

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 23 April 2020
7.00pm to 10.04pm
Record of the meeting

Present: The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway (Councillor Tejan)
Councillors Buckwell, Fearn, Filmer, Gulvin, Mrs Josie Iles,
Steve Iles, Jarrett, Johnson, Khan, Maple, Murray, Andy Stamp,
Rupert Turpin and Wildey

In Attendance: Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Wayne Hemingway, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Perry Holmes, Chief Legal Officer/Monitoring Officer
Stephen Platt, Democratic Services Officer

796 Apologies for absence

During this period, it was informally agreed between the two political groups, due the Coronavirus pandemic, to run Medway Council meetings with a reduced number of participants. This was to reduce risk, comply with Government guidance and enable more efficient meetings. Therefore, the apologies given reflects that informal agreement of reduced participants.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adeoye, Ahmed, Aldous, Barrett, Bhutia, Bowler, Brake, Browne, Carr, Mrs Diane Chambers, Rodney Chambers OBE, Chitty, Clarke, Cooper, Curry, Doe, Etheridge, Griffin, Hackwell, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Kemp, Lloyd, Mahil, McDonald, Opara, Osborne, Paterson, Pendergast, Potter, Prenter, Price, Sylvia Purdy, Sands, Chrissy Stamp, Thompson, Thorne, Tranter, Elizabeth Turpin and Williams.

797 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Gulvin declared an OSI in any reference to Medway Development Company Ltd (MDC) as he is a Board Member of MDC. He relied on a

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dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in any discussions and votes thereon.

Other interests

Councillor Turpin declared an interest in question 7D as he owned Houses of Multiple Occupation.

798 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 was agreed by the Council and signed by The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway as correct.

799 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway, on behalf of all Members, placed on record the Council's condolences to the family of Roy Hunter who had sadly passed away earlier this month.

The Mayor stated that Mr Hunter had served on the Council between 2000 and 2011 having represented St Margaret's from 2000- 2003 and Rainham South from 2003-2011. He had been Chairman of the various Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committees between 2002 and 2009 and also served as the Chairman of the Area Development Control East Committee in 2003.

The Mayor, on behalf of all Members, placed on record the Council's condolences to Councillor Potter and his family as his father had sadly passed away last week.

The Mayor informed Members that the meeting would be paused briefly at 8:00pm so that those present could take part in the weekly tradition of clapping for carers for a minute.

Following a proposal by the Mayor, those present observed a minutes silence in recognition of all those who had lost their lives to COVID-19.

800 Leader's announcements

There were none.

801 Petitions

Public

There were none.

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Members

Councillor Andy Stamp submitted a petition containing 1,766 signatures which asked the Council and Medway Norse to stop anti-union bullying and protect the workforce from Covid19.

802 Public questions

The Mayor announced that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council had discouraged members of the public from attending the Council meeting in person in light of Government advice on travel and social distancing. The Council Rules stated that should a member of the public be unable to attend the meeting they would receive a written response. However, given the current exceptional circumstances, the five public questions submitted would be answered at the meeting.

A) Zeynep Mehmet of Chatham asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“When will the Council do something about the increasing population of homeless people on Chatham High Street?”

I’m sick of my child and myself having to walk through groups of severely drunk, swearing, shouting, begging and more recently shouting at the public “what are you looking at”.

People are looking with disgust at their drunken behaviour. I can’t go shopping without feeling intimidated anymore.”

On behalf of Councillor Doe, Councillor Jarrett thanked Miss Memet for her question. He stated that the Council worked with a range of voluntary groups, partners and agencies to seek to address rough sleeping. Also, the Council had been very successful in securing significant amounts of funding from Central Government that had enabled it to find housing for over one hundred people since July 2018 who were at risk of, or currently were, rough sleeping. This work was undertaken through a range of initiatives that included a rough sleeping co-ordinator, an outreach team, hostel provision and housing first schemes.

Councillor Jarrett stated that not everyone that was seen in the High Street was rough sleeping and that was why the Council continually worked with its community safety team and the Police to address these issues.

He concluded by stating that the Council had recently established a dedicated Community Safety Officer for Chatham who worked closely with businesses, the Safer Medway Partnership and the Chatham Town Centre Forum, as well as colleagues in Kent Police, to make the High Street a safe, attractive environment for all.

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B) Ben Rist of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

"I would like to ask Medway Council why the Conservative councillors deny food poverty happens.

Medway Labour, particularly Alex Paterson, has been doing work around campaigning against this but as someone who has to use soup kitchens to survive, it's astonishing that Medway Conservatives refuse to deny food poverty exists in Medway on a huge scale.

Will the Council now start to recognise that it exists and will they start funding efforts to stop people going hungry or will they continue with Rochester Castle Concerts which is not as life threatening as shortage of food?"

On behalf of Councillor Brake, Councillor Turpin thanked Mr Rist for his question. He stated that on 3 March 2020, the Cabinet debated the issue of food poverty and supported the establishment of a Medway Food Partnership. This Cabinet decision was an endorsement of a recommendation made to Cabinet by the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board. In February 2020 the Health and Wellbeing Board received an in depth report and recommendations focussed on ensuring residents in Medway had access to food appropriate for their needs. Medway had developed a specific Action Plan to address food poverty.

He stated that the nature of this challenge required a range of partners to address such a societal challenge. The Council could not address the issues that may lead to individuals or groups being unable to access food. All those who were able to contribute and tackle this issue needed to work together. In setting up a Medway Food Partnership, the Council was bringing together a number of key stakeholders including the third sector, education partners, private sector and health partners.

Councillor Turpin stated that he was pleased to report that the current COVID19 emergency situation, albeit in lamentable circumstances, had fast tracked the establishment of this partnership. The excellent work that was being coordinated by the Medway Council Public Health team, had brought together local and regional partners from the voluntary sector, public sector and faith groups. The partnership had fed and offered support to thousands of the most vulnerable local people and this demonstrated the commitment of the Council to tackle this issue.

He concluded by stating that the Council would continue to build on this work once this emergency was over.

C) Vivienne Parker of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

"When are we going to get electric buses?"

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Councillor Filmer thanked Ms Parker for her question. He stated that bus operators did not currently have any plans to introduce electric buses in Medway. However, the Council was planning to bid for a £50million government grant to develop an all-electric bus city and was working with local bus providers to submit an 'Expression of Interest', which was the first stage of the bidding process.

D) Bryan Fowler of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) have been reported widely as more likely to facilitate transmission of COVID-19. There are many HMOs in Medway.

How does COVID-19 inform Medway Council's planning policies in this respect?

On behalf of Councillor Chitty, Councillor Turpin thanked Mr Fowler for his question. He stated that the Council had a statutory obligation to issue a license to Houses in Multiple Occupation that housed five or more people forming two or more households in a property that comprised two or more storeys. This was a statutory responsibility and had not been altered by Coronavirus Legislation.

Councillor Turpin stated that similarly, in relation to Planning, HMOs where 6 or fewer people were living together in one house but were not related did not require planning permission. Again this was the statutory position and had not been altered by Coronavirus Legislation.

He concluded by stating that HMOs under this size required no planning permission or licence from the Council to operate.

E) James Chespy of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, the following:

"One sad requirement of the COVID-19 pandemic is the need for increased mortuary capacity. It is to be welcomed that this is being provided across Kent and Medway. However, It is concerning that the Leader of the Council is reported to have said Medway will be not making a contribution towards the cost of this increased provision.

Could the Portfolio Holder indicate that the authority will be making a contribution to this vital temporary cross border provision and how much it will be?"

Councillor Turpin thanked Mr Chespy for his question. He stated that the provision of the Aylesford Place of Rest was part of the Local Resilience Forum's response to the requirement for this type of provision, should that become necessary. As such the funding for it would form part of the discussions ongoing with Government at this time. Councillor Turpin stated that

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Medway Council did not expect a free ride and would continue to pay its way although discussions with the Government would be on-going.

803 Leader's report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader's Report and raised the following issues during debate:

- COVID-19
- Children's Services
- Waste Services
- Decisions made by the Cabinet on 4 February 2020, 3 March 2020, 27 March 2020 (Leader Urgent Decision) and 7 April 2020.
- Housing Services
- Support for local businesses

804 Report on Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Members received a report on overview and scrutiny activity and raise the following issues during debate:

- Draft Capital and Revenue Budget 2020/2021
- Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets 2020/2021
- Update on progress made in relation to ILACS
- Social Isolation Task Group: The Impact of Social Isolation in Medway
- Voluntary Sector Task Group
- Medway Commercial Group – Six Monthly Progress Report and Business Plan Adoption
- Special Educational Needs
- South East Coast Ambulance Service update
- COVID-19

805 Members' questions

A) Councillor Steve Iles asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“Considering the poor use of Strood Market on a Tuesday will the Portfolio Holder bring back the well-used Saturday market and if not please give your residents and myself a valid reason as to why you alone think it is not needed?”

On behalf of Councillor Chitty, Councillor Filmer thanked Councillor Iles for his question. He stated that the challenges facing town centre retail business at the current time were understood and markets were no exception. To this end, in 2019 officers were asked to commission an independent review of Medway's three markets, Rochester Farmer's Market, Gillingham Town Centre and the

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Strood market referred to in the question. The aim of this review was to inform the current situation and future plans for market provision in Medway.

Councillor Filmer stated that for clarity, Councillor Chitty did not have delegated powers to take any action advised by the independent assessment without consulting with others. He stated that it was entirely incorrect to assume that any information in relation to this matter would be discussed outside of the normal process. That process was that this matter would be first discussed by officers, then Councillor Chitty would consider officers' recommendation and consult with colleagues, including the Leader, regarding any action under consideration.

He also stated that the successful tenderer for this work undertook town centre research and surveys in late 2019. Their report and recommendations were received in March 2020, and were due to be considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Directorate Management Team later this month, before reporting to Councillor Chitty who would then update Members on the Council's response to this report in due course.

B) Councillor Sands asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

"Given the news that in The Times of 9 February 2020 that the "£25 billion strategy to expand motorways and major A-roads over the next five years, has been shelved until later in the spring or even early summer", according to the article, which says the move follows the Court of Appeal ruling against the expansion of Heathrow because "it failed to take account of the UK's climate change commitments", I assume the Council and the Government will be reconsidering the HIF bid against climate change targets.

Is there an assessment of the effect of the infrastructure that would be produced by the implementation of the HIF bid infrastructure and the new housing development enabled by it?"

Note: As Councillor Sands was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 9.1

C) Councillor Johnson asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

"Would the portfolio holder agree that, in the current crisis, Medway schools, their leadership teams, teaching and support staff, have shown absolute dedication to supporting the children and young people of Medway and that we should take this opportunity to thank them for their commitment to serving Medway, alongside thanking our equally dedicated and committed Youth Services, Early Years Providers and Children's Social Care Services?"

Councillor Mrs Josie Iles thanked Councillor Johnson for his question and sincerely thanked all staff for their work so far and their work still to come in the current crisis.

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She stated that both internally and externally, in partnership with Schools and Early Years Providers, Medway staff had shown remarkable levels of commitment to Medway's children and young people.

They had worked together to make sure that Medway's children and young people remained safe and protected, had the right support to ensure they were still learning where possible and kept healthy throughout these troubling times.

Children's Social Care Staff, youth workers and Early Help Staff, and Medway Schools, heads, teachers and support staff had shown a remarkably high degree of commitment to keeping vital services available, whether it had been Child and Family Hubs, or education facilities for some of the most vulnerable children and those of key workers fighting this crisis on the front line.

Councillor Mrs Iles stated that she was pleased and proud to say that all Medway's schools had remained open since the 'lockdown', and worked effectively with the local authority to establish holiday provision over Easter to ensure that vulnerable children and children of key worker parents had access to additional support.

She stated that the Council had ensured that social workers had prioritised those children most in need and had maintained contact through use of technology such as Facetime and WhatsApp. Social workers and schools had worked together to ensure that vulnerable children were still being contacted regularly if they were not attending an educational setting.

She also stated that through this crisis, herself and Councillor Potter had seen staff from a range of organisations and teams come together across the children and education landscape to work together in a strong partnership that the Council would drive forward into the future.

She concluded her thanks by quoting an extract from the Assistant Director, Social Care's message to her staff at the beginning of this crisis. She considered it so poignant and equally characterised the commitment and dedication of all staff across Social Care, Education and SEND in this unprecedented situation:

"It's a strange and unfamiliar world at the moment but along with our colleagues in the health service we know that those of us who have chosen a 'caring profession' to work in will be at the front line in this situation as we have in the past and will do so again in the future. What we know with certainty is this too will pass and while it is passing social workers, early help workers, youth workers and all those who support them to do their jobs will rise to the challenge".

Councillor Mrs Iles stated that everyone was grateful that they certainly had.

D) Councillor Andy Stamp asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

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“The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Coronavirus Guidance advises local authorities and contractors to protect the health and safety of employees, for example by implementing social distancing and by providing sufficient cleaning products in the cabs of refuse collection vehicles.

However, in Medway several aspects of the WISH guidance are not being observed, putting workers at unnecessary risk.

Which is more important, ensuring the Waste contract is followed to the letter, or protecting the health and safety of Medway Norse employees?”

Councillor Filmer thanked Councillor Stamp for his question. He stated that he would like to take the opportunity to publicly thank the outstanding efforts of Medway’s refuse collectors. They had continued to provide a critically important service to residents in exceptionally challenging times. In the past two weeks there had been an 80% increase in organic waste which included organic food waste and an overall increase of 40% in waste collected from Medway’s doorsteps. Of course, the safety of Medway’s refuse collectors and indeed all of the key workers, was of paramount importance.

Councillor Filmer stated that he was advised that all possible actions had been taken to protect refuse staff in line with WISH guidance. This included:

- provision of Personal Protective Equipment
- hand washing facilities and social distancing at depots
- daily cleaning of the cabs of the vehicles
- the option for staff to reduce crew numbers.

Councillor Filmer concluded by stating that residents had told the Council on many occasions how appreciative they were to have their waste collection service maintained in these unprecedented times. The Council’s refuse collectors were a credit to Medway Council and a credit to the community as a whole.

E) Councillor Khan asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Does the Leader of the Council agree with the Government in welcoming the contribution of trade unions in the CoVid19 crisis and condemn poor employers like those who would de-recognise trade unions with immediate effect?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Khan for her question. He stated that, in these unprecedented times, finding solutions to the challenges of Covid 19 on a collaborative basis, including all partner organisations as well as staff representative groups and trade unions, was an important and sensible approach. Working together in this way could make a significant difference. Supporting and recognising the excellent contribution of Council staff and contractors delivering key services the people in Medway fully deserved. This

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had been the experience of many of the services in recent weeks, not least waste collection which had been repeatedly praised by Medway residents.

Councillor Jarrett stated that he believed the Government's approach of recognising the important contribution of trade unions had been appropriate. This was what was done at Medway Council, which worked with and recognised a number of Trade Unions including extending free facilities to them. That was an approach that was considered appropriate for the organisation. He also stated that, as far as other councils and other organisations were concerned, that was entirely an issue for them and was not something the Council could or should intercede in.

F) Councillor Maple asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“This Council has relatively low levels of reserves for a unitary authority of our size - with the combination of increased pressures due to the CoVid19 crisis and dramatically reduced income streams, what measures will the Council consider to deal with these challenges?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Maple for his question. He stated that, with regard to low level of reserves, there were quite a number of other local authorities with a similar level of reserves, some of which were larger than Medway, which of course did not make it any better.

Councillor Jarrett stated that Medway's Medium Term Financial Strategy which the Cabinet had approved in September 2019 not only sought to balance expenditure with resources, but also to protect and rebuild general reserve balances to provide cover against continued austerity, significant unforeseen events and to demonstrate that the Council was financially resilient. At the end of the 2018/19 financial year the Council was able to increase general reserves by around £4million and in line with that strategy, through a review of the Minimum Revenue Provision, the Council had planned a further increase at the end of 2019/20 and through the budgets for 2020/21 on into the medium term.

Councillor Jarrett stated that, in responding to the Covid 19 pandemic the Council had moved heaven and earth to act quickly, working closely with a whole range of partners from the public and private sector and of course the voluntary sector. Inevitably the Council was spending significant sums in that response and its income was down, with some significant income streams ceasing entirely.

He also stated that the Council's Revenues and Benefits teams were working hard to apply the government announced support for businesses in both grants and discounts, and the hardship fund for Council Tax payers with these schemes being fully funded by the government. Medway Council had also received £6.628million of direct funding from the government, and on Saturday 18 April the government had announced that the national sum of £1.6billion would be doubled. The Council was yet to see what its share of that sum would be, though it was hoped that it would be similar to the last allocation of

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£6.6million. Through all available channels, the Local Government Association, Key Cities through working with the South East 7, the Council continued to lobby the government to underwrite local authorities for all spend and lost income in responding to this pandemic.

Councillor Jarrett stated that some of this response dealt in part with the points Councillor Khan made in her question and comments made earlier in the meeting under Leader's report.

He stated that Finance officers were integral to the Council's response, with arrangements in place for the financial impacts to be considered and captured for all action taken. The Council was building a picture of what the pandemic meant for the Council's finances but it was still in the response phase and with government funding announcements continuing, it was too early to make decisions about how the Council would deal with the longer term impacts.

Councillor Jarrett concluded by stating that he was already thinking about what moving to the recovery phase might look like, and there would be opportunities to take advantage of new ways of working which might enable the Council to make savings and ensure the continued financial sustainability of the Council.

G) Councillor Murray asked the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

"The COVID19 crisis and resulting need for lockdown and isolation has been particularly challenging for those with poor mental health.

Accepting that interim support using phones and online services have been put into place, does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that there will be an increased need for extra vigilance and support for the mentally ill health community once restrictions have been lifted and is he prepared to ensure that the Council's Resource Centre at Nelson Road can be fully utilised to help sufferers recover and resume their normal activities?"

Responding on behalf of Councillor Brake, Councillor Turpin thanked Councillor Murray for her question. He stated that this had been a difficult time for some residents with poor mental health, because of the impact of the government guidance to reduce social contact, however, many people had adapted and were managing day to day. The Council's social care locality teams were working hard and continued to maintain contact with the most vulnerable residents and to ensure that they were appropriately supported, for example, through the maintenance of regular contact with friends and family who at this time might be providing some additional support.

He stated that where the need had been identified, the Council was increasing community support packages and its Community Support Outreach Team were providing outreach support to those who were suffering with poor mental health, who would ordinarily access day services.

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Councillor Turpin concluded by stating that the Community Resource Centre at Nelson Road was just one of a number of services provided by the Council and partners to support people with poor mental health, and when restrictions were lifted the Council would consider the needs of individuals on a case by case basis to ensure that they got the support they needed through the appropriate services.

806 Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) New Routes to Good Growth - Project Delivery

Discussion:

This report provided an update on progress of Medway's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Bid – New Routes to Good Growth, which would provide much needed infrastructure to enable growth in and around the Hoo Peninsula.

The report asked Full Council to agree to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Chief Finance Officer and the Chief Legal Officer to carry out all non-executive pre- and post-commencement conditions, as detailed in the Exempt Appendix to the report.

The report was initially considered by the Cabinet on 7 April 2020. Comments of the Cabinet were set out in section 3 of the report.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, proposed the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Council agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Chief Finance Officer and the Chief Legal Officer, to carry out all non-executive pre- and post- conditions of the Grant Determination Agreement, as detailed in the Exempt Appendix.

807 Addition to the Capital Programme: Street Lighting LED and Column Replacement Programme

Discussion:

This report provided details of the LED (Light Emitting Diode) and Column Replacement Programme and procurement exercise following consideration at the Procurement Board on 18 March 2020 and Cabinet on 7 April 2020, details of which were set out at sections 5 and 6 of the report.

This report asked Full Council to agree to add £11,155,144 to the Council's Capital Programme for the Street Lighting LED (light emitting diode) and Column Replacement Programme to be funded by prudential borrowing met from projected energy savings.

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The Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, proposed the recommendation in the report.

Councillor Stamp, supported by Councillor Murray, proposed the following amendment:

Retain 8.1 and add:

8.2 Council recognises the importance of on-street electric vehicle charging points and therefore requests officers to urgently consider whether it would be more cost-effective to proactively install a number of electric charging points as part of the scheme, instead of retro-fitting them at a later date. These considerations will be reported to Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

Decision:

The Council agreed to add £11,155,144 to the Council's Capital Programme for the Street Lighting LED (light emitting diode) and Column Replacement Programme to be funded by prudential borrowing met from projected energy savings.

808 Byelaw Provisions Review

Discussion:

This report provided details regarding the adoption of byelaws in relation to Pleasure Boats as the original records regarding their adoption could not be located. It also addressed the update in legislation in relation to the byelaws for Skin Piercing.

The report was initially considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 11 March 2020, details of which were set out in section 6 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, supported by Councillor Fearn, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council resolved to confirm that the byelaws in relation to Pleasure Boats and Vessels first adopted in 1936 remain adopted and are in force across the whole of Medway.
- b) The Council resolved to re-adopt the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and any subsequent amendment thereto.

809 Arrangements for 2020/21 Municipal Year

Discussion:

This report provided details of the new Regulations issued in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, which had removed the requirement to hold an annual meeting and enabled local authorities to hold meetings remotely.

The report set out some of the implications for the Council and the options available to Members with regard to the Annual Meeting, the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the appointment of Members to Committees and the approval of the 2020/21 schedule of meetings.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, supported by Councillor Buckwell, proposed the recommendations in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council agreed to cancel the Annual Meeting scheduled for 20 May 2020 (option 1 in the report) and agreed that the next Annual Meeting will not take place until May 2021.
- b) The Council noted that the appointment of the current Mayor, Deputy Mayor, the number and size of Committees and Members currently appointed to Committees, Joint Committees and other bodies would continue until the next Annual meeting takes place in May 2021.
- c) The Council agreed, for the avoidance of doubt, that in light of the cancellation of the Annual Council meeting, Special Responsibility Allowances should continue to be paid to those Members currently holding positions of special responsibility as specified in the Members Allowances Scheme noting that adjustments would be made during the course of 2020/2021 if different Councillors were appointed to any of these positions, for example, Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen.
- d) The Council noted the timetable of meetings attached at Appendix A to the report which had been the subject of consultation with Group Leaders and Group Whips and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to agree the timetable of meetings during 2020/21, including the cancellation or rearrangement of meetings in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the respective Committee Chairman and the Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Party Group, as necessary in response to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- e) The Council delegated authority to the Chief Executive to agree, and amend, procedures for remote participation at Council, Cabinet and

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Committee meetings, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Group.

- f) The Council agreed a change to the Council's Constitution to amend the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

810 Approval of Reason for Absence of a Councillor from Meetings

Discussion:

This report asked the Council to approve the following reasons for failure by any Councillor to attend meetings because of the COVID-19 pandemic from 23 April 2020 – 8 October 2020:

- i) the protection of the health of the residents of the area or;
- ii) the health of the individual Member.

This matter would remain under review and a further report would be presented to the Council meeting on 8 October 2020, if necessary.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, supported by Councillor Wildey, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council agreed that from 23 April 2020 - 8 October 2020 inclusive, under the provisions of Sections 85(1) and Section 85(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the protection of the health of the residents of the area or the health of the individual Councillor shall be an approved reason for the non-attendance of a Member at any meeting (including, in the case of members of the Executive (Cabinet), non-attendance at meetings of the Executive).

811 Use of Urgency Provisions

Discussion:

This report provided details of recent usage of urgency provisions contained within the Constitution.

The report also provided an overview of decision making arrangements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, supported by the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

812 Motions

A) Councillor Maple has submitted the following:

“This Council recognises that Medway has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic - an unprecedented public health crisis.

This Council puts on record its thanks for the tireless dedication of all those front line workers and volunteers who have played a part in our community response to the pandemic.

This Council commits to taking all possible action, working with all partners, to ensure the relevant protections are in place for those front line workers and volunteers.”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, proposed the following amendment:

On the first line of the third paragraph of the motion, delete – “This Council commits” and replace this with – “This Council continues its commitment”.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Decision:

The substitute motion was agreed:

“This Council recognises that Medway has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic - an unprecedented public health crisis.

This Council puts on record its thanks for the tireless dedication of all those front line workers and volunteers who have played a part in our community response to the pandemic.

This Council continues its commitment to taking all possible action, working with all partners, to ensure the relevant protections are in place for those front line workers and volunteers.”

Mayor

Date:

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