

Council Priority: GROWTH

Maximising regeneration and economic growth

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

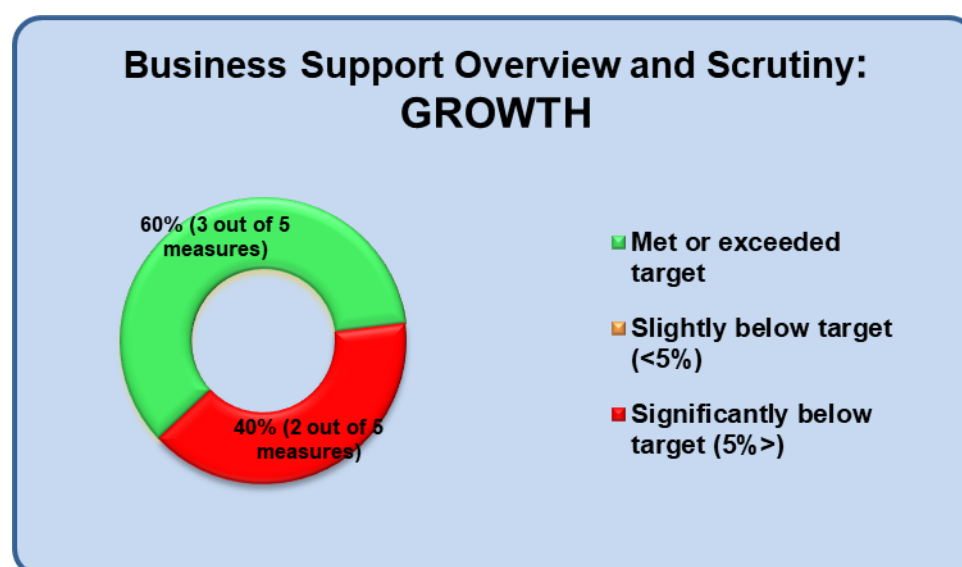
Performance: Quarter 2 2020/21

Key

Red	significantly below target (>5%)	Amber	slightly below target (<5%)	Green	met or exceeded target
Imp	Improved	Det	Worsened	Static	Static

Council Plan measures: summary performance

There are 5 Council Plan measures that fall under the remit of this committee.



Improved performance

- 40% (2 out of 5*) improved long term (average of previous 4 quarters)
- 20% (1 out of 5*) improved over the short term (since last quarter)

*where data available

Measures in target (green)

Code	Status	Measure	Long Trend	Short Trend
MAE 3	Green	Achievement rate (pass rate)	IMP	IMP
HC3	Green	No. of households with dependent children in B&B who have resided there for 6+ weeks at the end of the quarter	STATIC	STATIC
HC4	Green	Number of private sector properties improved as a result of the Council's intervention	IMP	DET

Measures significantly below target (red)

Code	Status	Name	Long Trend	Short Trend
NI 156	Red	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	DET	DET
MAE 2	Red	% Retention rate	DET	DET

Strategic Risks

The quarter 2 20/21 strategic risk register is attached at Appendix 4. The register shows all strategic risks together with mitigation in place to minimise impact and likelihood. The risks pertaining solely to this council priority are shown below (full details in Appendix 4).

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SR35	54	Homelessness	AD Physical and Cultural Regeneration	CIII	L - significant I - marginal

The following risks pertain to all priorities:

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SRO3B	4	Finances	Chief Finance Officer	A1	L – very high I - catastrophic
SR46	7	Medway's Economic	Assistant Director Regenerati	BII	L - high

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
		Recovery from Covid19	on (Recovery Lead Officer for Medway Council		I - critical
SR32	29	Data and information	Chief Legal Officer	CII	L - significant I - critical
SR36	42	Alternative service delivery models	Chief Legal Officer, Director of RCET	BIII	L - high I - Marginal
SR37	45	Cyber Security	Chief Finance Officer	CI	L - Significant I - Catastrophic
SR02	3	Business continuity and emergency planning	Director of RCET	DII	L - low I - critical

Council Plan Outcome: Resident with jobs and skills

Programme: Jobs, Skill and Employability

Council Plan Measures

MAE 2 Medway Adult Education % retention rate

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q4 2019/20	94.0%	72.06%	Red	Maximise	DET	DET
Q3 2019/20	94.0%	72.84%	Red	Maximise	DET	DET

Comment

This PI is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data shown is for Q4 of Academic Year 19/20 (May 2020 – July 2020).

Retention rates have been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many classes have had to close, and not all learners can access online sessions.

1,003 learners withdrew due to Covid-19. Excluding these learners from the figures for retention gives a rate of 87.8%.

Action

Managers and Tutors have worked, following lock down and the closure of Medway Adult Education Centres, to ensure that learners have access to online and remote delivery. Tutors have had to be innovative and to respond very quickly to the challenges presented by new ways of delivering learning.

MAE 3 Medway Adult Education achievement rate (pass rate)

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q4 2019/20	96.0%	99.87%	Green	Maximise	IMP	IMP
Q3 2019/20	96.0%	99.13%	Green	Maximise	DET	DET

Comments

This PI is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data shown is for Q4 of Academic year 19/20 (May 2020 – July 2020).

The pass rate measures how many of the learners, who complete their course, achieve a qualification or their learning aim. Performance has not been affected by Covid-19. It shows that Medway Adult Education learners continue to achieve very high pass rates and demonstrates the excellent processes in place to support learners achieve their qualifications, or to achieve their learning outcomes in non-accredited provision (RARPA).

Action

Medway Adult Education's approach to improving performance is one of continuous improvement through a range of quality measures including monthly quality review meetings scrutinising KPIs, observations of teaching and learning, learner and partner evaluations, performance and development reviews, self-assessment reviews and quality improvement plans at Service and Programme level. These ensure the Service's overall excellent KPI rates are maintained. Medway Adult Education has maintained its Information, Advice and Guidance Matrix kite mark, and monitors the effectiveness of assessment processes, ensuring learner needs are met through differentiation, and additional learning support if required, enabling learners to reach their goals and is evidenced in the good pass and achievement rates and high learner satisfaction.

Council Plan Projects

Medway Adult Education (MAE) learning programme to boost local skills levels for those furthest from employment

The Work skills programme which targets employability skills and provides qualifications for learners who are unemployed, in receipt of benefits or who are wanting to improve their current employment prospects or progress in work has a

refreshed offer. This remains a challenging area of work due to the introduction of Universal Credit, Employ Medway closing and the lower number of referrals from JCP locally. The introduction of shorter introduction course has proved successful and the offer also includes entry level courses to provide a better stepping stone progression route for learners who are unskilled or have no or very low levels of qualification.

As of September 2020, MAE Centres are now fully open with Covid-19 measures in place. The Work Skills Programme* has a refreshed offer which includes an online programme of qualifications developed during lock down as well as the face to face delivery. This remains a challenging area of work due to the impact of lock down and few referrals from Job Centre Plus (JCP). The MAE Information, Advice and Guidance Manager has been in discussion with JCP with regards to referrals, and leaflets for the new online programme have been shared with JCP staff. The Workskills department is considering National announcements regarding upskilling and retraining and will develop programmes accordingly when new and additional funding streams become available which are appropriate to the adult community learning sector.

* The Work Skills Programme targets employability skills and provides qualifications for learners who are unemployed, in receipt of benefits or who are wanting to improve their current employment prospects or progress in work.

Support Medway Skills Board to champion skills development to all ages and to support lifelong learning

Providing people with the skills they need to be able to make a positive contribution to all levels of Medway's economic future is critical to delivering economic growth. Medway will need a pool of skilled and employable staff to ensure the long-term growth of high economic value contributors, such as the business likely to locate at the Innovation Park Medway. As Medway Council encourages existing businesses to grow and new businesses to move to Medway, it is vital that there is a suitable workforce ready to meet business need.

In order to do this effectively, two Medway Skills Boards have been established. An Officers Skills and Employability Board first met in August 2017 to begin defining emerging skills priorities, which were then discussed at the first Members Skills Partnership Board and has been established as a Cabinet Advisory Group. The group has overseen the development of the Skills and Employability Plan for Medway and will oversee the action plan delivery.

Due to Covid-19, the majority of skills programmes were paused as they involved group training and engagement with businesses, however the majority have now been started. These include:

Supported Employment project - was due to start in April - started on the 1 August
Scaffolding training project -was due to start in April - will start in October
Medway Apprenticeship Advice Service - was due to start in April - started on 1 September

The Enterprise Coordinator programme has continued and used this time to engage will with schools, developing new careers strategies. As the new academic year starts, the focus is on encouraging schools/college to update their careers self-evaluation and demonstrate the positive impact the network is having. Focus will also be put on supporting schools/college to adapt careers information to a changing economic landscape.

Work is being undertaken to liaise closely with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Government funding and initiatives to ensure Medway benefits.

On the 28th October an event called Brighter Futures was held virtually as a business focused event, informing businesses of the challenges that Care Leavers face and providing an chance for them to provide opportunities to young people, whilst encouraging them to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant. The second half of the event saw mock interviews with young people and businesses held virtually.

A Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce has been created to tackle rising unemployment and held its inaugural meeting on 1st October 2020.

Medway Adult Education has been integrated with Skills and Employability, with work being done to align priorities and activities. The Skills and Employability Plan will be reviewed in light of Covid-19 and be updated as more information and data is gathered.

Council Plan Outcome: Preventing homelessness

Programme: Preventing homelessness

Council Plan measures

NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q2 2020/21	350	370	Red	Minimise	DET	DET
Q1 2020/21	350	346	Green	Minimise	DET	DET

Comments

At the end of Q2 there were a total of 370 households residing in temporary accommodation (TA) provided by the Council in line with its statutory responsibilities. This is an increase from the 346 households that were accommodated at the end of Q1. The majority of households in TA will have children. Therefore, there is a correlation between the overall number of households in TA and the number of children in TA. The accommodation provided to families will usually be in the form of a self-contained property located in Medway.

Benchmarking

The rate of households in temporary accommodation in Medway is currently 1.26 per 1000 households, this is slightly lower than the national rate of 1.27 (latest benchmarking figures June 2019.)

Further benchmarking has been undertaken to identify how Medway compares with other similar sized unitary authorities. In June 2019, the numbers in temporary accommodation in Brighton was at a rate of 5.45 households per 1,000 and Milton Keynes had a rate of 2.64 households per 1,000. Locally, Dartford had a rate of 2.11 in the same time period.

HC3 No. of households with dependent children in B&B who have resided there for 6+ weeks at the end of the quarter

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q2 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC
Q1 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC

Comments

A snapshot at the end of Q2 2020/21 identifies that no families were in bed and breakfast accommodation. Additionally, throughout Q2 no families were placed into bed and breakfast for more than 6 weeks.

Action

Work is continuously underway to ensure that the use of bed and breakfast is kept to a minimum. This has been done by seeking more suitable temporary accommodation for households and using HRA properties as temporary accommodation. The Service has also reviewed its procedures to ensure that all cases with children or a pregnant are moved on from bed and breakfast within appropriate timescales.

HC4 Number of private sector properties improved as a result of the Council's intervention

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q2 2020/21	175	285	Green	Maximise	IMP	DET
Q1 2020/21	175	369	Green	Maximise	IMP	IMP

Comments

In Q2 285 private sector households were assisted in having their properties improved via Council intervention despite the restriction over Covid-19 on inspections. The Council have continued with its statutory services and targeted work with the taskforce and will continue this through Q3.

8 new HMO licences have been issued in Q2 bringing a total of 185 licenced HMO throughout Medway. 7 category 1 hazards and 12 category 2 hazards have been identified in Q2 and these have been alleviated. This action helps improve living conditions and raises the standards in the Private sector rented accommodation.

Action

The Council continues to undertake its range of actions to improve accommodation in the private sector ranging from informal advice to enforcing legislation via the service of statutory notices. Throughout the quarter the most prominent hazards have been damp and mould followed by, Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage.

Council Plan Projects

Help Medway's people get a foot on the housing ladder

Last year the Council delivered over our target of 204 affordable homes (total of 333 units) and this year we are on track to reach our target of 204 units featuring a range of 1-4 bed units for Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership, following discussions with developers and registered providers in terms of Covid-19 impact on new housing supply. The Council are also looking to increase the number of potential housing options.

All potential avenues are being explored to help people get on the housing ladder e.g. new key worker housing scheme, making effective use of the allocations policy and maximising update of private rented properties through our Private Rented Sector scheme.

Prevent homelessness by providing targeted support to those who need it.

Work continues to ensure that HRA tenants are supported to mitigate the negative impact of welfare reform, to minimise rent arrears, evictions, and support tenant's financial well-being. In Q3, the focus will be on supporting tenants who have been financially affected by Covid-19, especially tenants who are claiming benefits for the first time and new tenants.

Review Housing Related Support (HRS) commissioning

The Council are currently undertaking a review of the current provision of Housing Related Support (HRS) and identifying any gaps, with the aim of reducing the number of those rough sleeping. Opportunities are currently being explored for joint work with children's services commissioning and aligning our tender activity with potential Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding, to ensure we meet the needs of Medway residents. It is anticipated the Council will going out to Tender in October/November with new contracts starting in April 2021.

Shift the focus of the rough sleeping initiative

Through the 'everyone in' initiative, all people known to be sleeping rough at the start of the pandemic lockdown were accommodated (or offered accommodation). This was initially 20 people, but over time this grew to 40 rooms being available at any one time. Additional cases presented as a result of sofa surfing and identifying a number of preventative cases where people would have gone on to sleep rough. In total 70 people were accommodated or offered accommodation. Of these, we have managed to support 51 people who were sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, in to settled accommodation.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative team (RSI) has now moved back to a 'business as usual' approach and is working with those who have recently been accommodated, as well as those who have been identified as sleeping rough, or have not taken up offers of accommodation to date. We are working with partners across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to identify vulnerable people at risk of eviction and so reduce the numbers of people returning to the street. The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team facilitate a wide variety of partnership meetings and are launching a Services Mentoring Scheme. Additional offers of training are delivered by Housing Strategy team members to services external to Council departments directly as well as via 'A Better Medway Champion' courses.

Ensure that the council maximises the opportunity to reduce homelessness through prevention and relief

The Council continues to ensure that the opportunities for the prevention and relief of homelessness are maximised within the district. This includes through joint prevention working arrangements with local landlords and housing providers, to seek to sustain those tenancies of their tenants who are at risk of eviction.

In Q2 there were 638 approaches for homeless assistance. Approach figures for Q2 this year are down compared to Q2 last year (665). This is likely due to the reduction in approaches as a consequence of landlord eviction action, itself a result of the Government stay on possession action. However, monthly approaches at the end of the quarter are at normal levels. In addition, the stay ended on 20th September and it is anticipated that the service will see a significant increase in approaches once possession hearings resume at the court.

There were 213 successful prevention/reliefs in Q2, which is a success rate of 50%. This is being achieved by robust supervision and monitoring of staff prevention/relief activity and the proactive maintenance of regular contact with private and social landlords and supported providers in order to offer early intervention appointments.

Working with landlords and agents to support households to sustain their accommodation and prevent homelessness

Work continues with landlords and tenants to offer support and prevent homelessness. This includes via the landlord helpline, joint working with social housing providers, and via using social media and the Council's website to promote our services. We have also reached out to Medway CAB and the County Court to

seek and agree opportunities to promote our service at the court to landlords and their tenants at threat of eviction.

Landlords and agents are reporting to the Council that they have seen a significant increase in rent arrears during the pandemic which puts tenancies at risk. CallB4UServe provides an important service to landlords for joint working to seek to prevent loss of tenancies and loss of tenancy income. A mailshot was sent to 1100 landlords to raise awareness of support that is available as well as promotions via social media. During Q2 24 landlords contacted the Council compared with 18 in Q2 2019/20.

The team also continues to reach out to social landlords, with response being variable and the most consistent being MHS. Joint prevention appointments with MHS have been restarted when a tenant is at risk of eviction. Contact has been made with the county court to enquire whether they can provide the team with contact details for those subject to possession action, or in the alternative if they will share details of our service with them. A request is also being made to the Court for Council officers to have a weekly presence alongside the court help desk to enable us to promote our prevention services to landlords and their tenants at risk of eviction.

Maximising the number of Private rented Sector (PRS) properties available to us to prevent and relieve homelessness remains an essential service goal. However, despite a number of initiatives to seek to increase supply, including mail shots to landlords and messages on social media Q2 has seen a reduction in the availability of new PRS properties becoming available to the team. This has likely been caused by the impact of COVID-19 upon the private rented housing market, with enquiries made of local landlords identifying a lack of void properties for rent. For the first two months of Q2 the PRS Team have secured 60 new properties, compared to 73 for the same period last year, and 48 tenancy sign ups compared to 61.

A new rent guarantee scheme for landlords has been agreed and is to be launched on 30 September. This will support an improved offer to landlords with a view to enhancing procurement and an increase in PRS properties.

Review of homes for independent living services in light of funding reduction

The Scheme Support Officers role is currently being reviewed in light of the funding reduction. This role will be redesigned to consider social inclusion within the schemes and provide a package of holistic council support.

Ensure that HRA tenants are supported to mitigate the negative impact of welfare reform.

The team continue to support Medway Council HRA tenants by working closely with them to manage rent arrears and maximize income. Following the intervention from the HRA Welfare Reform Team, the Councils HRA tenants have been awarded £33,379 from the Local Authority's benefits and revenues service for benefits including Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments and Council Tax

Reduction. These amounts are paid directly onto the tenants rent and or council tax accounts.

In Q2, through working in close partnership with MRBS, 12 tenants have benefitted from payments totalling £17,222 so far. With £15772 paid directly on to the rent account and £ 1449 directly on to the council tax account.

The team also work with all new tenants that 'sign up' to new tenancies to ensure that any assistance required, for example a change of address notification, or new UC claim is dealt with at the earliest possible time. This has resulted in claims being processed in a timely manner to support the tenant not only in moving in but in the early sustainment of their tenancy by preventing the early build-up of rent arrears.

This quarter negotiations are ongoing with the library service to re-open some drop-in services in the community. The drop-in service proved of great value prior to the lockdown, and the team are working to get this service back in place for the tenants of HRA housing services. The drop-in sessions which are very popular and especially useful for tenants with low levels of online activity, as well as supporting tenants who have been financially affected by Covid-19.

With the uncertainty of what will happen with the ending of the Governments furlough scheme at the end of October, the team are preparing for a possible influx of work as an outcome of increased unemployment. This cohort may present as cases that are claiming benefits for the first time so will probably require more assistance to help navigate the benefits system.

At a more strategic level, work is being done to ensure the team structure/resources are fit for the increasing roll-out of UC and possible increase in households requiring the assistance of the Welfare Reform Team.

Ensure that rent arrears are maintained under the existing target of 1.65%.

Effective rent arrears prevention and control is a key performance indicator for the Landlord Services team. Maximising rental income is vital to support the services provided to tenants such as the repairs service, and is vital in supporting tenants to avoid getting into rent debt.

Current arrears at the end of Q2 are 1.53%, within target. This is an increase from 1.47% at end of Q1. The team are facing the underlying challenge of the continued roll-out of UC, and Q2 has been particularly challenging due to the financial difficulties faced by many tenants, plus the suspension of all legal action as an enforcement tool for staff.

All new tenants are referred to the HRA Welfare Reform Team to ensure any potential rent payment issues can be dealt with before arrears arise. As part of the early intervention based approach to rent arrears, tenants who are just into arrears or who report difficulties are referred to the Welfare Reform team for advice and support.

The Income Team have been very successful in limiting the potential increase in arrears during this time, and the focus on Q3 will be to continue this work, especially in the lead up to Christmas which is always a challenging time for income collection.

Capital works programme

2020-21 Capital works programme is now fully resourced with staff returning from furlough. We anticipate a shortfall in completion due to the late start, however all efforts are being made to deliver as much of the programme as possible. In some workstreams we are expecting a shortfall of 25% due to the late start. The new 3-year capital works programme is in 1st draft and work is underway to finalise this. Any further COVID related lockdown will cause further disruption to the programme.

Repairs and maintenance contracts

The Mears contract extension has been signed and agreed, this confirms that Mears will continue to be the Councils repairs and maintenance service provider until September 2024. The contract extension is forecast to deliver annual savings of over £100k. Annual review of costs using Housemark benchmarking data will be completed by December 2020. The financial data has been verified and submitted to Housemark and we anticipate a full report to be available by the end of Q3.