes. We began the campaign with various preview editorial pieces, and outdoor signage. We have also assisted in the creation of a Sugar Smart pack for residents, and created water bottles and barracudas to support events this year. This activity will continue throughout 2019.

Health Walks and Cycling

- 3.4.37 We relaunched our Health Walks and Cycling programmes in September with two new videos filmed with some of our walking and cycling groups at locations including Cuxton village, Strood and Riverside Country Park, Gillingham. The campaign was launched across a range of digital support, including linking the videos across several areas on our Medway.gov website, along with a wider social media campaign, including targeted posts. Our cycling video was the first to be pushed out on Facebook, and it performed well with 807 views in the first weekend. Alongside digital, the campaign has included print advertising and promotional activity in parks.

Theatres

- 3.4.38 We have continued work to tailor our marketing more directly for our theatre productions. Sammy the Sheep Saves Christmas, our Brook Christmas Show generated over 6,100 ticket sales – the 2nd highest grossing Brook Christmas Show in the last five years, assisted by a large pre-awareness marketing campaign across Medway and Kent.
- 3.4.39 We have launched a strong digital marketing drive using social media and introducing a new electronic monthly newsletter which now has 30,000 subscribers and an average open rate over 30% (above the industry standard of 24%) with high engagement rates in clicking through to book tickets. This is a strong tool in helping us grow our theatres' brand.

3.5 Other projects

Business to Business Event

- 3.5.1 Medway Council were again a sponsor of the Medway B2B event held at Chatham Dockyard. The event took place in September and was supported across LinkedIn and Twitter and digital media. In addition to focussing on the benefits of locating in Medway, there was additional support for Medway Adult Education and Public Health, outlining the extensive range of support available to businesses and employees.

External design services

3.5.2 We continue to provide cost effective design services for a number of external clients including Gravesham and Dartford Borough councils as well as local community organisations.

3.6 **Media**

3.6.1 Our press office provides a professional, proactive and reactive media service as well as maintaining our social media channels which are an increasingly important tool for communication with our communities.

3.6.2 Through forward planning we work to ensure strong coverage of Medway and Medway Council key stories in local, national and specialist media. The press office has issued 212 press releases in the past year (1 April 2018 until 6 March 2019). Additionally, they have issued concise updates through social media, for example photographs at events and 'job done' posts in relation to action taken by services following a social media request.

3.6.3 In addition to our regular stories on service initiatives and events some of our strong stories this year have included:

- Rochester Riverside – ground breaking, marketing suite open, ministerial visit.
- Innovation Park Medway – great national and international media interest in the new business hub with over 129 articles.
- Historic canon found in Chatham – we produced a social media video which had fantastic engagement. ITV Meridian also attended the site when the canon was removed from the ground.
- Armed Forces – Armed Forces Day, parade, covenant and Major James McCudden commemorative stone event and WW1 commemorations.
- Enforcement action taken and ongoing court results.
- Heritage – rare wall paintings revealed at Eastgate House.
- Dementia friendly – good coverage at Hoo Sports Centre event.
- Universal credit – advice to residents and those who might be affected
- Zero tolerance campaign – working with a local university to address sexual harassment and discrimination in the night-time economy.
- Drowning Prevention Week – Swim England coverage.
- Public Health – stop smoking and Man vs Fat.
- Schools – increase in places and plans for new schools.
- Lower Thames Crossing.

3.6.4 In addition to proactive media work, the team has handled 1,000 reactive media enquiries during the course of the year (1 April 2018 until 6 March 2019).

Medway on Map

- 3.6.5 We have reached a broader range of media in the past year including The MJ, The Economist, Property Week, This England, Timeless Travels, City Metric, The Times, Financial Times and The Telegraph.
- 3.6.6 Medway featured heavily in the December/January edition of Kent Profile, with a 16-page special section, which is the biggest cover story for several years. Kent Life has also been featuring Medway news.
- 3.6.7 LGiU recently featured our budget news, and Children & Young People now featured Ofsted findings following an inspection of Children's services.

3.7 Digital communications

- 3.7.1 In June 2018 we launched a major social media campaign to tackle some negative comments, reinforce our message that we will not tolerate litter and fly tipping in Medway, clarify how people can best report incidents and promote the work we do in clearing incidents. A 'jobdone' graphic was created to showcase the fly-tipping incidents the environmental team had responded to. The press office worked with the environmental team and officers to obtain before and after photos of the fly-tipped incidents. These were posted on social media to provide reassurance to residents that the council takes the matter seriously. Between 1 July and 16 September 2018, 166 #jobdone posts were issued, reaching a total of 1.7million people. During this period, there were 1200 link clicks.
- 3.7.2 We also produced a video showing people how easy it is to report fly-tipping – via phones and using the online form. In addition, the press office continues to promote all successful prosecutions. There are now very few negative comments criticising the action taken to deal with fly-tipping.
- 3.7.3 The main Medway Council Twitter account has 19,000 followers and more than 10,000 people like our Facebook page. We also have a LinkedIn account with approximately 5,700 followers. We continue to gain more followers across our social media accounts, especially with more digitally focussed content such as videos taken at events or short interviews with key spokespeople.

#OurDay

- 3.7.4 November 2018 was the second time Medway Council has taken part in the Local Government Association's national Tweetathon, known as #OurDay, aimed at raising awareness of the wide range of services provided by local government. Throughout the day on Tuesday, 20 November 2018 we issued 88 related tweets and doubled our reach on the previous year to two million people.

3.8 Internal Communications and Engagement

3.8.1 Internal Communications and Engagement remains an important priority for the Council, especially during transformational change. Integration of the Employee Engagement Team from HR Services (April 2018) has enabled a more joined-up approach to keeping the workforce informed of council plans and progress.

3.8.2 Initiatives this year have included:

- Creation and implementation of the Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy 2018-2020.
- Development and re-design of the fortnightly e-bulletin *Our Medway*, providing a greater employee focus, and the production of *CMT Headlines* providing important strategic corporate news from our management team.
- Leadership Academy supporting managers with bespoke modules around managing change in their teams including engagement, empowerment, innovation and using digital options for new ways of working.
- Supporting Smart Medway through an internal communications campaign highlighting employee/team case studies, including branding, video, monthly *Smart Medway* email bulletin, new webpages, employee briefings, supporting suggestion scheme.
- Implementation of digital cafés, working with ICT to engage with employees and teams about new software and how this can improve ways of working.
- Replacing the Just4you intranet with Medspace.
- Implementation of *The Hot Seat* to increase engagement with the Corporate Management Team.

4. Finance

Achievements for 2018/2019

4.1 The Finance division continues to deliver on all of its key targets and is steadily transforming its processes and systems to deliver improved services.

4.2 The 2017/18 statement of accounts was signed off by the Chief Finance Officer by the end of May, meeting the new accelerated statutory timescales and once again achieving an unqualified audit opinion. Initial meetings with the new incoming auditor have been very positive and preparations for the closure of the 2018/19 accounts are progressing well. Our new auditors, Grant Thornton, have undertaken a technical review of our last accounts and have not identified any issues with the format, content or accounting policies.

4.3 The revenue budget monitoring forecasts a very challenging set of figures for the current year, however officers and portfolio holders have been working on a range of management actions and other measures to address this.

- 4.4 Highlighting our treasury performance, the returns on our £23m of property fund investments are holding up well and overall the Council is forecasting a net £156,000 underspend against our Interest and Financing budgets.
- 4.5 Against an extremely challenging financial backdrop, the Council recently agreed a balanced budget for 2019/20, which should address the demographic pressures impacting services for children and adult, without recourse to reserves.
- 4.6 The capital programme is huge in its scale and ambition, including the continuation of the riverside housing developments facilitated with Growing Places funding, the programme of LGF schemes to improve Medway's infrastructure, the pipeline of schemes to be delivered by the Medway Development Company Ltd and the flagship Innovation Park Medway project. The acquisition of the Pentagon Centre will also be key to delivering our aspirations for Chatham and represents another significant element of the £220 million programme over the medium term. The Finance team has been important in supporting colleagues in bringing these schemes to life and arranging the financing.
- 4.7 The Finance division also plays an important role in supporting the Council's transformation programme, working with colleagues to ensure that the business cases demonstrate a return on investment and that the benefits are ultimately realised in the delivery against planned savings targets.
- 4.8 Since responsibility for Council Plan reporting has been transferred to the Chief Finance Officer, work has been ongoing to more closely align the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Treasury Strategy, the new Capital Strategy and Risk Management Strategy with delivery of the outcomes articulated in the Council Plan.
- 4.9 The division is moving all of its main financial systems onto hosted arrangements, contributing towards efficiency savings and ensuring that we are always working in the latest upgrades. Payroll moved into Finance Operations in April 2018 and will be moving to a hosted arrangement in early 2019. The Head of Service has been working with HR on some developments to improve functionality, 'sweat the asset' and to improve the traded offer to schools.
- 4.10 The division has made good progress in improving its debt collection processes and this work continues across all areas of the business to ensure we collect more of the income we're entitled to.
- 4.11 With four Trainee Accountants in post, all studying for professional qualifications, the division is growing a pool of expertise for the future and maximising the opportunity offered by the Apprenticeship Levy. We will shortly be recruiting a fifth trainee to support the Corporate Performance side of the business.

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Appendices

None

Background documents

None