

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

Thursday, 28 March 2019

6.30pm to 10.36pm

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, Osborne, Paterson, Saroy, Shaw, Stamp, Tejan and Tranter
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Steve Iles (Substitute for Mrs Josie Iles)
- In Attendance:** James Brown, Head of Regulatory Services
Laura Caiels, Legal Advisor
Councillor Jane Chitty, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Dave Harris, Head of Planning
Anna Marie Lawrence, Head of Business Intelligence
Andrew Mann, Partnership Director, Medway Norse
Carrie McKenzie, Assistant Director - Transformation
Kim Savill, Contracts Manager, Veolia
Councillor Rupert Turpin, Portfolio Holder for Business Management
Sarah Valdus, Head of Environmental Services
David Warner, Acting Road Safety Manager
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

943 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hicks and Josie Iles and the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive and the Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration.

944 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 22 January 2019 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

945 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

946 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

The Chairman, Councillor Etheridge declared an interest in item 8 (Gateway 5 Report: Annual Review of Waste Contracts Contract Year: October 2017 to September 2018) and left the meeting for the consideration and determination of this item. In his absence, the Vice Chairman chaired the meeting.

Councillor Stamp declared an interest in item 5 (Petitions) on the basis that his sister was the lead petitioner for the petition referred to the committee. He left the meeting for the consideration and determination of this item.

Other interests

Councillor Tejan referred to item 7 (Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation) concerning any reference to the Innovation Centre on the basis that he has a registered business at that address and in any reference to the Chatham Centre Forum as he serves on the Forum. He advised that he would remain and take part in the debate on this item.

947 Petitions

Discussion:

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

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

In accordance with the Council's petitions scheme, one petition had been referred for discussion by the Committee and the lead petitioner was in attendance and invited to address the Committee.

The Committee welcomed Ms Stamp to the meeting and she set out her reasons for requesting a review and the concerns of petitioners. She advised that Albany Road, Gillingham was a narrow road and visibility was restricted owing to a bend in the road. This often resulted in confrontation when one or both drivers refused to reverse to give way to oncoming vehicles. Such

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confrontations had on occasion turned aggressive and been witnessed by children. In addition, residents were subjected to noise from running engines when cars were unable to move. Residents had therefore petitioned for Albany Road to be made one way to alleviate these problems and it was considered that this low cost proposal would make a difference to the quality of life for those living in Albany Road.

Ms Stamp confirmed that all but 2 residents had signed the petition and the 2 that had not signed lived at one end of the road and were therefore not affected by the problem.

The Acting Road Safety Manager advised that the Council's Highway Designers had produced a scheme design as part of previous investigative work and the cost of making the road one way would be £31,860 at 2018/2019 prices. Such costs included the provision of signs which would require illumination and therefore an energy supply would need to be provided.

He advised that no personal injury collisions had been recorded at Albany Road during the last 5 years of available police records and therefore the scheme could not be considered a priority for investment on casualty reduction grounds. Albany Road did not form part of the local distributor road network and was not considered strategic in nature and for these reasons, the scheme had not been prioritised for available funding streams in terms of reducing road casualties or improving journey times.

It was also stressed that it was possible that the speed of traffic using the road could increase should it be made one way and the costs quoted did not include traffic calming measures.

As a way forward, it was possible for alternative options to be investigated such as the provision of passing places along the road. This would result in the introduction of parking restrictions but these might not need to be in operation for 24 hours.

The Committee discussed the petition and noted that this issue had been the subject of previous concerns expressed by residents and therefore warranted further investigation as to possible ways of alleviating the problem.

The Assistant Director Front Line Services suggested that the possible provision of passing places in Albany Road, Gillingham be placed on the 2019/20 parking programme and she explained the process by which the scheme would then be progressed which would likely involve consultation with residents.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the petition response and appropriate officer action as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

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- b) thanked Ms Stamp for attending the meeting and noted that the possible provision of passing places in Albany Road, Gillingham would be placed on the 2019/20 parking programme for consideration as a matter of priority.

948 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress on the areas within the terms of reference of this Committee covered by Councillor Turpin, Portfolio Holder for Business Management as set out below:

- Community Officers
- Emergency Planning
- Registration
- Bereavement.

Councillor Turpin paid tribute to the various teams within his Portfolio, in particular the Community Wardens and his praise was supported by Members of the Committee.

Councillor Turpin responded to Members' questions as follows:

- **Spring Clean Campaign** - In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder advised that the recent Spring Clean had been very successful attracting more participants than in 2018 and the event was still ongoing. Should residents wish to undertake more regular litter picks, this could be arranged via the Community Warden Team and Ward Councillors. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the benefits of using social media to promote community events such as the annual Spring Clean.
- **Preparations for Brexit including information on the Council's website** - A Member referred to Emergency Planning and sought information as to what plans had been put in place to respond to Brexit. In addition, he asked whether the Council had utilised any of the £210,000 allocated to all local authorities by the Government to prepare for Brexit and if so, what this money had been spent on.

In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council was actively involved in Kent Resilience Forum Groups and he referred to paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of his report which provided more detail. He stated that much work was going on behind the scenes in preparation for Brexit but Medway had not established a standalone Forum.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he was unable to provide information as to the use of the £210,000 funding and the Chairman suggested that this information be provided to Members via a briefing note

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Another Member referred to the availability of basic Brexit information and weblinks on a number of local authority websites and asked whether Medway would be prepared to consider including similar information on its website. In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that if such information was easily available, he would raise this with the Leader and officers.

- **Community Wardens - Welfare** – A Member referred to the difficult job undertaken by the Community Wardens which often bought them into conflict and asked what welfare measures were put in place to support these officers. In response, the Portfolio Holder outlined work being undertaken to encourage citizenship so that members of the public could provide help and support to the wardens in their day to day activities. The Assistant Director Front Line Services reassured the Committee that the Council takes the welfare of all staff seriously and that staff undergo regular 1:1's and Performance Review sessions along with regular team meetings and away days. In addition, staff were able to access Care First and Occupational Health if they required additional support.
- **Surface water flooding** – A Member asked for a Briefing Note providing an update on the flooding incident in Luton.
- **Crematorium** - In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that all works at Medway Crematorium had now been completed and the mercury abatement project was in place.
- **Dog walking in parks** – In response to concerns as to irresponsible behaviour of dog walkers when letting their dogs loose in parks, the Portfolio Holder drew attention to the Council's Canine Code and agreed that this could benefit from further promotion.
- **Flytipping** – Although flytipping was not within his portfolio, in response to a question about flytipping, the recent decision to reduce the bulky waste charge and whether such decision correlated to the level of flytipping in Medway, the Portfolio Holder advised that a substantial level of flytipped rubbish was not bulky waste.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.
- b) requested that a briefing note be supplied on the expenditure of the £210,000 Brexit related funding allocated to the Council by the Government.

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- c) noted that the Portfolio Holder has offered to discuss with the Leader of the Council and officers, the inclusion of information on the Council's website signposting people to relevant Brexit weblinks
- d) requested that all Luton and Wayfield Ward Councillors be provided with an update as to the current position concerning the area of Luton which was subject of a flood in 2018.

949 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of Councillor Chitty, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation which fell within the remit of this Committee as set out below:

- Economic Development
- Employment
- Local Plan
- Markets
- Planning Policy
- Regulation – Environmental Health/Trading Standards/Enforcement and Licensing (executive functions only)
- Social Regeneration
- South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Innovation Studios Medway** – A Member asked whether the lower level take up of the ground floor innovation studio units was attributed to the potential flood risk of the site on which the units were located. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the location of the site had dictated the design of the units and the ground floor units were being used for storage. Tenants of the units were fully aware of the limitations of the site before taking on the units.
- **Gillingham and Chatham Town Centre vacant shop rates** – A Member asked the Portfolio Holder what was being done to reduce the level of vacant shops in town centres. In response, the Portfolio Holder agreed that the vacancy rates were unacceptable but stated that major regeneration plans were underway for Chatham which may help. In addition, the Chatham Town Forum was continuing to work to reduce the number of vacant shops. In Gillingham, works had been undertaken to improve Gillingham Railway Station and a long term masterplan was in place for the regeneration of Britton Farm.

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- **Local Growth Fund (LGF) Bids** – A Member referred to the list of LGF bids detailed in the report and asked why the Britton Farm LGF bid had not been included. The Portfolio Holder advised that she was unable to provide information on this bid at the current time but confirmed that if funding was not available, the Council would pursue funding for Gillingham in the next round of High Street funding allocations.
- **Jobs fair** – In response to a suggestion that the Jobs Fair be extended to take place twice a year, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Jobs Fair was very successful and attracted many businesses and she considered that to increase the event more than once a year may dilute the effectiveness of the event and reduce the numbers of businesses taking part.
- **Medway Local Plan - next steps** – The Portfolio Holder and Head of Planning outlined the current position concerning the Medway Local Plan and the next steps to be followed. The outcome of the Housing Infrastructure Bid was awaited and it was anticipated that the draft Plan would be produced in the Summer of 2019 with the final Plan being submitted to Cabinet in the Spring of 2020.

In response to a question as to whether the Local Plan would include provision for one or more new recycling centres in Medway, the Portfolio Holder stated that this was an issue that could be investigated but in the meantime, the Council needed to maximise the use of the three existing centres. She also gave a reassurance that recycling would continue.

- **Annual Monitoring Report** – It was confirmed that this was available on the Council's website.
- **Economic development in Medway** – A Member referred to the Centre for Cities Independent Report for the South East Region and stated that from the statistics provided, Medway was not performing as well as other areas such as Swindon and Brighton. In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that she was not in a position to comment upon the statistics quoted but would respond direct to the Member concerned if he put the question in writing to her. The Head of Business Intelligence stated that the Centre for Cities Independent Report used a different methodology and therefore was not comparable to Medway's statistics.
- **Appeals performance** – A Member asked whether the level of upheld planning appeals was a direct response to the Council not having a Local Plan. In response, the Head of Planning advised that the level of upheld appeals in Medway at 21% fell well below the national average of 30%.
- **Air Quality** - In response to a question as to action being taken to improve air quality in Medway, the Portfolio Holder advised that this issue was actively promoted by the Local Government Association but

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local authorities were dependent upon legislation to take action. She referred to the Council's Air Quality Strategy and the work being undertaken to promote and educate the importance of air quality.

- **Illegal tobacco** – The Portfolio Holder advised upon the work undertaken by officers to intercept the sale of illegal tobacco.
- **Income from markets** – In response to a question about the income generated from markets, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that whilst Gillingham's market was flourishing, the Strood market had required support through the offer of preferential rates. She advised that market traders determined which markets they attended based on commercial decisions. An independent market review had been commissioned to guide the future direction of Medway's markets and the outcome of this was due in July 2019.
- **Loss of ATM's in Rochester** – A Member referred to the loss of a free use ATM in Rochester High Street and whilst noting that an ATM was available in the Visitor Information Centre and the Railway Station, he considered that being a major tourist destination, an 24 hour ATM machine should be available for use in the High Street so that people had access to cash during events such as the Farmers Market. In response, the Portfolio Holder assured the Member that she was happy to support any representations for provision of a free to use ATM in Rochester High Street.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.
- b) noted that the Portfolio Holder was happy to investigate alternative uses of the ground floor units at the Innovation Studios Medway.
- c) requested that a briefing note be provided on the outcome of the Local Growth Fund bid for Britton Farm, Gillingham.
- d) noted that the final Medway Local Plan was anticipated to be ready in Spring 2020.
- e) noted that the Portfolio Holder had offered to support Members in any representations for a free to use ATM machine in Rochester High Street.

**950 Gateway 5 Report: Annual Review of Waste Contracts Contract Year:
October 2017 to September 2018**

Discussion:

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman took the Chair for this item.

The Committee received a comprehensive report and presentations providing an update on the activities carried out by Veolia Environmental Services on the provision of waste and recycling collection, waste disposal and street cleansing services and Medway Norse providing management of the three household waste recycling centres.

Kim Savill, Contracts Manager Medway – Veolia and Andy Mann, Partnership Director from Medway NORSE were in attendance at the meeting to answer questions.

The Committee discussed the following issues:

- **Removal of asbestos** It was confirmed that staff were trained in asbestos awareness and that asbestos materials were not accepted at the transfer stations.
- **Transfer of contract to Medway Norse** – It was confirmed that the waste and recycling collection would transfer to Medway Norse on 1 October 2019 but that Medway Norse would continue to use Veolia's transfer stations.
- **The total tonnage waste collected** – The Head of Environmental Services informed the Member concerned that information on the tonnage of waste was included in Appendix 3 and she was happy to meet with him to discuss this if he wished.
- **Recycling rates** – The Head of Environmental Services referred to changes to the markets for recycled items over recent years and confirmed that a new contract had been entered into for the disposal of mattresses on a cost neutral basis. This prevented mattresses going to landfill.
- **Provision of leaf blowers** – It was hoped that leaf blowers would be available for use in 2019 and these would be used in parks in Medway.
- **Christmas waste collections** – It was noted that household waste collections had operated well over the Christmas/New Year period.
- **Street Cleansing** - In response to concerns that residents had commented that there appeared to be less street cleaning, it was confirmed that street cleansing was continuing and Veolia had taken on more employees. Mechanical sweepers were also used and those areas

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which could not be accessed by the mechanical sweeper were swept manually. However, it was always possible that areas may get missed and both Members and residents were encouraged to report areas of concern.

- **Street Cleaning Inspections** – A Member referred to paragraph 3.6.3 of the report and suggested that it would have been useful to have received information as to the outcome of the 2,066 street inspections carried out between October 2017 – September 2018. The Head of Environmental Services advised that this information had previously been included in a Briefing Note on Performance Indicator NI 195 (Improved street and environmental cleanliness:Litter).
- **Increasing communications concerning street cleansing and recycling** - In response to a suggestion that the level of publicity concerning street cleansing and recycling be increased, the Head of Environmental Services advised that work was underway with the Council's Communications Team to refresh publicity covering all areas of the Environmental Services remit.
- **Refuse bags left out overnight** – In response to concerns that refuse bags left out overnight were often ripped open by foxes, the Head of Environmental Services commented that foxes were attracted by food waste and therefore she encouraged food waste to be placed in brown bins rather than in plastic sacks.
- **The introduction of charges by Kent County Council at Household Waste Recycling Centres and how this could affect Medway** – The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that in response to the decision by Kent County Council to implement a charge for use of its household waste recycling centres, work was underway to ensure that this would not have a detrimental impact upon Medway's sites. She confirmed that there were no plans to implement a charge at Medway's sites for Medway residents. Members requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting on this issue

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) thanked Kim Savill from Veolia, Andrew Mann from Medway Norse and the Head of Environmental Services for their presentations and comprehensive response to Member's questions.
- b) noted that work was underway with the Council's Communications Team to refresh publicity covering all areas of the Environmental Services.
- c) agreed that a report be included on the agenda for the June meeting of the Committee providing an update concerning the Council's response

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to the introduction of charges by Kent County Council at its household waste recycling centres so as to protect use of Medway's sites for Medway residents.

951 Update on CCTV Review

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out progress on work streams 1, 2 and 3 of the CCTV improvement programme and the Head of Regulatory Services provided a brief update on further progress since the report had been written.

In response to a question as to progress on replacing CCTV cameras in Strood, Rainham and the Peninsula, the Head of Regulatory Services advised that under work streams 1, 2 and 3, Gillingham, Rochester and Chatham had been identified as priority areas to address the number of non-working cameras in those areas and being areas with the highest number of cameras and footfall. However, other areas would be addressed under a later phase.

In addition, he confirmed that as a means of ensuring economies of scale and re-siting of cameras, no expenditure had been incurred to date other than on network costs.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director Front Line Services confirmed that the total budget available for the CCTV improvement programme was £105,000 made up of £80,000 from the Council's budget and £25,000 from Section 106 funding required to be spent in Chatham. Whilst it was not possible at this stage to confirm that this funding would be sufficient to provide CCTV improvements in Strood, Rainham and the Peninsula, it would be sufficient to cover the full improvement programme in Gillingham, Rochester and Chatham. The maintenance budget would continue to be held by the Council. She confirmed that a further update on works and costs could be provided to the Committee in June.

The Assistant Director Front Line Services also advised that work was underway with Medway Commercial Group (MCG) to establish a new Business Plan and identify priorities and asset investment going forward. This was supported by the Assistant Director Transformation who confirmed that MCG had been operating under a new Chairman since December 2018 and, under his instruction, she was undertaking a review of MCG and was personally overseeing the MCG element of the CCTV improvement programme whilst the Assistant Director Front Line Services had an oversight from the Council's perspective. She gave an assurance that they were both working closely to ensure that the CCTV improvement programme priorities were being taken forward and were working in partnership to set up the Business Plan. The Business Plan would be a transparent plan and set out options going forward and the costs involved, including capital costs over a 3, 5 and 10 year period.

In response to a question as to whether the Business Plan would be publically available, the Assistant Director Transformation advised that as MCG was a

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commercial company some of the information would be commercially sensitive and therefore whether the Business Plan could be publically available would be for the CCTV Partnership to determine. She confirmed that the partnership involved three other local authorities. The Chairman suggested that the Committee be supplied with the section of the Business Plan relating to Medway's element of the contract.

A Member expressed concern that the CCTV service was continuing to be run by MCG and he expressed a view that this service should be bought back in house and operated by the Council. Other Members expressed concern regarding the lack of accountability concerning the work of MCG.

In response, the Assistant Director Transformation advised that CCTV was only one element of the Company's contract with the Council as MCG was also involved in recruitment, the provision of education services and Telecare in addition to CCTV. However, CCTV was the top priority for a review and she confirmed that officers had increased engagement and transparency around what was being done along with accountability, cost effectiveness and performance information.

A Member expressed appreciation as to the work that had been undertaken to resolve issues in the CCTV service covering Rochester and he commented upon the excellent quality of the cameras that were now in place.

The Head of Regulatory Services outlined the future phases of the CCTV Improvement Programme. The latter work stream would involve a larger piece of work involving a strategic requirement for CCTV provision throughout Medway and the underlying infrastructure.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) agreed that a report updating progress on the current CCTV improvement programme be included on the Committee's work programme.
- b) agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee in June 2019 setting out expenditure to date on the current CCTV Improvement Programme.
- c) agreed that a report also be included on the Committee's work programme enabling the Committee to have an oversight of future programmes of CCTV provision in Medway.
- d) requested that details of the Medway Council element of the MCG Business Plan be provided to Members of this Committee when available.

952 Transformation Update

Discussion:

The Committee received a report providing an update on the implementation of digital channels and the take up of these processes by residents.

The Assistant Director Transformation drew attention to various elements of the transformation programme and stressed that assisted digital support was available through the Community Hubs and Adult Education Centres for those who did not have access to or, were not comfortable with using digital services.

Decision:

The Committee noted the significant progress made in the transformation and digital journey for the Council.

953 Council Plan Monitoring 2018/19 Quarter 3

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance in Quarter 3 for 2018/19 for the key measures of success and projects relevant to this Committee.

A Member referred to NI 154 (Net additional homes provided) and asked why data was not yet available for 2017/18. In response, the Head of Business Intelligence advised that statistics for this performance indicator were produced by the Government and were not yet available but this data was included within the Council's Authority Monitoring Report and was available on the website.

Decision:

The Committee noted the Quarter 3 performance of measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities.

954 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee considered its work programme.

Decision:

The Committee noted the current work programme and agreed that the following reports be added to the Committee's work programme arising from discussions at this meeting:

- For June 2019 - a report providing an update concerning the Council's response to the introduction of charges by Kent County Council at its

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household waste recycling centres so as to protect use of Medway's sites for Medway residents.

- A report updating progress on the current CCTV improvement programme.
- For June 2019 a report setting out expenditure to date on the CCTV Improvement Programme.
- A report enabling the Committee to have an oversight of future programmes of CCTV provision in Medway.

955 Chairman's Announcements

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman expressed his appreciation to those Members serving on the Committee but who would not be standing for re-election to the Council on 2 May 2019.

Chairman

Date:

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