

Council Priority: GROWTH

Maximising regeneration and economic growth

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

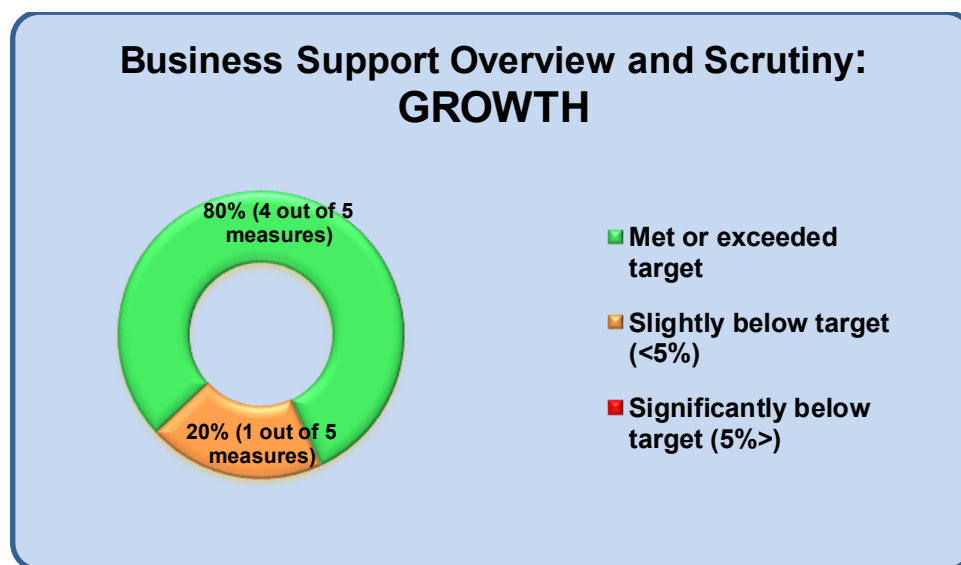
Performance: Quarter 3 2020/21

Key

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

Council Plan measures: summary performance

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



Improved performance

- 80% (4 out of 5*) improved long term (average of previous 4 quarters)
- 60% (3 out of 5*) improved over the short term (since last quarter)

*where data available

Measures in target (green)

Code	Status	Measure	Long Trend	Short Trend
MAE 3	Green	Achievement rate (pass rate)	IMP	IMP
HC3	Green	No. of households with dependent children in B&B who have resided there for 6+ weeks at the end of the quarter	STATIC	STATIC
HC4	Green	Number of private sector properties improved because of the Council's intervention	IMP	DET
NI 156	Green	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	IMP	IMP

Measures slightly below target (amber)

Code	Status	Name	Long Trend	Short Trend
MAE 2	Amber	% Retention rate	IMP	IMP

Strategic Risks

The quarter 3 20/21 strategic risk register is attached at Appendix 4. The register shows all strategic risks together with mitigation in place to minimise impact and likelihood. The risks pertaining solely to this council priority are shown below (full details in Appendix 4).

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SR35	50	Homelessness	AD Physical and Cultural Regeneration	CIII	L - significant I - marginal

The following risks pertain to all priorities:

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SRO 3B	4	Finances	Chief Finance Officer	A1	L – very high I - catastrophic
SR46	7	Medway's Economic Recovery from COVID19	AD Regeneration (Recovery Lead Officer for Medway Council)	BII	L - high I - critical

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SR32	23	Data and information	Chief Legal Officer	CII	L - significant I - critical
SR36	26	Alternative service delivery models	Chief Legal Officer, Director of RCET	BIII	L - high I - Marginal
SR37	30	Cyber Security	Chief Finance Officer	CI	L - Significant I - Catastrophic
SR02	39	Business continuity and emergency planning	Director of Place	DII	L - low I - critical
SR49	57	Income Reduction due to COVID19	Chief Finance Officer	BII	L - high I - critical

Council Plan Outcome: Resident with jobs and skills

Programme: Jobs, Skill and Employability

Council Plan Measures

MAE 2 Medway Adult Education % retention rate

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q1 2020/21	94.0%	91.68%	Amber	Maximise	IMP	IMP
Q4 2019/20	94.0%	72.06%	Red	Maximise	DET	DET

Comment

This performance indicator (PI) is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data is at 18 December 2020 for Q1 of Academic year 20/21 (August – October 2020).

Although starts have reduced significantly in some areas (particularly in the community learning funded leisure courses), retention has increased to 91.7% compared to 72% in the previous quarter. Despite the issues around the current COVID-19 pandemic, retention at the end of Q1 is only 3.5 percentage points below the retention at the end of Q1 in the previous academic year.

Action

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

MAE 3 Medway Adult Education achievement rate (pass rate)

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q1 2020/21	96.0%	1007%	Green	Maximise	IMP	IMP
Q4 2019/20	96.0%	99.87%	Green	Maximise	IMP	IMP

Comments

This PI is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data is at 18 December 2020 for Q1 of Academic year 20/21 (August – October 2020).

The pass rate measures how many of the learners, who complete their course, achieve a qualification or their learning aim. There are significantly less enrolments with a known outcome, compared to the first quarter of previous year, as these are mainly community learning short courses which would have finished this early in the academic year and have been particularly affected by COVID-19. However, 100% of these learners achieved their learning goals. It shows that Medway Adult Education learners continue to achieve very high pass rates and demonstrates the excellent processes in place to support learners achieve their qualifications, or to achieve their learning outcomes in non-accredited provision (RARPA).

Action

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

Council Plan Projects

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

The Work Skills Programme which targets employability skills and provides qualifications for learners who are unemployed, in receipt of benefits or who are

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

MAE Centres have remained fully open from September 2020 with COVID19 measures in place. The Work Skills Programme has a refreshed offer which includes an online programme of qualifications developed during lock down as well as the face-to-face delivery. Discussions have been held with the Job Centre to increase referrals and this is proving to have some impact with more referrals being made to the employability and work skills programmes. Most referrals are residents with English language needs as a barrier to employment opportunities. These referrals will be offered a place on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses following initial assessments and advice and guidance sessions. Leaflets have been created and sent to the Job Centre and close attention is being paid to national announcements regarding upskilling and retraining funding.

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

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

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

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

- Supported Employment project - was due to start in April - started on the 1 August
- Scaffolding training project - was due to start in April - will now likely start in early 2021, this is due to training arrangements
- Medway Apprenticeship Advice Service - was due to start in April - started on 1 September

The Enterprise Coordinator programme has continued and used this time to engage will with schools, developing new careers strategies. As the new academic year starts, the focus is on encouraging schools/college to update their careers self-evaluation

and demonstrate the positive impact the network is having. Focus will also be put on supporting schools/college to adapt careers information to a changing economic landscape.

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

On the 28 October an event called Brighter Futures was held virtually as a business focused event, informing businesses of the challenges that Care Leavers face and providing a chance for them to provide opportunities to young people, whilst encouraging them to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant. The second half of the event saw mock interviews with young people and businesses held virtually. The event was a success with many of the businesses present keen to support Care Leaver initiatives. There has also been one job offer from the interviews.

A Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce has been created to tackle rising unemployment and held its inaugural meeting on 1 October 2020. An action plan has been developed and is in the final stages of sign off. Key actions include making the most of Kickstart, sharing the Apprenticeship Levy and a strategic review of Adult Skills Training. Medway Council will play a key part in all of those actions.

Medway Council has been registered as a Kickstart Employer and will provide at least 37 placements for young people who are unemployed. A support offer has been designed to provide pastoral and employability support.

Medway Adult Education has been integrated with Skills and Employability, with work being done to align priorities and activities. The Skills and Employability Plan will be reviewed in light of COVID19 and be updated as more information and data are gathered.

Council Plan Outcome: Preventing homelessness

Programme: Preventing homelessness

Council Plan measures

NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q3 2020/21	350	307	Green	Minimise	IMP	IMP
Q2 2020/21	350	370	Red	Minimise	DET	DET

Comments

At the end of Q3 2020 there were a total of 307 households residing in temporary accommodation (TA) provided by the Council in line with its statutory responsibilities.

This is a decrease from the 370 households that were accommodated at the end of Q1. Most households in TA will have children. Therefore, there is a correlation between the overall number of households in TA and the number of children in TA. The accommodation provided to families will usually be in the form of a self-contained property located in Medway.

Benchmarking

Recent benchmarking at the end of March 2020, showed the rate of households in temporary accommodation in Medway was 3.01 per 1,000 households, this is slightly lower than the national rate of 3.92.

Further benchmarking has been undertaken to identify how Medway compares with other similar sized unitary authorities. In March 2020, the numbers in temporary accommodation Milton Keynes had a rate of 7.97 households per 1,000 households and Brighton and Hove a rate of 12.92. Locally, Swale had a rate of 4.57 in the same period.

Benchmarking data has been reviewed and will not be comparable to previous quarters.

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

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q3 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC
Q2 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC

Comments

A snapshot at the end of Q3 2020/21 identifies that no families were in bed and breakfast accommodation. Additionally, throughout Q3 no families were placed into bed and breakfast for more than 6 weeks.

Action

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

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

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q3 2020/21	175	280	Green	Maximise	IMP	DET

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

Comments

In Q3 280 private sector households were assisted in having their properties improved via Council intervention despite the restriction over COVID-19 on inspections. The Council have continued with its statutory services and targeted work with the taskforce and will continue this through Q4.

14 new Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) licences have been issued in Q3 bringing a total of 199 licenced HMO throughout Medway. 19 category 1 hazards and 155 category 2 hazards have been identified in this quarter. 23 category 1 hazards and 173 category 2 hazards have been alleviated throughout this quarter with either formal or informal actions. This action helps improve living conditions and raises the standards in the Private sector rented accommodation.

Action

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

Council Plan Projects

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

Last year the Council delivered over our target of 204 affordable homes (total of 333 units) and this year we are on target to reach our target of 204 units featuring a range of 1-4 bed units for Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership, following discussions with developers and registered providers in terms of COVID-19 impact on new housing supply. So far this year a total of 134 affordable units have been delivered. The Council are also looking to increase the number of potential housing options.

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

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

Work continues to ensure that HRA tenants are supported to mitigate the negative impact of welfare reform, to minimise rent arrears, evictions, and support tenant's financial well-being. In Q4, the focus will be on supporting tenants who have been financially affected by COVID-19, especially tenants who are claiming benefits for the first time and new tenants.

Review Housing Related Support (HRS) commissioning

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

We are looking to ensure that all commissioned services work in a Trauma Informed way to increase engagement of people with complex needs.

Shift the focus of the rough sleeping initiative

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

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

From the start of the 'everyone in' request from government, to date the Council have accommodated 88 people who were rough sleeping. 50 of those are now in settled longer term accommodation.

The Council was awarded £239,000 from the Next Steps Accommodation Program to ensure there is capacity to house those sleeping rough in Medway, particularly as traditional night shelters are unable to open due to safety reasons.

The development of our variety of services has allowed a look at alternatives in the type of accommodation being provided, avoiding the need to exit people from service.

The Service has been working with the local hospital to increase understanding of people who are sleeping rough and to ensure that discharges are done in such a way to maintain people in accommodation rather than returning people to rough sleeping.

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

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

In Q3 to there were 702 approaches for homeless assistance, compared to 565 for Q3 2019/20. This represents a substantial increase of 24%, with December alone seeing nearly double the number of approaches compared to last year (@ 224 vs 119).

Data for the year for accepted cases to mid-December shows a 21% reduction in approaches from households with children with a 29% increase in approaches from single persons. This very roughly correlates to a 33% reduction in approaches from those being evicted from private sector and social housing (likely due to the stay on possession proceedings earlier in the year) and an increase of 39% in the number of households approaching as homeless due to being asked to leave (ATL) accommodation by family or friends (many due to concerns over COVID-19).

The figures given above are for accepted homeless cases only and therefore will not correlate exactly with the 24% increase in approach enquiries and which include all cases whether accepted for homeless duties or otherwise. However, they do directly reflect our experience of a substantial increase in approaches from those ATL, accompanied by a reduction in possession/eviction cases.

Of concern is that is that there is currently said to be a large backlog of possession cases awaiting administration by the courts and it is likely that this will feed into an increase in our approach figures going forwards into 2021. This represents a risk to our service.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, during Q3 there were 231 successful prevention/reliefs for homeless households. For cases accepted as being owed a homeless duty, the average success rate for the service is running at 58%. This is comparable to 2019/20 which saw an overall success rate for the year of 60%. This high level of performance is being achieved by robust supervision and monitoring of staff prevention/relief activity, including proactive working with homeless households, and the maintenance of regular contacts with private and social landlords and supported providers to offer early intervention appointments.

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

Work continues with landlords and tenants to offer support and prevent homelessness. This includes via the landlord helpline, joint working with social housing providers, and via using social media and the Council's website to promote our services. We have agreed arrangements with the County Court to display our leaflets and posters to promote our service to landlords and their tenants at threat of eviction and who are attending the court. We have also reached out to Medway CAB who operate the court duty desk to seek their assistance, but to date have been unsuccessful in securing their engagement.

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

During this period of Q3 CallB4UServe helpline received 18 contacts from landlords compared with 11 for the whole of Q3 in 2019/20. This indicates some success in our efforts to increase awareness of our service. In addition, once initial contacts have been made via the helpline and relationships established, landlords will often contact the PRS Team direct. For Q3 to date the Team dealt have dealt with 25 such enquiries

The team also continues to reach out to social landlords, with response being variable and the most consistent being MHS. Joint prevention appointments with MHS have been restarted when a tenant is at risk of eviction. Contact has been made with the county court who have agreed to display details of our service in their reception area for those attending for possession hearings.

Maximising the number of Private rented Sector (PRS) properties available to us to prevent and relieve homelessness remains an essential service goal. Earlier in the year there were several initiatives to seek to increase supply, including mail shots to landlords and messages on social media. Q3 to date has seen an increase in the availability of new PRS properties, with 123 new becoming available to the team compared to 99 for the whole of Q3 in 2019.

For the first two months of Q3 the PRS Team have secured 58 new tenancy sign-ups and are on target to meet or exceed the 76 secured in Q2.

A new rent guarantee was launched at the end of Q2 which supports an improved offer to landlords with a view to enhancing procurement and an increase in PRS properties. There has been one take up of the scheme to date but with several Landlords expressing interest and with several potential properties being in the pipeline.

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

The Welfare Team continue to work closely with tenants to maximise their benefits and ensure that rent is paid and budgeted for. Following the intervention from the team HRA tenants during Q3 were awarded £34,467 in backdated benefits or DHP, of this £9,095 was paid directly onto the rent accounts. They also assisting in achieving £77,008 in annualised benefits for tenants.

The team continue to attend all Council sign ups to identify those that require additional support and ensure that benefits are in place. The service assisted with the sign-ups for the new Council homes at Ingram Court, where they completed affordability checks to ensure that potential tenants were able to afford the rent, given they are set higher than usual Council rents. This is something that will be continued going forward

for any new homes where affordable rent has been set. COVID-19 secure venues have been identified, however following the second lockdown and the high rates in Medway, this has therefore been placed on hold until it is safer to proceed.

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

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

Arrears at the end of Q3 are 1.55%, within target. This is a slight increase from the end of Q2, which was 1.53%.

The team are continuing to face challenges with the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) and the pandemic, however, they have been keeping regular contact with customers, reminding them through text messages and e-mails to pay their rent and referring to the Welfare Team for tenancy support when required. This has proven to be productive and aid in reducing arrears.

There have been changes to the way that the UC Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) is processed, and this is now electronic and is processed every couple of weeks rather than every 6/7 weeks, this means that the funds are going into the rent accounts quicker and arrears are not building, therefore assisting in the reduction of arrears.

Capital works programme

Following excellent recovery work from June - October 2020, to reduce risk, we have suspended internal non-essential planned works. i.e. kitchen, bathroom replacement which will impact on the delivery of this full programme. Contractors are supportive of this action, and ready to hit the ground running once the risk level is lower. Where possible external works will still be undertaken and progress in these areas has been excellent.

Repairs and maintenance contracts

The Mears contract extension has been signed and agreed, this confirms that Mears will continue to be the Councils repairs and maintenance service provider until September 2024. The contract extension is forecast to deliver annual savings of over £100k. The annual review of costs using Housemark benchmarking data was completed in December 2020. The report notes that overall maintenance performance was performing well in comparison with peer organisations. A detailed feedback session has been scheduled for the end of January.