

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

**Thursday, 14 January 2021**

**6.30pm to 9.12pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Curry, Etheridge (Chairman), Fearn, Sylvia Griffin, Hubbard, Andy Stamp, Tranter and Williams

**In Attendance:** Councillor Jane Chitty, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation  
Councillor Martin Potter  
Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive  
James Brown, Head of Regulatory Services  
Louise Browne, Principal Engineer  
Michael Edwards, Head of Integrated Transport  
Dave Harris, Head of Planning  
Neil Howlett, Community Safety and Enforcement Manager  
Wayne Knight, Contracts Manager - Volker  
Colinda LeGall, Urban and Greenspaces Services Director - Medway Norse  
Vicky Nutley, Assistant Head of Legal Services  
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community  
Sarah Valdus, Head of Environmental Services  
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

**616 Apologies for absence**

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

Apologies for absence were received from the Vice Chairman Councillor Bhutia and Councillors Browne, Carr, Mahil and Thompson.

**617 Chairman's announcements**

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Vice Chairman, Councillor Bhutia had undergone an operation and was now recovering at home and he

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informed the Committee that he would pass on the Committee's best wishes to Councillor Bhutia for a speedy recovery.

The Chairman also welcomed Dee O'Rourke to her first meeting as Assistant Director Culture and Community.

### **618 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **619 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

### **620 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

### **621 Petitions**

#### **Discussion:**

The Committee received a report advising of two petition referrals as follows:

#### **Petition concerning Domino Pizza, Walderslade**

The Committee was informed of a petition containing 56 signatures presented by Councillor Brake to the Council at its meeting on 8 October 2020. Details of the petition were set out within the report and the Committee was informed that the petition organiser had also submitted a further statement listing residents' concerns, details of which were also set out in the report along with the officer's response to each point.

On 28 October 2020, the petition organiser requested that the matter be reviewed by this Committee and, in line with the Council's remote meeting protocol, the petition organiser had been invited to provide a further written representation or take part in the meeting remotely. The petition organiser had

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chosen to provide a further written representation which was set out within the report along with the officer's response to the points raised.

The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive drew attention to the Council's response at paragraph 3.7 and suggested that the Committee note that discussions with the petition organiser were ongoing and that the situation continue to be monitored.

### **Petition for the installation of a warden operated gating system at the access into Cozenton Park from Cranford Close**

The Committee was informed that a petition containing 32 signatures had been presented by Councillor Doe on 16 October 2020. Details of the petition were set out within the report along with the officer's response.

On 16 November 2020, the petition organiser requested that the matter be reviewed by this Committee and, in line with the Council's remote meeting protocol, the petition organiser had been invited to provide a further written representation or take part in the meeting remotely. The Committee was advised that the petitioners had requested that Councillor Potter address the Committee on their behalf.

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Potter informed the Committee that Cranford Close was in a unique position in that residents' homes were located in close proximity to the skatepark and Splashes Leisure Pool and young people congregating at both sites moved to Cranford Close in the evening resulting in anti-social behaviour in the Close. Residents were therefore asking that a gate be installed at the access point into Cozenton Park which could be closed at night.

Councillor Potter stated that the cost of the gate at £900 could be funded from Ward Improvement Funds and there were options for locking and unlocking the gate either through the local Neighbourhood Watch Group or adding this gate to the existing schedule for Medway Norse when the Splashes Leisure Pool gates were closed.

The Committee discussed the suggestions put forward by Councillor Potter recognising that this was not the only entrance to Cozenton Park and, in addition, similar requests had been received from residents for gating provision across Medway.

During discussion, it was suggested that taking into account the suggestions by Councillor Potter as to the potential funding of provision of the gate and the possible inclusion of the locking and unlocking of the gate as an addition to Medway Norse's existing schedule, this should be further investigated to explore all options and associated costs.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

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- a) noted that discussions with the petition organiser for the Dominos Pizza petition were ongoing and the situation would continue to be monitored.
- b) taking into account the suggestions by Councillor Potter as to the potential funding of provision of the gate into Cozenton Park at Cranford Close and the possible inclusion of the locking and unlocking of the gate as an addition to Medway Norse's existing schedule, requested that further investigations be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.

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

#### Discussion:

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

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

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

- **Markets** – The Portfolio Holder noted the Committee's support for the possible merging of the Rochester Farmers Market and the Artisan Market. In response to concerns that following the redevelopment of Strood Town Centre, the Strood Market had discontinued, she advised that as part of the redevelopment proposals, Strood Market had been temporarily relocated but it had subsequently become clear that the stallholders no longer found a market in Strood to be viable due to the wider retail offer available in Strood. Therefore, the market stallholders had left to take up places elsewhere.
- **Discretionary Grant Fund Scheme (DGF)** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that the take-up of the DGF scheme had been high with grant funding awarded to 319 Medway businesses. Both the Committee and the Portfolio Holder expressed appreciation to the Economic Development Team for their work in

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supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic. The Portfolio Holder commented that at the current time it was not yet possible to provide statistics as to businesses that had closed as a result of the pandemic, but once further information was available, this could be shared with the Committee.

- **Locate in Kent** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that Locate in Kent worked with all types of businesses where they had expressed an interest in opening in or relocating to Medway.

In response to a question as to whether particular industries were targeted to relocate or set up in Medway, the Portfolio Holder advised that whilst Medway had an excellent record of attracting technology, food and engineering industries, there were benefits to having a mixed economy and therefore no particular type of industry was specifically targeted. She also gave an assurance that the Council continued to work closely with the Universities.

- **Apprenticeships** – Referring to paragraph 2.5.1 of the report, clarification was sought as to whether the target of creating 30 new apprentice opportunities was sufficient taking into account that a greater number of apprentice placements had been available in past years. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, businesses were continuing to show an interest in apprentice placements but she did not have the latest statistics as to the number of apprentice opportunities currently available. She agreed to supply this information outside of the meeting.
- **Greeters in Rochester High Street** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that ‘greeters’ had been available in town centres across Medway to welcome the return of shoppers after the first lockdown and to provide information and advice upon social distancing measures.
- **Avoidance of disruption due to Brexit and use of Chatham Docks** – In response to a question concerning possible disruption due to Brexit and whether increased use could be made of Chatham Docks, the Portfolio Holder advised that potential use of Chatham Docks was outside the control of the Council. She advised that it was inevitable that the new Brexit regulations would create difficulties for some businesses and the Council would provide support where possible.
- **Regeneration schemes - Lower Thames Crossing and London Resort** – In response to a question as to how Medway could benefit from regeneration projects concerning the Lower Thames Crossing and London Resort, the Portfolio Holder provided an assurance that discussions on plans for the Lower Thames Crossing were continuing as

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this regeneration scheme would have a significant impact on transport and traffic in Medway.

Discussions were also continuing concerning any benefits that could be forthcoming arising from the London Resort development.

- **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and the Local Plan** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder advised that she was satisfied that having HIF and the Local Plan under one Portfolio was not a conflict of interest.
- **South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (STG)** – The Portfolio Holder advised that the STG offered an excellent service and had reduced overall costs for those local authorities involved. As a result, the number of local authorities joining the Partnership had continued to increase.
- **Social Regeneration** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder stressed the importance of social regeneration and bringing communities together to identify improvements and opportunities for the provision of education, employment and improvement to their surroundings.
- **Air Quality and the Four Elms Hill Air Quality Action Plan** – The Portfolio Holder advised upon the delays in progressing the Four Elms Hill Air Quality Action Plan due to concerns raised by Highways England. She advised that the issue of air quality and climate change was an important issue and there was now a Portfolio Holder with specific responsibility for climate change.

The Portfolio Holder also advised that as part of the planning process, developers were requested to include within new developments options to help reduce pollution and thus improve air quality.

In response to a question the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the number of air quality monitoring sites would be increased at a future date.

In closing, the Portfolio Holder suggested that if any Member had any questions or wanted information about services within her portfolio, she would welcome them approaching her direct.

### **Decision:**

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions and noted:

- a) that the Portfolio Holder has offered to supply further information as to the level of grants awarded to businesses with such information to include:
  - how many business have been supported;

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- the levels of support provided;
  - the types of businesses supported; and
  - the level of employment provision that has been protected.
- b) that the Portfolio Holder has offered to supply the following further information on apprenticeships:
- the number of apprentice schemes available;
  - the types of businesses where apprentice schemes are offered;
  - the interest shown by businesses in joining the apprenticeships scheme.
- c) that the Portfolio Holder has offered to pass on the Committee's appreciation to the Economic Development Team for their work in supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 623 Highways Infrastructure Contract Annual Review

#### Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out an annual review of the Highway Infrastructure Contract for Year 3 of the Contract Term covering the period 1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Localised flooding** - In response to a question concerning localised flooding, the Principal Engineer informed the Committee that most drainage systems across Medway were old and had limited capacity. Therefore, whilst a programme of gully cleansing was regularly undertaken, in periods of high rainfall, some areas were prone to flooding until such time that the additional water could drain away.
- **KPI's** – Officers were requested to provide further information by way of a briefing note on the Key Performance Indicators referred to on pages 58 and 74 of the report and appendix.
- **Resurfacing of highways and footways** –The Principal Engineer informed the Committee that both road surfacing and footway resurfacing schemes were undertaken following a priority assessment scheme.
- **Timing and quality of repairs** – In response to a question concerning the time taken to complete minor works, the Principal Engineer explained the process by which works were undertaken following the issue of a 28 day order. She confirmed that in the main, works were completed earlier but there were occasions when this was not possible.

Concerning the quality of repairs, on occasion it was necessary to undertake a temporary repair which would then be repaired fully at a

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later date. The Principal Engineer advised that there was a rolling programme of inspections for road repairs and she suggested that if any Member had an issue with a road repair in their Ward, they notify officers to enable this to be investigated.

- **Apprenticeships** – Volker’s Contracts Manager informed the Committee that Volker had been successful after competing against 100 other nominations to be awarded the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Excellence Award for its work within the community. In response to a question concerning the level of apprenticeships on offer, he advised that Volker offered 2 – 3 apprentice placements each year and these roles could cover either administration or trade work. In addition, Volker also offered re-training opportunities to older age groups. He was pleased to report that to date at the end of the training period, all apprentices had been offered roles with the company.
- **Plastic Kerbs** – In response to a question as to the potential use of plastic kerbing, Volker’s Contracts Manager advised that such kerbing was suitable for use in some areas but not others. He assured the Committee that Volkerc continued to investigate new technological advancements especially where they helped reduce carbon footprint.
- **Electric charging** - The Committee discussed the provision of vehicle electric charging points, in particular, at the roadside. In response to questions, Volker’s Contracts Manager advised that Volkerc were actively involved in the installation of vehicle electric charging points in London. However, for roadside schemes to be successful, it was necessary for the underlying infrastructure to be in place. The Committee asked for more information on this issue particularly taking into account that much of Medway was made up of Victorian housing and streets.
- **Strood Flood Defence works** – In response to a question as to those works which remained outstanding as part of the Strood Flood Defence works and the relationship between the Council’s work on this project and the Rochester Bridge Trust as owner of some of the land, the Principal Engineer advised that this was a project being completed by the Council’s Regeneration team and therefore she would obtain this information and respond to the Member direct.
- **Strood Redevelopment project – Outstanding works and removal of pedestrian refuge in Gun Lane** - In response to a question as those works which remained outstanding as part of the Strood Development project, the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive advised that minor lighting works remained outstanding and it was hoped these would be completed within the next few weeks.

Volker’s Contracts Manager advised that there were a few minor elements of work outstanding and some planting.



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The Committee noted the request for the removal of the pedestrian refuges in Gun Lane, Strood which had been installed when it had originally been intended that Gun Lane was to be open to two-way traffic.

- **New technology** – The Principal Engineer advised of a scheme currently used by Surrey County Council and trialled by Kent County Council involving use of a device attached to highways and refuse vehicles which could register the condition of the highway and in particular pothole detection.
- **Medway City Estate Slip Road** - In response to a question concerning the provision of the Medway City Estate slip road, the Principal Engineer advised that the Council's Regeneration team were responsible for this project and therefore she would ask the Project Manager to provide an update to the Member direct.

### Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the annual review for Year 3 of the Highways Infrastructure Contract as set out in the appendix and agreed the following:

- a) a briefing note be supplied providing a breakdown of the Key Performance Indicators referred to within the report.
- b) a briefing note be supplied providing an update on the availability of new technologies as they relate to street lighting and vehicle electric charging.
- c) an update be provided as to outstanding Strood Flood Defence works including consultations with the Rochester Bridge Trust.
- d) information be supplied as to the outstanding works as part of the Strood Redevelopment project and in particular whether works could be undertaken to improve pedestrian access in Gun Lane including the removal of the existing pedestrian refuges.
- e) information be supplied as to progress on the highway works at Medway City Estate and Four Elms Hill.

### 624 20mph Schemes in Medway

#### Discussion:

The Committee considered a report setting out a response to the recommendations of previous meetings of the Committee concerning the possible introduction of a pilot 20mph scheme in Medway.

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Appended to the report was a 20mph Area-wide (Blanket) Speed Restriction Monitoring Report providing an overview of monitoring carried out within other local authorities where 20mph schemes operated, an outline of the recently published Department for Transport commissioned research around the effectiveness of 20mph speed limit signed only schemes and a summary of the effectiveness of ten existing 20mph schemes in Medway.

The Committee discussed the report and in response to questions, the Head of Transport and Parking informed the Committee that road safety engineering work was evidence-based taking into account crash records and interventions. The introduction of 20mph speed restrictions was only one measure that was available to improve road safety.

The Committee acknowledged that from research provided, the success of 20mph schemes was variable but it was generally considered that where there were requests for traffic calming measures, the introduction of a 20mph zone could be more cost effective than more expensive engineering solutions.

It was suggested that Cabinet be requested to use the Members' Priorities Fund to introduce a 20mph pilot zone in Medway taking an evidence-based approach but ideally in an area where several schools were located.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) noted the findings of the '20mph Area wide Speed Restriction Monitoring Report'.
- b) noted the findings of the 'Effectiveness of Medway's 20mph schemes report'.
- c) noted that 20mph schemes remain an available option for traffic and highways schemes, linking as appropriate to current Council Policy and objectives.
- d) recommended to Cabinet that the Members' Priorities Fund be used to introduce a 20mph pilot zone in Medway taking an evidence based approach but ideally in an area where several schools are located.

## **625 Medway-wide Public Space Protection Orders**

### **Discussion:**

The Committee considered a report outlining the background to the Medway-wide Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and the status of two lapsed PSPOs concerning dog fouling and dogs on leads (by direction) that were in place across the whole of Medway and expired in October 2020.

The report explained the process to be followed in implementing new orders.

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### **Decision:**

The Committee noted that the proposed introduction of the Borough wide dog fouling and dogs on leads (by direction) Public Space Protection Orders would be considered by Cabinet on 2 February 2021 and determined by Council on 18 February 2021.

### **626 Review of use of Herbicides on Green Space Assets**

#### **Discussion:**

The Committee received a report detailing the outcome of a review into the reduction in the use of glyphosate in parks and play areas and the impact of reducing the cutting of an area of 3 feet around tree bases in public parks to once during the season in line with the recommendations of this Committee on 15 August 2019 and decision no. 8/2020 of Cabinet on 14 January 2020.

The Committee was advised that in addition to the above, fence line spraying had been replaced by manual strimming or leaving grass longer where suitable.

The new methods had proven successful in 2020 and there had been no complaints about the change of asset maintenance. Therefore, the programme had been adopted for assets on all green open space sites, not just restricted to play areas.

It was confirmed that whilst advice from industry specialists and the current view from the UK Government body and the HSE remained that the use of glyphosate when used as instructed was safe, Medway Norse would continue to research and test new products and was working to a year on year reduction in the use of glyphosate. In 2020, Medway Norse had used 60% less glyphosate based products than in 2019 and 100% reduction in play areas.

The Committee discussed the report and thanked officers and Medway Norse for committing to reduced use of glyphosate. It was suggested that this be publicised and, in response, the Urban and Greenspace Services Director from Medway Norse advised that an article would be placed in a future issue of Medway Matters and increased signage placed in parks and amenity areas.

It was suggested that allotment holders be encouraged to go organic where possible but it was recognised that as allotment plots were individually managed this might prove more difficult.

The Committee also noted that there were certain invasive species where the use of glyphosate was necessary but it was noted that these plants could be treated by individual stem injection as opposed to spraying.

The Urban and Greenspace Services Director from Medway Norse also informed the Committee that officers were liaising with the Kent Wildlife Forum

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to undertake surveys at a future date as to the impact of the reduction in use of glyphosate on wildlife and biodiversity.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) noted that Medway will continue with the integrated approach of no glyphosate use in parks and play areas.
- b) noted that Medway Norse will continue its research and testing of alternative non-chemical products for other areas that do not need weed control management, shrub beds and pathways.

## **627 Work programme**

### **Discussion:**

The Committee considered its current work programme.

It was reported that at the agenda planning meeting on 17 December 2020, it had been suggested that the presentation by Locate in Kent be undertaken as a separate Member Briefing Session and that if the Committee was minded to support this suggestion, the Briefing Session would likely be held in February/March 2021.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) noted the current work programme.
- b) agreed that the presentation by Locate in Kent be arranged as a separate Member Briefing Session and removed from the Committee's work programme.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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