

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 21 January 2021
7.00pm to 11.50pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next Full Council meeting

Present: The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway (Councillor Tejan)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Aldous)
Councillors Adeoye, Brake, Browne, Buckwell,
Rodney Chambers, OBE, Chitty, Curry, Doe, Etheridge, Filmer,
Gulvin, Mrs Josie Iles, Steve Iles, Jarrett, Johnson, Kemp, Khan,
Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson, Pendergast, Potter, Sands,
Andy Stamp, Rupert Turpin and Wildey

In Attendance: Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Wayne Hemingway, Interim Head of Democratic Services
Perry Holmes, Chief Legal Officer/Monitoring Officer
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

653 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 reflect that informal agreement of reduced participants.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Barrett, Bhutia, Bowler, Carr, Mrs Diane Chambers, Clarke, Cooper, Fearn, Griffin, Hackwell, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Lloyd, McDonald, Opara, Osborne, Prenter, Price, Purdy, Chrissy Stamp, Thompson, Thorne, Tranter, Mrs Elizabeth Turpin and Williams.

654 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Johnson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 14 (Contract Letting – Exceptional Circumstances) as one of the contracts mentioned in the report had been let to his employer. Councillor Johnson advised that he would be leaving the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

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Councillor Johnson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 18B (Motion in relation to Universal Credit) as his employer had expressed a view in relation to the matter. Councillor Johnson advised that he would be leaving the meeting during the discussion and determination of the item.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Gulvin declared an OSI in any discussion relating to Medway Development Company (MDC) Ltd as a Director of MDC and he relied on a dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in any related discussion and voting.

Councillor Doe declared an interest in any discussion relating to Medway Commercial Group (MCG) Ltd or Medway Development Company (MDC) Ltd as he is the Chairman of both companies. Councillor Doe relied on a dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in any related discussion and voting.

Councillor Rupert Turpin declared an interest in any discussion relating to Medway Norse or Medway Commercial Group (MCG) Ltd as the Chairman of Medway Norse and a Director of MCG. Councillor Turpin relied on a dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in any related discussion and voting.

Other interests

There were none.

655 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 was agreed by the Council and signed by The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway as correct.

656 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway, announced that former Councillor John Avey had passed away. He had been a Member for Strood South from 2007 to 2019, having previously been a Member of Rochester Upon Medway City Council from 1987 to 1991. He had been the Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee between 2011 and 2013, having served as Vice-Chairman between 2009 to 2011. In addition to Health Scrutiny, former Councillor Avey was also a long serving member of the Employment Matters Committee and the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor extended condolences to the family.

The Mayor advised that former Councillor Peter Tungate had passed away. He had represented All Saints Ward from 1998 to 2000 as well as during Medway Council's shadow year in 1997. He served as the Council's first Deputy Mayor

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from 1998 to 1999 and had previously been a Member of Rochester-Upon-Medway City Council from 1995 to 1998. He had also been a longstanding member of Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association.

A Member of the Council provided a tribute to former Councillor Tungate. She said that he had been a loving, kind and generous man who was funny, hard working, with a positive attitude, popular and a champion for the Peninsula. He had particularly enjoyed football and cricket, including playing for High Halstow Cricket Club. He was practically minded and had worked on the railway and had been determined to get a good deal for those he represented.

A tribute to Councillor Tungate, from former Councillor Bill Esterson, was read out to the Council meeting. He was described as a wonderful family man and a generous and supportive friend whose passing was a reminder of how deadly the pandemic was.

The Mayor announced that Sue Alexander, the Chatham Labour Election Agent had recently passed away. On behalf of the Council, he offered condolences to Ms Alexander's family. Another Member of the Council added that Ms Alexander had been a passionate defender of the health service and an internationalist and had been involved in the work of the Boundary Commission.

The Mayor said that the Council continued to remember those who had lost their lives during the pandemic and looked forward to the continued roll out of the vaccination programme.

It was announced that the Head of Democratic Services, Julie Keith, had retired just before Christmas 2020 after 39 years' service in local government. Julie had started her career at the London Borough of Greenwich in 1981 and moved to Medway Council as Head of Democratic Services in 1998 before moving on to the London Borough of Bexley in 2001. She subsequently returned to Medway in 2006.

Ms Keith had made a significant contribution to the democratic life of the Council and Members held her in the highest esteem. On behalf of all Members of the Council, the Mayor wished her a very happy retirement. Other Members recognised the contribution she had made to the work of the Council. This included recognising Ms Keith's expertise, passion for overview and scrutiny and highlighting how good it had been working with her. Members wished her a happy retirement.

657 Leader's announcements

There were none.

658 Petitions

Public

There were none.

Member

Councillor Doe referred to a petition on behalf of members of the public. The petition asked the Council to devise a plan to bring the sale and distribution of plastic bags throughout Medway to an end, with the exception of those made from vegetable matter as they were generally considered to be biodegradable.

Councillor Potter referred to a petition, for which he was the lead petitioner, on behalf of all Rainham Councillors. The petition opposed the Kent and Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group moving GP practices moving out of the Medway Healthy Living Centre.

659 Public questions

The Mayor announced that Council Rules stated that should a member of the public be unable to attend the meeting they would receive a written response to their question. However, given the current exceptional circumstances, the Council had not asked members of the public to attend the meeting in person. Therefore, the 15 public questions submitted would be answered at the meeting on the basis set out in paragraph 7.1 of the Remote Meetings Protocol.

A) Claire Stollery of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

“I have a question regarding the full opening of early years settings while schools are only allowing key worker and vulnerable children in. The Sage report from December 2020 clearly states that 2-6 year olds have a high transmission rate and symptoms are often missed as it is usually more mild in children. They are most likely to be the first to get COVID-19 in a household which then transmits to adults including those working in early years settings. We must follow Scotland's lead and only be open to key worker and vulnerable children. It not only protects staff but every other child's family. Children under 5 do not legally have to be in education so why put them at unnecessary risk?”

Councillor Potter thanked Mrs Stollery for her question. He said that the Council followed national Government guidance in relation to all educational settings and that it continued to support local Early Years providers in following the guidance.

It was recognised that there were development benefits for pre-school children to continue to attend these settings, but it was understood that not all parents wished to continue accessing Early Years provision.

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Councillor Potter was pleased that lobbying efforts had been successful to ensure that no Early Years provider would lose Government funding as a result of parents choosing for their child not to attend.

B) Mai Monk of Gillingham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“Has anybody looked at the parking problems in the three roads, First Avenue, Second Avenue and Glebe Road surrounding the new houses? We need small first time buyer houses.”

Councillor Filmer thanked Mrs Monk for her question. He confirmed that the Parking Team had not received any requests to review parking issues in First Avenue, Second Avenue or Glebe Road. Councillor Filmer invited Mrs Monk to get in touch if there were specific issues that she wanted to raise about parking in this area and advised that contact details were available on the Council website.

C) Mary Smith of Gillingham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“Congratulations to Medway Council on its successful bid for funding for the refurbishment of Chatham Town Centre with the award of almost £10 million.

At present there is a proposal for 164 apartments in Mountbatten House, with planning applications in for 176 on Globe Lane and 115 on Whiffens Avenue.

Would Medway Council please state how they are ensuring that these developments will help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which have been accepted by 193 countries including the UK? Particularly the following – goal 1 – to eradicate poverty, goal 11 – to provide Sustainable Cities and Communities and goal 13 – to work towards zero carbon emissions.

It would also be hoped that these and all other major developments would provide a generous level of social housing and properties that are affordable to local people in order to help achieve goal 1 - to eradicate poverty.”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Smith for her question. She said that the developments at Chatham Waterfront, Whiffens Avenue and Mountbatten House would be undertaken by the Council’s development arm, Medway Development Company. All construction would meet the latest building regulations concerning energy efficiency and sustainability.

Councillor Chitty said that the location was considered perfect in terms of sustainability as it was close to Medway city centre and therefore close to local services and facilities and public transport. The Council had signed up to the climate change emergency and would be leading by example. In terms of affordable housing, each of the planning applications supporting these

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developments had included proposals to provide much-needed affordable housing.

D) Bernard Hyde of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“In the Government's recent press release on their change of policy regarding housing development, they are keeping to their target of building 300,000 houses a year, but these are now to be built on brownfield sites, in urban areas and away from the South East, to accord with their 'levelling up vision' for England.

Do you agree that Medway Council should now follow the new government policy and protect Medway's rural areas from the inappropriate over-development currently written into the Emerging Local Plan?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Hyde for his question. She confirmed that the Government had re-iterated its objective for at least 300,000 homes a year and had indicated a preference for a brownfield-first approach, but it was recognised that this number of homes could not be delivered without some greenfield sites being made available.

The Government had confirmed the target housing numbers for every authority in the Country and Medway's remained the same at 1,662 dwellings a year which provided a Local Plan target of just under 28,300. This was the figure that Medway had been working towards for the last few years.

Councillor Chitty said that the Planning Team continued to work on the evidence base to support the Local Plan as it moved towards the draft Plan stage later in 2021. The Plan would look to meet the needs of Medway in terms of its housing, providing the necessary accompanying employment to assist in sustainability and protecting the natural and historic environment. This would help to make Medway a healthy and vibrant place where people would want to live, that was fit for the 21st century.

E) Leigh Ann Smith of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

“My question is regarding why those year R to year 2 children who are covered by infant free school meals aren't entitled to have a meal at home, only while they are at school, despite the schools being closed! Why are only benefits children being fed, or those covered by the "transitional period", it's disgraceful.

No child should go hungry especially if the only reason you have not to is because their parent/s are taxpayers!”

Councillor Potter thanked Ms Smith for her question. He said that the non-provision of Universal Infant Free School Meals to pupils not attending school during the current lockdown was a national policy and not one that had been unilaterally implemented by Medway Council.

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During the current lockdown schools were required and funded to provide meals for those not in school who were eligible for free school meals through a benefit entitlement.

Councillor Potter said that under normal circumstances, schools did not provide free school meals to eligible children who were not in school. However, during the pandemic, a decision had been made that families in receipt of qualifying benefits should continue to receive these meals at home.

F) James Chespy of Gillingham, asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“What investment will be brought forward to improve Gillingham High Street?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr Chespy for his question. He said that the current climate was challenging for the vitality of town centres and this was further exacerbated by changing retail trends, such as the rise of on-line shopping and out-of-town shopping centres.

Medway Council had developed a Masterplan for Gillingham with Forum members, businesses and residents having engaged with the consultation process. Key regeneration sites and potential initiatives identified from the master planning included Britton Farm Mall, the former Riley’s building, the station and improved public realm.

Councillor Jarrett said that at Britton Farm Mall, £850,000 had been invested to convert the empty former supermarket into brand new office accommodation that had been rented to the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust. This had recently opened. The investment would positively impact the local economy with 170 staff accessing the town centre offer, thereby increasing footfall. As part of this project, improvements had also been made to the circulation space in the mall, with the removal of roofing near the high street entrance.

An award of £1.99m of Getting Building Fund had been secured to create an innovative adult learning, skills and employment hub on the upper floor of Britton Farm Mall. This would retrain, upskill, and support adults to access employment with flexible classroom space with high quality digital equipment. The project also included funding towards 44 affordable homes which would be delivered at the rear of Britton Farm, as well as public realm improvements to revitalise Gillingham High Street.

The Council hoped to make a bid to round 2 of the Future High Streets Fund to further support the regeneration of Gillingham High Street, taking forward additional elements of the Masterplan proposals. This funding opportunity was expected to be announced in Spring 2021.

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G) Vivienne Parker of Chatham, asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“A few years ago, the Council felled a tree outside 58 Concord Avenue and we were promised a new tree in its place. This has never happened and I should be grateful to know when a replacement tree will be planted?”

Councillor Doe thanked Mrs Parker for her question. He said that the tree team had returned during the current winter to grind the old stump in advance of tree planting. However, the crew had not been able to complete removal to incorporate a new tree, as they discovered a hidden cable under the tree pit. As an alternative, it was planned for a tree to be planted in the nearest suitable location along the road outside of number 32/34. This would be completed by the end of February 2021. Councillor Doe said that a second location was also being considered outside number 60/62, subject to an underground utilities check.

H) Catriona Jamieson of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“The Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggests that in order to meet the demands of natural population growth over the next 17 years, 17,000 houses need to be built in Medway. The target quoted by Medway previously has been as high as 37,000.

Can the Council reassure the people of Medway that they will in the light of the recent press release from Government “Plan to regenerate England’s Cities with new homes” 16/12/20 revise their housing targets in line with the ONS?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Jamieson for her question. She said that the Government set the housing targets for all authorities in the Country and that this was based upon a standard methodology based upon 2014 housing figures. Despite the availability of more recent population forecasts, the Government had confirmed that the standard methodology for assessing housing need would remain, based on the 2014 forecasts.

Councillor Chitty said that as a consequence, as she had set out in response to a previous question, the Government had confirmed the housing targets for all councils. For Medway, the housing target remained at 1,662 homes per year, which would provide a Local Plan target up to 2035 of 28,300.

I) Marilyn Stone of High Halstow, asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“A recent Government press release “Plan to Regenerate England’s Cities” (16/12/20) from the Housing Minister Robert Jenrick indicates that the Government are shifting the focus of their housing targets to development in the north of the country. The Government will also be launching a new £100m Brownfield Land Release Fund which will be available across the country. Will

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Medway Council take advantage of both and further concentrate housing development on brownfield sites alongside identifying vacant properties that can be brought back into the housing stock?

It is understood from “Medway’s Housing Target Delivery Action Plan” that it is the Council’s wish to develop greater awareness of the availability of brownfield sites. It is also understood from Medway’s Housing Target Delivery Action Plan that Medway has a higher proportion of vacant properties than other Kent Authorities.”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Stone for her question. She said that the Government had re-iterated its target for the delivery of 300,000 homes a year and that to achieve that figure, planning permissions would need to exceed that figure as some sites would not be built.

The Government had confirmed housing targets for every authority in the country, which for Medway was 1662 dwellings a year. Councillor Chitty said that this was a significant challenge for Medway, as demonstrated by the Housing Delivery Action Plan. Medway was taking the appropriate steps to try to increase housing delivery to meet its targets but on sustainable and appropriate sites.

The aspiration for brownfield-first was recognised. This was why Medway Council was taking a lead by bringing forward development at Chatham Waterfront and Whiffens Avenue and at Britton Farm, Gillingham. The Council also owned the land at Rochester Riverside and was working with development partner Countryside to bring forward development of the award winning site at pace. Work had been undertaken at Strood Civic and Strood Riverside to enable those sites to be brought forward for development.

Medway would look to grasp all investment and funding opportunities available that would be beneficial to Medway. The Planning team now had a Derelict and Empty Properties Officer responsible for bringing derelict properties up to a required standard and, where properties are empty, to work with landlords to bring them back into use.

Planning also had an officer tasked with working on the actions from the Housing Delivery Action Plan, to help increase house building to meet Government targets. This included working with developers on sites that had planning permission but had not yet commenced development to resolve issues and allow development to commence.

Medway Council had been working to increase house building on appropriate and sustainable sites in accordance with Government policy for many years. The Council’s Planning Committee had made some difficult and challenging decisions over that period.

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J) Marilyn Stone, on behalf of the Medway Green Party, asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“Does the Council agree with Medway Green Party that the advice of housing minister Robert Jenrick’s press release “Plan to regenerate England’s Cities (16/12/20) needs to be heeded and that green spaces need to be protected and that consequently the development plans on the Hoo Peninsula and other rural areas within Medway such as Capstone Valley, Lower Rainham and Darland Banks need to be scrapped immediately?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Stone (on behalf of Medway Green Party) for her question. She said that the Secretary of State had emphasised that the Government target of delivering 300,000 homes a year remained. To achieve this would mean granting planning permissions in excess of that number, as some sites would not be built.

The Government had also confirmed that the housing target for Medway would remain at 1,662 homes a year, providing a Local Plan target up to 2037 of 28,300 dwellings. The Council recognised the desire for development of brownfield sites to be prioritised and town centre regeneration would be actively promoted.

Councillor Chitty said that the Government accepted that its housing targets could not be achieved on brownfield sites alone, and that there would need to be some greenfield release. The Government’s recognition of this was demonstrated by appeal decisions across the country. In Medway, there would need to be some release of appropriate greenfield sites to meet housing targets. This would be reflected in the emerging Local Plan, where there would be a split between town centre regeneration, brownfield sites and greenfield sites.

K) Kate Belmonte of Gillingham, asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“I was delighted to hear that Medway Council has been awarded enough funding to plant 13,842 trees across Medway. I am encouraged that the council have clearly identified the importance of trees to our environment, and intend to increase Medway’s canopy cover to 30%, a level identified as providing the minimum level of biodiversity for a healthy society and planet.

Every tree in Medway is vital in our fight against climate chaos. Would you agree with me that Medway Council should protect all trees within Medway awarding a blanket Tree Preservation Order to all healthy trees, stopping the scenes we have witnessed recently in Twydall on the land behind Northbourne Road bordering Eastcourt Lane, or on the Bakersfield et al sites, where rich ecosystems have been destroyed to make way for unaffordable housing?”

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Councillor Doe thanked Ms Belmonte for her question. He said that Medway Council recognised the importance of trees for many reasons, including for health and wellbeing benefits, to deal with climate change and to improve air quality, as well as the benefits for biodiversity. In view of these benefits, Medway Council had made a bid to the Challenge Fund, which had resulted in the provision of 13,000 trees to be planted in Medway in the coming months.

Councillor Doe said that Medway Council recognised the need for housing and the implications for Medway in terms of the housing targets imposed by Government, as well as the need to provide affordable housing to meet the needs of residents in Medway. In relation to new development, the Planning team carefully balanced a number of considerations, including protecting trees where possible, replacing those that needed to be removed and increasing the number, where possible, and also considering developments to secure net biodiversity gain. These considerations would be carried through into policies in the emerging Local Plan. It would not be possible or reasonable to protect every healthy tree in Medway. Where a tree that merited protection was under threat of removal, action would be taken by imposing a tree preservation order.

L) John Castle of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

“The results from Covid-19 mass testing in Medway indicate relatively low numbers of positive results, averaging around 1.8% infection rate.

Does the Council consider this to be effective levels of mass testing, if not could the Council set out the plan in place to bring the infection rate in Medway down quickly?”

Councillor Brake thanked Mr Castle for his question. He said that Medway Council had been the first council in the South East to introduce targeted symptom free testing at scale. One in three people infected with Covid-19 may not show any symptoms and over 50,000 people, including essential workers and people living in the most affected areas within Medway, had been tested. Of these, 1000 people were found to have the virus and were supported to self-isolate. This action broke chains of transmission, prevented others unknowingly being infected and ultimately helped to save lives.

Symptom free testing was just one, albeit a very important element, of the tools being used to drive down infections in Medway. The most important thing was for everyone to follow the national guidelines to avoid being infected in the first instance and therefore, everyone was asked to comply with the current regulations. Residents were encouraged to play their part by respecting Hands-Face-Space by washing their hands regularly, wearing a face covering where required and keeping at least two metres apart from other people.

The Medway targeted mass testing programme had played a significant role in driving down the rates of infection locally. It was supporting key personnel in schools, the NHS, retail, the police, the fire service, hauliers, taxi drivers, shop workers and many others. In view of the current lockdown, it was even more

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important for people use this service. To stop people needing to leave their home unnecessarily a test booking system had been introduced.

M) Paul O'Neill of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

“As we are now into our third lockdown, many business have closed their doors and we rely on the essential businesses needed, and many have made their premises Covid-19 secure in line with guidelines in order to provide us with service whilst looking after our safety.

And it is welcome that two major supermarkets are to take action in following said guidelines but with rates steadily on the increase in my area it is disappointing to witness a number of these classed essential businesses, namely takeaways, but not limited to, have failed to take adequate steps to make their premises secure, i.e. protective screens; fail even to display signage; wear masks or gloves when serving food and; handling change to the public.

Can you tell me what steps has the Council taken in respect of ensuring businesses that are trading are taking enough action in making their premises Covid-19 secure?”

Councillor Brake thanked Mr O'Neill for his question. He said that throughout the period of the pandemic, teams in Frontline Services had been advising local businesses on the provisions of the various iterations of Public Health Regulations and the need to implement appropriate and adequate Covid-secure risk assessments under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

As new legislation had been introduced, the teams had been visiting local businesses offering advice and guidance on the latest legal responsibilities. An example of this was the introduction of the legal requirement to implement a 'track and trace' system and display 'QR' codes. The Trading Standards team visited over 380 premises in ten days and brought them into 100% compliance.

In addition to this advisory role, the team had also sent over 420 warning letters. They had also used their new enforcement powers to issue 23 formal Prohibition Notices closing prohibited businesses.

The team kept the activities of local businesses under constant review and had introduced an online reporting tool which enabled residents, employees and businesses to report concerns about Covid-19 issues.

As the enforcement controls due to the Pandemic continued to evolve, the team would address this by responding to both individual complaints and undertaking proactive projects.

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N) Bryan Fowler of Chatham, asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Central Government is currently consulting about extending Permitted Development Rights, which may have a further deleterious effect on the Medway towns, including its Conservation Areas. It also seeks to bypass deliberations, usually made by officers or our Planning Committee.

What will Medway Council’s response be to the consultation?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr Fowler for his question. He said that Medway Council was currently preparing a response to the consultation and would be expressing concern about the implications of extending permitted development rights. This was particularly in relation to the potential for substandard accommodation in the wrong locations as well as potential negative impacts on businesses and on town centre vitality.

While the housing challenges that the country faced were recognised, as well as the need to encourage appropriate residential development in town centres, this needed to be undertaken in a planned way to deliver high quality development.

O) Andrew Millsom of Rochester, asked the Chairman of the Licensing and Safety Committee, Councillor Mrs Diane Chambers, the following:

“The owners of Hop and Rye Micropub in Wainscott appeared at a Medway Council Licensing Hearing Panel on 22nd December 2020 for breaching Lockdown 2 Covid-19 rules. The hearing was told that there had been at least five lock-ins. This is a significant breach of restrictions and yet the only imposition was that the pub lost its licence. The owners have claimed that they have been made scapegoats when interviewed by KM Messenger, but in reality, they have been dealt with very lightly. There has been no individual removal of selling of alcohol licences and there has been no personal or business fines imposed.

Why has Medway Council chosen to impose such a lenient “sentence”, is it not a green light for others to break Covid-19 restrictions just as we enter a very difficult period in Lockdown 3?”

Responding on behalf of Councillor Mrs Chambers, Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Millsom for his question. She said that Kent Police had called an expedited review of the Hop and Rye due to breaches of the Covid-19 regulations. This was initially considered at a meeting of the Licensing Hearing Panel on 4 December 2020, followed by a full review that had been considered by the Panel on 22 December 2020.

When hearing an application for a review of a Premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003, the Council had five options, which were:

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- to modify the conditions on the licence including adding additional conditions
- to exclude a licensable activity from the licence (for example the sale of alcohol)
- to remove the designated premises supervisor
- to suspend the licence for up to 3 months or
- to revoke the licence.

On this occasion, the Council had exercised its power to impose the most serious of the options available to it. During the course of the hearing Kent Police had confirmed that they were still considering what, if any, enforcement action would be taken in respect of the breaches in addition to bringing the premises to the Licensing Panel for review.

660 Leader's report

Discussion

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

- Covid-19, the impact on Medway and the need for school closures
- The importance of people taking the Covid-19 vaccine
- Recognition of the role of the NHS, Council staff, particularly the Bereavement Service and finance staff, as well as the role of volunteers during the pandemic
- Sustainable improvements to Children's Services
- Flooding and climate change
- Employment, skills and business sustainability
- The emerging Local Plan
- Decisions made by the Cabinet on 9 October (urgent decision), 20 October, 17 November, 27 November (urgent decision), 4 December (urgent decision) and 15 December 2020 and 12 January 2021.

661 Overview and scrutiny activity

Discussion:

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

- Scrutiny of children's services
- The retention of the 147 Nelson Road Mental Health Resource Centre
- Concerns in relation to dementia respite provision
- The contribution of Domiciliary Care provision during the pandemic
- Improvement required to dermatology and primary care services and the expectation that an excellent service would be provided
- The Voluntary Sector Task Group and need to support the sector
- Post Covid-19 challenges

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- The need to address childhood obesity
- Neurodevelopmental pathways for young people and excessive waiting times
- Ceasing of use of herbicides in green spaces following overview and scrutiny work
- The impact of COVID-19 and the Council's response
- The restart of NHS services following COVID-19
- The report of the Voluntary Sector Task Group
- The report of the Place Names and Monuments Working Group

Decision

The Council agreed to note the report on overview and scrutiny activity.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

662 Members' questions

A) Councillor Mahil asked the Portfolio Holder for Frontline Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“The latter part of 2020 saw numerous road traffic accidents on our roads, with a particularly devastating period in August seeing three fatal road traffic accidents within a two week period. Only a few years ago I witnessed an incident outside Holcombe Grammar School where a child was seriously injured. Not too far from the same spot there was another accident last month, where a school child was once again injured in a hit and run. Unfortunately, this location has seen numerous similar incidents. Parents in our community are understandably concerned about the safety measures on our roads.

Following my question surrounding road traffic accidents to the October Full Council meeting, could the Portfolio Holder update the Council on the progress in reducing casualties on our road network including the use of 20mph speed limits, a crossing as well as other tools or arrangements, with particular reference to the Holcombe Grammar school area.”

Councillor Filmer thanked Councillor Mahil for his question. He said that the Council worked throughout the year to enhance road safety and reduce casualties on Medway's roads. Road safety was continually promoted and safety advice shared, particularly with Medway schools. This helped equip young people with valuable road safety skills. Physical changes were also made to roads to reduce road casualties. This was done in a targeted way.

The recent collision at the junction of Maidstone Road, Pattens Lane and Walderslade Road, which was not far from Holcombe Grammar School, was distressing and Councillor Filmer offered his sympathies and best wishes to those affected by it.

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Road safety at this junction had been good, prior to the collision in December 2020, with no pedestrian incidents during the previous three years. The recent incident would form part of the Council's investigation work and would be taken into account as part of ongoing work to reduce road casualties on Medway's roads.

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

"Given the catastrophically high COVID-19 infection rates in Medway, with the consequent tragic rise in the deaths of Medway residents and the intolerable pressure on Medway Maritime Hospital and its dedicated staff which has seen Medway cases moved as far away as Plymouth and the West Midlands, what does the leader wish he had done differently?"

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Paterson for his question. He said that Councillor Patterson would be aware that Covid-19 infection rates were primarily a matter for the NHS. The Council had played its part in combatting virus and continued to do so.

Councillor Jarrett stated that he could have done more to hold the Labour Group to account in relation to the suggestion that the existing weekly refuse collection could be replaced with a three-weekly collection.

C) Councillor Johnson asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

"What measures has the portfolio holder taken to ensure that the additional financial pressures on already stretched school budgets caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including additional staffing costs and protective measures, have been fully compensated?"

Councillor Potter thanked Councillor Johnson for his question. He said that schools had fully delegated budgets. Payments to reimburse schools for Covid-19 related costs had been made by the Department for Education (DfE) to schools. Secondary schools that had elected to participate in the testing programme could also apply for extra grant funding for this activity.

The Council monitored the expenditure of all maintained schools, but the Council had no role in monitoring the expenditure of academy schools, which was a matter for the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The Council's Finance department and Education team had supported both maintained schools and academies throughout the pandemic.

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

"Does he stand by his comments that calls to close Medway schools in November at a time when our community consistently had the highest coronavirus infection rates in the country were 'incessant politicking', or does

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he agree with the Prime Minister that schools act as significant ‘vectors for transmission’ for the virus?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Maple for his question. He said that in November, Medway had not had the highest rates of Covid-19 in the country, this had occurred later.

A letter to Councillor Jarrett from Councillor Maple, on 23 October 2020, in relation to free school meals, had advised that it would be published on social media as had a letter from Councillor Maple, covering a range of topics, which was dated 26 November 2020. Councillor Jarrett state that he did not consider the posting of such letters on social media to be helpful and considered this to be an example of ‘incessant politicking’.

E) Councillor Khan asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“In the absence of the ‘Everybody In’ scheme implemented in the first lockdown to provide homeless and rough sleepers with temporary accommodation which has not been continued by Government, can the portfolio holder detail what work is being undertaken to house rough sleepers during the pandemic including the number of currently rough sleeping in Medway, who do not have shelter?”

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Khan for her question. He said that correspondence had been received from the Secretary of State on 8 January 2020 to again request that all rough sleepers were provided with accommodation.

Throughout the pandemic the Council’s Housing Service had continued providing support and accommodation to rough sleepers, working with the Government to secure the funding to do so. 88 rough sleepers had been housed since the beginning of the pandemic, 50 of whom had gone on to secure longer term accommodation.

Councillor Doe said that a street count had been conducted on 25 November 2020, with an external, independent verifier, with three people having been found sleeping rough. It was known that the number of rough sleepers fluctuated from night to night, however, this was the number of people found on that occasion.

The service would continue to engage with anyone who was rough sleeping to assist them to access accommodation and services to provide them with support. This activity was underpinned by the Council’s joint working with other statutory services, partners and the voluntary sector. Councillor Doe thanked these organisations for their support.

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F) Councillor Adeoye asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

“Can the Portfolio Holder guarantee that all Medway children without their own access to digital equipment and internet access have been provided with appropriate equipment and access through the government funded scheme?”

Councillor Potter thanked Councillor Adeoye for her question. He said that allocations of devices for schools were the responsibility of the Department for Education and were ordered directly by schools. The Council only took receipt of devices for children in care and children in need. However, the Education Management Team had supported schools to access this Government service.

G) Councillor Curry asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“The value that our greenspaces have for both mental and physical wellbeing is now well understood. Over the period of the Covid-19 crisis we have seen a huge increase in the numbers of people using these spaces. We have also seen a significant increase in the numbers of volunteers wanting to help with the care of their local greenspaces. The pressure that this brings upon the maintenance of these invaluable areas has increased proportionately.

What is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure that country parks and greenspaces are not detrimentally impacted by high visitor numbers given their increased usage throughout the pandemic?”

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Curry for his question. He said that during the pandemic, parks had been a haven for many, and this had been reflected in higher visitor numbers to urban and country parks.

He gave reassurance that this increase had not led to a significant impact on the urban parks. Those parks had been maintained to a high standard throughout the year and the service had received positive feedback from park users.

Councillor Doe said that where there had been an increase in litter and dog waste, Medway Norse had increased litter and dog waste bin emptying to twice daily, where required. The country parks had been busier than usual but Medway’s Country Park Rangers had not reported any detrimental impact.

H) Councillor Stamp asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“We know that the health of our community is linked directly to the levels of air pollution caused by excessive traffic levels. Levels of air pollution in Medway have reduced significantly during the periods of lockdown. What measures are the Council taking to build on the benefits of this improvement to the quality of the air we breathe?”

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Councillor Chitty thanked Councillor Andy Stamp for his question. She said that one such opportunity had been the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund, with Medway having been awarded grants of £242,500 and £927,000 under phases 1 and 2 of the scheme. As a result, various improvements had been made to Medway's strategic cycle network, which complemented the 80 plus miles of cycle routes in Medway, many of which linked to the National Cycle Network.

Medway would continue to work towards delivering the strategic measures detailed in the Local Transport Plan and Air Quality Action Plan, which were designed to bring about improvements in the Air Quality Management Areas and more widely across Medway. A particular focus in recent years had been implementing the Air Quality Communications Strategy and work with schools in Medway to raise awareness and change behaviours.

Councillor Chitty advised that the Council was also developing an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy, including plans to transition the Council fleet to EV, along with the charging point infrastructure to facilitate this. Reducing the need to travel by car, for example by working from home, walking and cycling more would continue to contribute towards improving air quality and public health in Medway.

I) Councillor Browne asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

"The Council has declared a climate emergency and is asking all developers to take into consideration the impact of their projects on the environment; both locally and globally.

We have our own extensive capital programme which will inevitably have an impact upon the environment. What efforts are being made to measure the impact of our own capital programme on the environment and what we are doing to minimise and offset this impact?"

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Browne for her question. He said that Cabinet had formally approved the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy earlier in January 2021 and that this informed the Climate Change Action Plan which was due for publication later in 2021.

One of the priority actions of the Plan would be to develop a comprehensive energy monitoring programme to understand the Council's current carbon/energy performance and to map potential routes for the Council to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Council had already started to monitor the carbon emissions associated with its business, which would allow it to identify where the biggest carbon emissions savings could be made. Council decision making reports also requested that due consideration be given to climate change implications and energy savings.

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Councillor Doe said that both the Streetlighting LED conversion programme and Re:fit were examples of energy efficiency programmes within the Capital programme. Re:fit was a national procurement initiative for public bodies wishing to implement energy efficiency measures within their buildings or their estates. As a result of the measures, such as solar panels, heat pumps or smart/intelligent heating controls, carbon emissions would be reduced and cost savings achieved. The intention was that delivery of the first phase of measures would begin in Summer 2021.

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

“Given the Council’s welcome U-turn on mental health services at 147 Nelson Road, what more are the Council doing to support the mental wellbeing of individuals throughout the pandemic?”

Councillor Brake thanked Councillor Murray for her question. He said that there was increasing evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the mental health of sections of the population differently, depending on their circumstances and this was recognised by the Council. It was imperative that clients with mental health needs were supported.

In March 2020, in response to Government guidance on Covid-19, the resource centre at 147 Nelson Road had been closed. During the closure, regular contact was made with all service users. Support was provided via telephone and activity sets were sent out to provide meaningful activity.

Since the start of the pandemic, Adult Social Care’s Community Mental Health teams had needed to adapt their operations to support people to maintain both their physical and emotional wellbeing. Since July 2020, the teams had continued to provide face to face services.

In accordance with Government guidelines, 147 Nelson Road had remained open since the start of the second national lock down, providing 80 individual sessions a week, including a Sunday Social session. Those unable to attend had been provided with activity packs, which had generally been well received.

Councillor Brake said that regular telephone contact with service users had been maintained by both the Resource Centre and the Community Support Outreach Team. The latter reported an increase in the number of calls and that the amount of time callers spent on the phone had increased.

The constraints placed on people to reduce the spread of the virus had been a challenge for the community teams. However, working closely with partners in both the statutory and voluntary sector, the community teams ensured that people had regular deliveries of food, that their utilities were functional and that housing issues were addressed. Examples of housing support-based work included the Outreach team working with AMAT (a housing organisation) to support a person moving into Extra Care after three years of being in temporary accommodation. Computers for five individuals were obtained from Charity Plus

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and assistance was given in developing the skills needed to keep in contact with the outside world. Both Community teams had linked people to organisations delivering food parcels. Likewise, organisations delivering food parcels had identified people requiring support.

Both Community teams had worked closely with and taken advantage of their close links with Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT), Medway Engagement Group & Network (MEGAN,) One Big Family, and other organisations.

K) Councillor Howcroft-Scott asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

“Following the numerous examples of woefully inadequate food parcels sent to children who qualify for free school meals, by private companies such as Chartwells, part of the multi-billion revenue food service giant Compass Group, does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that more must be done to ensure that all children requiring term-time free school meals receive nutritious parcels or vouchers as opposed to financially benefiting large corporations?”

L) Councillor Pendergast asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“Flooding has a devastating impact on people and communities” was one of the opening lines in Councillor Filmer’s introduction to the July 2014 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The Medway Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is dated 2006 and clearly now out of date, as are the Flood Risk Management Strategy and Surface Water Management Plan.

Recently, many areas of Medway were subjected to flooding, but once again rural villages were particularly hardest hit with Stoke village virtually afloat and Hoo suffering from the continued policy of building houses regardless.

As part of the response, Flood Drainage Officer, Priscilla Haselhurst, has been outstanding with her hands-on approach and willingness to try and find a solution to the problems.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that as part of finding a solution to this problem, these plans and assessments will now be urgently updated, with the added bonus that updated and accurate flood maps may cause some developers to abandon plans to build in and around Hoo and other rural locations such as Cliffe and Cliffe Woods.”

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, a written response would be provided to questions 10K – 10L.

663 Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Mayor informed the Council that consideration of this item had been deferred until the next meeting of full Council. This was because all local authorities, including Medway, were awaiting the relevant notifications from the Government which would allow the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be finalised and presented for approval.

664 Speak up Policy (Whistleblowing)

Discussion:

This report requested Council approval of the Speak Up Policy. The report advised that the current Whistleblowing Policy had recently been reviewed, updated, and rebranded as the Speak Up Policy. Set out were some proposed amendments to the new policy, following consultation, as well as a revised version of the policy.

The report had been considered by the Audit Committee on 19 November 2020 and the Employment Matters Committee 2 December 2020, and their comments were set out in section 6 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council approved the Speak Up Policy, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

665 Medway Children's Assessment Unit - Addition to the Capital Programme

Discussion:

This report requested Council approval to make an addition to the Capital Programme in support of the proposals agreed by the Cabinet on 12 January 2021 following initial consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 January 2021.

The comments, recommendations and decisions of the Committee and Cabinet were set out in sections 6 and 7 of report respectively.

The report outlined the options that had been available to the Cabinet to develop an Assessment Unit to support with the reunification of children back with families or into more suitable and longer-term arrangements. The report

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explained that due to the high levels of vulnerability of the young people undergoing assessment, one Assessment Unit would support no more than four young people at a time. The unit would be run as a children's home and there would be a methodology behind the support programme to the young people that would run on a cyclical basis. The home would be staffed by a wrap-around multi-professional support team and additional support brought in as required by the care plans for the young people.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, proposed the recommendation, as set out below:

"Full Council is asked to add £1,654,000 to the capital programme to fund the purchase and related fees and costs for the purchase and conversion of the 2 alternative properties to progress option 4b, and the refurbishment of the Old Vicarage, as set out in section 3 of the report".

The Council was advised that the recommendation differed slightly from that set out in the report as the cost of refurbishment of the Old Vicarage children's home had not been reflected in the recommendation.

Decision:

The Council agreed to add £1,654,000 to the capital programme to fund the purchase and related fees and costs for the purchase and conversion of the 2 alternative properties to progress option 4b, and the refurbishment of the Old Vicarage, as set out in section 3 of the report.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

666 Contract Letting - Exceptional Circumstances

Discussion:

This report provided details of details of six contracts awarded in the past year, in accordance with the provisions paragraph 1.8.2 of the Contract Procedure Rules. The report stated that exemptions to Contract Procedure Rules to deal with the letting of contracts in exceptional circumstances, where it was in the best interests of the Council to do so, could be approved by the Monitoring Officer, provided that the exemption did not breach any EU or UK Directive, Statute or Regulation.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision

The Council noted the contents of the report.

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Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

667 Duration of Council Meetings

Discussion:

This report proposed some suggested amendments to the Constitution to limit the duration of Council meetings. The item of business had been included on the agenda for the Council meeting held on 8 October 2020. At that meeting the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, supported by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett had proposed the recommendations set out in the report. As the proposals recommended changes to the Council Rules relating to the duration of Council meetings, the matter had been taken forward without discussion for debate at this Council meeting, in accordance with Council Rule 16.2.

The report set out a number of options under consideration in order to limit the duration of Council meetings. These included a guillotine provision in the Constitution for bringing proceedings to a close at a given time; re-arranging the agenda; limiting reports that are for noting or limit speakers on such items; Limiting the number of reports for decision; Limiting the time of debating reports; Reducing the time for questions; Limiting the number of motions debated at a meeting and; limiting the time for motions to be debated.

The report recommended that one of these options, in relation limiting the number of motions, be agreed by the Council, as set out in the recommendation.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Rupert Turpin, supported by Councillor Etheridge, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Mahil, proposed the following amendment:

“Delete 10.1 and 10.2 and replace with:

10.1. Council notes that the length of meeting and the number of motions do not have a direct correlation with many meetings having more than one motion from a political group finishing by 23:00. This can be seen in the analysis table from 2010 to 2020:

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Year	Meeting Date	Meeting end	Total Motions	Labour	Conservative	Independent	Members
2010	January	22:20	1			1	Kearney
	April	21:13	1	1			Maple
	July	23:15	2	1	1		Griffiths, Clarke
	October	21:13	0				
2011	January	22:55	3	2	1		Murray, Maple, Jarrett
	April	21:57	1	1			Maple
	July	21:45	1	1			Murray
	October	00:15	4	3	1		Murray, Osborne, Price, Chishti
2012	January	23:26	2	2			Murray, Maple
	April	21:53	0				
	July	22:30	1	1			Murray
	October	22:30	1	1			Murray
2013	January	23:20	2	2			Murray, Price
	April	22:40	2	2			Murray, Griffiths
	July	23:20	1	1			Maple
	October	22:35	3	2	1		Igwe, Murray, Chishti
2014	January	00:05	2	1	1		Murray, Brake
	April	22:15	1		1		Hicks
	July	22:30	1	1			Murray
	October	22:30	5	2	3		Murray, Cooper, Carr, D Chambers, Irvine
2015	January	23:55	5	3		2	Maple, Price, Craven, Irvine (x2),
	April	22:19	2	1		1	Bowler, Irvine
	--August	22:16	2	2			Maple, Murray
	October	00:03	5	3	2		Maple, Bowler, Stamp, Turpin, Jarrett
2016	January	23:04	2	2			Maple, Bowler
	April	22:04	2	2			Maple, Price
	July	22:12	2	2			Johnson, McDonald
	October	22:08	3	2		1	Maple, Murray, Freshwater
2017	January	22:40	4	2	1	1	Khan, Johnson, D Chambers, Freshwater
	April	21:08	1		1		Brake
	July	21:24	1	1			Johnson
	October	21:44	2	1	1		McDonald, Jarrett
2018	January	00:22	5	4	1		Maple, Johnson, Stamp, Khan, Jarrett
	April	23:20	2	2			Khan, McDonald
	July	23:17	2	2			Johnson, Osborne
	October	22:42	2	1	1		Maple, Brake
2019	January	23:30*	1	1			Khan
	April	01:02	6	3	3		Maple, McDonald, Paterson, Jarrett, Potter, Chishti
	July	22:47	2	1		1	Maple, Pendergast
	October	23:05	2	2			Maple, McDonald
2020	January	23:27	5	3	2		Mahil, Stamp, Browne, Turpin, Doe
	April	22:04	1	1			Maple
	July	02:02	5	2	2	1	Adeoye, Khan, Jarrett, Ethridge, Pendergast
	October	23:15	3	1		2	Maple, Sands, Pendergast

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*Meeting started slightly later at 19:15

■ - meetings that finished prior to 23:00 despite also seeing more than one motion per group/independent

10.2 Council further notes the specific meeting referenced in 4.10 was the first full online council meeting which included a break at the request of the mayor and a prolonged discussion following an offensive comment which was eventually withdrawn during the meeting. Neither of these are commonplace in Medway Council meetings.

10.3 Council agrees to take no further action.”

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

(Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the amendment be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.)

Decision

- i) The Council agreed to amend the Constitution to limit the duration of Council meetings, by limiting the number of motions per formally constituted Political Group and each Independent Member (a Councillor who is not a member of Political Group) to one per Council meeting, as set out in the tracked amendments to the Constitution at Appendix 1 to the report.
- ii) The Council asked the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes against the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

668 Schedule of Meetings 2021/22

Discussion:

This report asked the Council to consider a provisional programme of meetings for the 2021/22 municipal year, as set out in Appendix 1, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 19 May 2021.

Councillor Kemp, supported by Councillor Wildey, proposed the recommendation in the report.

Decision

The Council agreed a provisional programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report for recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 19 May 2021.

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Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

669 Use of Urgency Provisions

Discussion:

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

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, supported by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision

The Council noted the report.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

670 Motions

A) Councillor Curry, supported by Councillor Browne, has submitted the following:

“This Council notes that the Community Wealth Fund Alliance (CWFA) is a group of organisations calling for the establishment of a Community Wealth Fund to invest in the most ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are classed as the most deprived in the country and include areas of Medway.

This Council further notes that the CWFA is being led by Local Trust which was established in 2012 to deliver Big Local, a National Lottery Community Fund-funded programme which committed at least £1m each to 150 neighbourhoods across England. The £217m originally provided by The National Lottery Community Fund to support this programme is the largest single-purpose Lottery-funded endowment ever made, and the biggest ever investment by a non-state funder in place-based, resident-led change. This programme includes our own Big Lottery Project, Arches Local, which has been such a huge success in the centre of Chatham over the last few years led by the community and working positively with partners.

There is an urgent need for funding to improve social infrastructure including transport and digital connectivity in neighbourhoods across Medway in order to improve their prospects. A Community Wealth Fund would provide this.

The Community Wealth Fund Alliance now has the support of over 340 organisations including more than 20 Local Authorities, including Thanet District

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Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, and is calling on Government to dedicate £4bn from the next wave of dormant assets coming on stream from bonds, stocks, shares and insurance policies to establish the Community Wealth Fund.

The Fund would be a new independent endowment with distribution guided by the following principles:

- provision of long-term funding (10 -15 years)
- investment at the hyper-local level (directly to communities of c.3,000 – 10,000 residents)
- community-led decision making
- appropriate support provided to build community confidence and capacity.

Distribution along these lines would support the development of economic and social capital in the “left behind neighbourhoods” at a time when funds like this are most needed. At the same time giving power back to these communities.

This Council agrees to support in principle the establishment of a Community Wealth Fund by joining the Community Wealth Fund Alliance.”

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

B) Councillor Murray, supported by Councillor Paterson, has submitted the following:

“This Council notes:

Next April the Government plans to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March as part of his pandemic response package.

The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families' living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.

Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and its lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.

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The increase in benefits has had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing and utilities.

The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.

Given that the number of households claiming Universal Credit in Medway almost doubled from January to August 2020, this is a policy which directly impacts over 20,000 households in our community.

This Council resolves to:

Write to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.

Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.”

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

C) Councillor Johnson, supported by Councillor Curry, has submitted the following:

“Following the Government’s decision to keep Early Years settings open, risking the health of staff and children, as well as risking community transmission of Covid 19, while other education settings are closed except for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children, this Council agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Education to call for the closure of Early Years settings.

This closure, with provision for key groups as for schools, should be for the length of the current lockdown, and should include appropriate financial compensation, including compensation for the current period where settings have not been closed but have suffered a financial impact due to parents’ and carers’ concerns about their children attending.”

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

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Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the decision be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

D) Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Adeoye, has submitted the following:

“Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

Council welcomes Kent Fire and Rescue Service committing to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.

In adopting this Charter an organisation commits to ensuring that it learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

Council commits to Medway Council becoming an organisation which strives to:

1. In the event of a public tragedy, activate its emergency plan and deploy its resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
2. Place the public interest above our own reputation.
3. Approach forms of public scrutiny – including public inquiries and inquests – with candour, in an open, honest and transparent way, making full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts. Our objective is to assist the search for the truth. We accept that we should learn from the findings of external scrutiny and from past mistakes.
4. Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
5. Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely.
6. Recognise that we are accountable and open to challenge. We will ensure that processes are in place to allow the public to hold us to account for the work we do and for the way in which we do it. We do not knowingly mislead the public or the media.

Council agrees to adopt the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.”

The Portfolio Holder for Adults’ Services, Councillor Brake, supported by Councillor Buckwell, proposed the following amendments:

“Delete the following: “Council commits to Medway Council becoming an organisation which strives to:”

Replace with: “This Council recognises that Medway Council is an organisation which strives to:”

Amended Motion reads:

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“Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

Council welcomes Kent Fire and Rescue Service committing to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.

In adopting this Charter an organisation commits to ensuring that it learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

This Council recognises that Medway Council is an organisation which strives to:

1. In the event of a public tragedy, activate its emergency plan and deploy its resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
2. Place the public interest above our own reputation.
3. Approach forms of public scrutiny – including public inquiries and inquests – with candour, in an open, honest and transparent way, making full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts. Our objective is to assist the search for the truth. We accept that we should learn from the findings of external scrutiny and from past mistakes.
4. Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
5. Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely.
6. Recognise that we are accountable and open to challenge. We will ensure that processes are in place to allow the public to hold us to account for the work we do and for the way in which we do it. We do not knowingly mislead the public or the media.

Council agrees to adopt the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.”

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

Councillors Adeoye, Browne, Curry, Johnson, Khan, Mahil, Maple, Murray, Paterson and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour of the amendment be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

Decision:

“Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

Council welcomes Kent Fire and Rescue Service committing to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.

In adopting this Charter an organisation commits to ensuring that it learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

Council, 21 January 2021

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Council agrees to adopt the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.”

E) Councillor Pendergast, supported by Councillor Filmer, has submitted the following:

Councillor Pendergast proposed an alteration to his previously submitted motion. In accordance with Council Rule 11.4.1, the meeting’s consent was signified without discussion, therefore, the altered motion was considered as follows:

“This Council welcomes the news of approval by the Government of the vaccines against Coronavirus and the provision of some vaccination centres in Medway.

The Council also notes the most excellent and forthright efforts of Kelly Tolhurst MP and Tracey Crouch MP in working with the Kent and Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group but the vaccination centres declared to date by the Kent and Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group leave many residents facing journeys of several hours and or many miles for these potentially life saving inoculations.

This Council calls on the Kent and Medway NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure all residents of Medway have easy access to vaccination centres regardless of where they live.”

Council, 21 January 2021

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Councillors Adeoye, Curry and Johnson requested that their abstentions be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

Councillors Filmer and Potter requested that their votes in favour of the motion be recorded in accordance with Council Rule 12.6.

Mayor

Date:

Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 33715

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

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