

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

Tuesday, 23 March 2021

6.30pm to 10.12pm

Record of the meeting

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

- Present:** Councillors: Browne, Etheridge (Chairman), Fearn, Mahil, Andy Stamp, Tranter and Williams
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Mrs Elizabeth Turpin (Substitute for Sylvia Griffin)
- In Attendance:** Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Bob Dimond, Head of Sport Leisure and Tourism
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Dave Harris, Head of Planning
Anna Marie Lawrence, Head of Business Intelligence
Andrew Mann, Partnership Director, Medway Norse
Vicky Nutley, Assistant Head of Legal Services
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director Culture and Community
Melanie Tong, Contracts Manager Medway Municipal (South Region) Veolia Environmental Services (UK) PLC
Sarah Valdus, Head of Environmental Services
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

824 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, Councillors Carr, Curry, Sylvia Griffin, Hubbard and Thompson and the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive.

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825 Chairman's announcements

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman congratulated Sunny Ee on his recent appointment to the post of Assistant Director Regeneration.

The Chairman and Councillor Andy Stamp provided an update on the health of Councillors Bhutia (Vice Chairman) and Councillor Bowler and the Committee requested that its best wishes be passed onto both Members.

826 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

827 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman of the Committee had agreed for the item on the Update on the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Programme to be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgency as permitted under section 100B of the Local Government Act 1972 having regard to the first stage of the HIF consultation having commenced on 11 January 2021 and being due to finish on 6 April 2021 and with the next meeting of this Committee being scheduled provisionally for 10 June 2021.

The report had not been available in time for despatch with the main agenda as it had been necessary to undertake further work to finalise the report.

828 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Andy Stamp referred to the Annual Review of Waste Contracts: Contract Year October 2019 – September 2020 and informed the Committee that he worked for the Environment Agency. However, he was not involved in any sites in Medway therefore he was not precluded from taking part in the discussion on this item.

829 Attendance of the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress on the areas of work within the terms of reference of this Committee and covered by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe as set out below:

- Archives
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Events and Festivals
- Greenspaces
- Heritage
- Leisure Services
- Sporting Legacy
- Theatres and Arts
- Tourism

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Splashes Sports Centre** – Clarification was sought as to the current position following the closure of the Splashes Sports Centre and in particular, whether the redevelopment of this facility would proceed as planned.

In response, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that the redevelopment of this facility remained a high priority project. However, whilst funding had been set aside for these works, detailed surveys indicated that more works were required than originally envisaged and therefore the project would take longer than anticipated. It was intended that when redeveloped, this facility would provide family friendly activities that would complement sessions held at other Medway sports centres.

He stated that whilst he was disappointed that the completion of the project would be delayed, work on the detailed designs would be undertaken in the Spring/Summer of 2021.

The Committee expressed concern that the project would not now include all the original proposals and in response, the Portfolio Holder advised that in considering the project as a whole, it was necessary to consider the market demand for facilities. Whilst there had once been a high demand for gym facilities, this was one example where demand had reduced in recent years as many people now had exercise equipment at home.

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- **Strand Swimming Pool** – The Committee noted that the Strand Swimming Pool had not opened in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic but that it was intended that the facility would be open in 2021 if permitted under Government's Covid-19 restrictions.

Whilst it was appreciated that the facility would need to operate at a reduced capacity to comply with ongoing social distancing rules, it was considered that demand to use the facility was likely to be high especially as Splashes Sports Centre was currently closed and the Committee requested information as to whether there were plans to introduce a booking system and extend the opening hours of the Pool.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that subject to Government restrictions permitting the Pool to be open, a booking system would be introduced. The Committee suggested that consideration be given to introducing timed sessions of say 2 – 3 hours in length to enable as many people as possible to use the Pool.

The Portfolio Holder advised that whilst he was not against opening the pool for extended hours, as the pool was open air, actual usage of the pool was weather dependent and therefore it was necessary to take this into account when arranging opening times and staff work patterns. This made it more difficult to arrange extended opening hours in advance.

- **Festivals and Events** - It was acknowledged that 2020/21 had been a difficult year with the cancellation of festivals and events due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Portfolio Holder was asked whether during this period, opportunity had been taken to review the overall events programme.

The Portfolio Holder expressed disappointment that the Council's festival and events programme had been cancelled in 2020/21 but he was hopeful that some events would be permitted to go ahead in 2021 but this would be dependent upon the Government's Covid-19 restrictions.

In response to the request for increased notice of event cancellation, in particular for those businesses such as hotels, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that festivals and events required planning and organisation well in advance of the actual date they were due to take place. Therefore, a decision about whether an event could proceed could not generally be made at short notice. However, there were occasions when it was necessary to cancel an event at short notice and where possible, this was communicated as widely as possible but he was willing to consider any suggestions as to how this communication could be improved.

As to whether an opportunity had been taken to review the festival and events programme, the Portfolio Holder stated he was satisfied that the programme did not require a review but he informed the Committee that

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a number of individual events were being considered by the Cultural Compact as to ways of increasing inclusivity for smaller groups.

- **Management of the grass verge environment** - The Committee was pleased to note that in 2019, the Council had agreed with Medway Norse to an environmental approach to the management of grass verges with the aim of creating a more diverse habitat and reducing CO2 and that this programme had continued in 2020 and would be expanded in 2021. The Committee requested a list of sites where this initiative had been introduced.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would welcome suggestions for future sites for this initiative from Ward Councillors.

- **Urban Tree Challenge Fund** – The Committee requested that the Portfolio Holder express its appreciation to officers for securing funding from the Forestry Commission as part of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund to plant over 13,000 trees in Medway’s open spaces.

In response, the Portfolio Holder agreed that this had been very successful and it was hoped that further funding may be forthcoming.

- **Visitor Centre in Rochester** – Following a request for information as to the plans for the internal review of the Visitor Centre in Rochester, the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that the Visitors Centre should be the first place of contact for people visiting Rochester and that the information available must be more interactive with a digital focus.
- **Booking systems at Medway Park Swimming Pool and availability of free swimming** – The Committee noted that due to the Covid-19 restrictions, when the Medway Park swimming pool had been open in 2020, swimming sessions were required to be pre-booked. Concern was expressed that some people failed to attend pre-booked sessions to the detriment of others who had been unable to pre-book swim slots, in particular those aged over 60 and under 60 who were entitled to free swimming. It was suggested that consideration be given to introducing a penalty for those who failed to attend pre-booked sessions without notice.

In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that to his knowledge this was not considered to be a regular occurrence. He did not wish to introduce a penalty system but would investigate this further in consultation with the Head of Sport, Leisure, Tourism and Heritage.

The Portfolio Holder also confirmed that free swimming sessions would resume when the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted and the pool could re-open.

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- **Archives** – The Committee requested that the Portfolio Holder pass on its appreciation for the work of staff in the Archives Section.
- **Corn Exchange** – The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that a new five-year business plan had been developed for the Corn Exchange and that the building had been completely refurbished with a view to being relaunched as a venue for weddings, business events and celebrations. Consideration was being given to introducing wedding planning packages which would take advantage of photography opportunities in Rochester e.g. Rochester Castle. The Head of Culture and Libraries was currently investigating other potential uses of the building as a means of generating increased income and any suggestions were welcomed.
- **Marketing and multi-centre ticketing offer** – In acknowledging that in the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been increased reliance on booking and purchasing on-line, the Committee asked whether there were opportunities to maximise the marketing of tourism and to offer multi-centre tickets for facilities across Medway.

In response, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that improved and increased marketing was important and service providers were being encouraged to utilise social media to promote services in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. Unfortunately, the possible introduction of multi-centre tickets was not yet available.

- **Armed forces** – In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council was a forces friendly employer and whilst a number of reservists currently worked for the Council, work would continue to encourage reservists to consider taking up employment within the Council.

The Portfolio Holder also advised upon the support provided to veterans and in particular, in the recruitment of veterans for construction work. He also confirmed that an officer working group ensured that armed forces personnel were not disadvantaged when applying for housing or school places.

- **Friends Groups/digital support** – The Committee requested information as to the support provided to Friends Groups over the past 12 months through the Covid-19 pandemic and in particular, whether it was possible for the Council to provide support via digital tools e. to enable remote meetings to take place.

The Portfolio Holder expressed his appreciation to those involved in Friends Groups and confirmed that they were valued and offered many benefits. He was not aware that any work had been undertaken on the possibility of providing digital support to Friends Groups but agreed to

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ask officers to investigate this in consultation with the Member concerned.

- **Engaging with hard to reach groups** – Information was requested as to whether the Community Hubs could be used to help with delivery of local events which may also assist in enabling increased inclusivity within local communities.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that accessing hard to reach groups was central to the Cultural Compact and he welcomed and encouraged use of local Community Hubs in considering ways that they could be more involved in providing support and events within their local community, particularly as not everyone was part of a group.

- **South East Creative Cultural and Digital Support** – The Committee noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the three year European Regional Development Fund, which had been due to run until December 2020 had been extended for a further 6 months to June 2021 and requested whether this Fund would be available beyond June 2021 to assist in researching inclusivity for events.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to investigate whether this Fund would be available beyond June 2021.

- **Provision of outdoor exercise equipment** – It was suggested that due to the Government's Covid-19 restrictions consideration be given to increasing the provision of outdoor exercise equipment.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that outdoor exercise equipment was already in place at a number of sites across Medway and consideration would be given to increased sites in the future.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted that the Portfolio Holder will consider the possible extension of the hours of opening of the Strand Swimming Pool in 2021.
- b) noted that the Portfolio Holder will request officers to supply to the Committee a list of sites that had benefitted from the grass verge initiative and that he welcomed suggestions from Ward Councillors for possible sites to be included in the initiative.
- c) requested that its appreciation be extended to the Archives Team and officers involved in securing funding from the Forestry Commission as part of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

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- d) noted that the Portfolio Holder has offered to investigate and discuss with officers the issue of non-attendance at pre-booked swimming sessions at Medway Park.
- e) noted that the Portfolio Holder will investigate whether the European Regional Development Fund which formed part of the South East Creative Cultural and Digital Support would be available beyond June 2021.
- f) noted that the Portfolio Holder has offered to ask officers to investigate further with the Member concerned, the possibility of providing digital support to Friends Groups.
- g) noted that the Portfolio Holder had offered to liaise direct with the Member concerned on the promotion of the Corn Exchange for events and ways of improving communications concerning cancelled events to businesses in Rochester.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Browne, Mahil and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour be recorded.

**830 Annual Review of Waste Contracts, Contract Year October 2019 -
September 2020**

Discussion:

The Committee received a comprehensive report on the activities carried out by Veolia Environmental Services on the waste disposal service for residual and recycling waste and Medway Norse for the provision of waste collection, street cleaning services and management of the three household waste recycling centres for the contract year October 2019 – September 2020.

The Head of Environmental Services presented the report and in doing so, thanked the teams for the work undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. This appreciation was echoed across the Committee throughout the debate.

Andy Mann, Partnership Director from Medway NORSE attended the meeting to answer questions.

The Committee discussed the following issues:

- **Provision of litter bins in greenspaces** – The Committee requested whether there was scope to increase the frequency of emptying litter bins located on greenspaces. Over the past 12 months with people staying local and increased use of greenspaces for exercise some litterbins were often full and overflowing.

The Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that the contract for the clearance of park litterbins was included under the Greenspaces contract and work had been planned to combine contracts

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to make this service more effective and efficient. However, this work had been delayed due to the need to concentrate on the provision of other services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Andy Mann from Medway Norse informed the Committee that the frequency of litterbin clearance was tied into the Service Level Agreements and was discussed at monthly meetings. To increase the frequency of litterbin clearance in one area may have implications on the frequency of collections in other areas. However, he was willing to continue dialogue on the Service Level Agreements to establish whether there was scope for increasing the frequency of litterbin emptying where considered necessary.

It was suggested that if any Member had a particular issue in their Ward, they notify officers and this could be investigated. It was also suggested that consideration could also be given to utilising Ward Improvement Funds for additional litterbins.

The Committee suggested that one alternative may be to consider installing larger litterbins in areas where the bins were heavily used.

The Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that the next report on Waste Services was due to be submitted in October 2021 and this would cover the period affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and would therefore show the impact upon waste collection through this period.

- **Possible retention of the booking system at Household Waste collection sites** - In response to a question as to whether the booking system at household waste collection sites could be extended beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, the Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that the system was working well and was essential to ensure that the facilities could remain open safely at the current time. A customer satisfaction survey was due to be undertaken in April which would feed into future consideration as to whether the booking system should continue into the future.

The Committee was further informed that there were now few days that the household waste collection site slots were fully booked as use of the service tended to be seasonal. Hourly booking slots had now been introduced across all sites which had increased the number of slots available and individuals were permitted up to four booked slots across a 4 week period. Unfortunately, whilst there were occasions where individuals failed to attend their pre-booked slots sites the majority informed the service if they were unable to attend.

- **Garden and food waste recycling** – In response to a question, the Head of Environmental Services explained that garden and food waste was recycled for agricultural use.

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- **Bulky waste and flytipping** – The Committee requested whether there was a link between the reduction in bulky waste collections and increases in flytipping. In response, the Head of Environmental Services referred to a recent briefing note which provided full information on flytipping along with flytipping hotspots and confirmed that there were no direct links between the bulky waste collection service and flytipping. She confirmed that the bulky waste collection service was currently working at full capacity which showed that people were prepared to use it and bulky waste collection charges in Medway were less than those levied by other local authorities.
- **Weekly collection services** – The Committee expressed its full support for the retention of weekly collection services.
- **Circular Economy package and recycling rates** - Referring to pages 87 and 88 of the agenda, concern was expressed that in 2019/20 the recycling rate had risen from 42.8% to 46% but that the target had been reduced from 46% to 38% in 2017/18. This was not in line with the Circular Economy Package which was a nationally recognised figure and which committed the United Kingdom to national recycling rates of 50% by 2020, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035.

In response, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that the predicted recycling rate in Medway could now be confirmed at 46% for 2019/20. She informed the Committee that the recycling of mattresses through the Mattress UK trial had significantly contributed to the recycling rate with 93% of mattress materials being recycled. The 50% target imposed by the Circular Economy Package was a national target but had not been imposed on local authorities. This was a challenging target but she gave an assurance that the Council was striving to increase recycling wherever possible.

In response to the reduction in the target rate from 46% to 38% in 2017/18, she explained that this has been a direct result of loss of a number of end markets at that time, in particular for plastics and mattresses but these targets were always open for review.

- **Use of Electric vehicles** – The Committee sought information as to whether electric vehicles or ultra low emission vehicles could be introduced to the fleet as and when vehicles were replaced.

The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that this issue was under constant review and was relatively easy with smaller vehicles. Options were continuing to be investigated for the larger fleet vehicles as this was an evolving area. This was also an issue included in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Andy Mann from Norse confirmed that any small fleet vehicle replaced since 2020 had been replaced with an electric vehicle.

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It was suggested that Members receive regular updates on the programme of fleet replacement either through the Climate Change Action Group or by way of a Briefing Note to this Committee.

- **Organic waste collection** – The Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that the organic waste collection contract was due to run until 2025 and that work would commence in 2023 for the procurement beyond 2025 at which point the existing collection services would be fully reviewed. She confirmed that Medway was proud of its weekly waste collection service and whilst the levels of organic waste fluctuated through the year due to the seasonal nature of garden waste, the organic waste service also included food wastage and therefore people were encouraged to use the service for their food waste.
- **Flytipping** – In response to a question as to whether CCTV could be used at sites known to be flytipping hotspots, the Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that this matter would need to be addressed by the Council's Enforcement Team.

Andy Mann from Norse informed the Committee that Norse were responsible for the collection of bulky refuse and whilst Norse had cleared some small areas of flytipping, this was the responsibility of the Council's Enforcement Team as they could investigate the source of the flytipped materials.

- **Community Spring Clean-ups** – In response to the suggestion that consideration be given to Community Clean-ups aimed at assisting recycling by households that did not have access to a car, the Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that this initiative had been undertaken in Cuxton but had proved to be expensive as much of the materials brought to the community clean-up could not be recycled.

Where possible, people were encouraged to take items to the household waste recycling centres by car-share or by donating items to local charities or recycling via social media.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) expressed its appreciation to all staff within the various teams operating the waste collection service and in particular, for the excellent service that they have provided over the past year during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- b) noted the content of the report including the Annual Service Reports set out at Appendices 1 and 2.

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- c) noted that the Democratic Services Officer will supply a copy of the recent Flytipping Briefing Note to the Member concerned.
- d) requested that the Committee receive an update on the findings of the customer satisfaction survey due to be undertaken at Household Waste Recycling Centres in April.
- e) noted that Ward Councillors have been invited to submit to officers sites where they would benefit from an increase in the frequency of litterbin emptying.
- f) requested an update on the programme of replacing vehicles within the fleet to electric or ultra-low emission either by way of information via the Climate Change Action Group or by way of a Briefing Note to this Committee.
- g) noted that the issue of potential use of CCTV cameras at flytipping hotspots will be referred to the Council's Enforcement Teams for investigation.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Browne, Mahil and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour be recorded.

831 Update on the Housing Infrastructure Fund Programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid and setting out information on the developments of the road, rail and environmental infrastructure and the first round of HIF consultation.

It was noted that the first round of HIF consultation had commenced on 11 January and would run for a period of 12 weeks during which virtual meetings had been arranged for Parish Councils, Ward Councillors, Statutory Consultees and residents. Further consultations on rail, road and SEMS would take place during their consenting processes. Feedback on the first round of consultation would be presented in the form of a Statement of Community Involvement based on an analysis of the online HIF questionnaire.

The following issues were discussed:

- **24% Costed risk for future unknowns** – In response to questions, the Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that a 24% costed risk had been built into the project as a contingency. He advised that in line with the decision of the Council on 23 January 2020, the £170 million HIF funding had been added to the Council's Capital Programme. The full funding would be provided by Homes England but if an overspend was to occur, the Council would be required to fund the first 1% (£1.7 million)

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from its own resources. He confirmed that at this stage of the project, no overspend was anticipated.

- **Consultation** – In response to questions, the Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that officers would be undertaking an analysis of the responses to the online questionnaire produced as part of the consultation process. Members expressed concern that there had been an indication that individuals could submit email responses and sought clarification that these would also be included in the analysis. The Assistant Director Regeneration advised that this would have a resource implication as they would need to be cross referenced with the completed questionnaires but he would investigate their possible inclusion.
- **Major changes to proposals** – The Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that should there be any major changes to the road proposals, this would present a challenge as such major changes would need to be the subject of further consultation. Following the consultation process, the Council would publish a summary of the proposals which were to be taken forward and those that could not be included.
- **Section 106 funding** – Referring to Appendix 2 to the report (Summary of the HIF Recovery Strategy), the Committee expressed a view that any Section 106 funding should be directed for use on the Hoo Peninsula.

The Head of Planning confirmed that Section 106 funding was required to comply with the CIL test and specifically relate to the development e.g. provision of schools, road improvements etc. A bespoke Section 106 as referred to in Appendix 2 would see an increase in the standard Medway-wide Section 106 payable by potential developments coming forward on the Hoo peninsula in recognition of the up-front delivery of infrastructure through the HIF, but would still need to meet the CIL tariffs.

- **Request for more detail in future reports** – In response to concerns that the report did not include sufficient detail as to the proposals and timescales, the Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that officers were in the process of going through the detailed design for the Programme and more information would be available in the next update report in six months.
- **Implications of the removal of the Medway Curve from the HIF programme** – The Committee expressed concern that the proposed rail curve connecting the Grain Freight Line to the North Kent Line had been removed from the HIF programme. In response, the Assistant Director Regeneration advised that the Council had undertaken a high level demand analysis with rail stakeholders and through this analysis, it had been determined that there was not sufficient demand for a local Medway service that would make it viable at this stage without a substantial Medway subsidy. He added that if, in the future, demand

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grew with the potential development of housing, this view could change but would then be dependent upon additional funding at the appropriate time.

Members expressed concern that the removal of the rail curve had reinforced the dominance of use of the car and sought clarification as to whether savings made from the removal of this part of the programme would provide funding for a free shuttle bus to connect Hoo with Strood or other areas of Medway or provide a priority bus lane on the road network.

Concern was also expressed that the original version of the HIF programme available in December 2020 had continued to include the rail curve but that the updated version had removed this part of the scheme. Concern was expressed that a decision to remove the rail curve had been undertaken before the consultation process had been completed.

The Assistant Director Regeneration explained the process by which a decision had been made to remove the rail curve from the programme and that the analysis had shown that demand and thus viability was higher for an electrified London Service as opposed to the Medway rail curve. Ultimately, the Council could not force a service provider to provide an unviable service. Whilst it may be possible to include this at a future date if there was proven demand, this could not be included in the current HIF programme. The Committee suggested that consideration be given to ring-fencing the land which may be required to provide the rail curve at a future date but it was noted that this would depend upon land ownership and possible third party involvement.

The Assistant Director Regeneration advised that as a result of this decision, consideration would be given to the provision of bus services and other alternative modes of transport. This would tie in with the Council's Climate Change agenda and the Local Plan process.

In response to concerns that this decision had been undertaken before the end of the current consultation process, the Assistant Director Regeneration advised that an update leaflet had been produced and full information was available online. In addition, the consultation period had been extended by one month to take account of this change.

- **Order of priority for provision of the road network** - The Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that within the HIF programme, there was a hierarchy of projects for the various road schemes. However, at the current time, all proposals were included in the programme and would include Compulsory Purchase Orders on a number of sites.
- **Competition date of the programme** - The Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that the HIF programme completion date was March 2024 and acknowledged that this was a challenge but officers within various teams were working to a programme and he was

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confident that the project would be delivered in the timescale required. Further information on timescales would be included in the next update report.

- **Consultations with developers** – In response to concerns that developers at other sites were unaware of the HIF programme, the Assistant Director Regeneration and Head of Planning provided an assurance that the Planning and HIF teams worked closely together and, as a result, developers were fully aware of the HIF proposals.
- **Local Growth Fund Scheme in Frindsbury at Berwick Way and Sans Pareil roundabout** – In response to a question, the Assistant Director Regeneration confirmed that the former Local Growth Fund works in Frindsbury at Berwick Way and the Sans Pareil roundabout had now been incorporated into the HIF programme in consultation with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). Concern was expressed that the original plans for the road network in Frindsbury had been predicated on a 10 year forward projection but that this had not included the extra capacity from the Medway City Estate or from the additional homes provided on the Hoo Peninsula by the HIF programme.
- **Relationship of HIF with Local Plan** – The Head of Planning confirmed that the Local Plan process had been delayed for a number of reasons including the consideration of the HIF bid. Officers were now in the process of finalising an evidence base taking into account the HIF programme and were working on an area wide travel plan aimed at getting people out of their cars and onto buses.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the report.
- b) noted the officer's response to questions and that consideration would be given to the points raised going forward and that a more detailed report would be submitted in six months.
- c) noted that the Assistant Director Regeneration has agreed to consider the cross-referencing of the email responses with questionnaires received in response to the consultation process.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Browne, Mahil and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour be recorded.

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**832 Council Plan Performance Monitoring and Risk Register Review Quarter 3
2020/21**

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 3 against the Council's two priorities Place and Growth insofar as they fell within the remit of this Committee.

The report also set out the Quarter 3 2020/21 review of the Council's Strategic Risk.

Then Committee was advised that as agreed at the Quarter 2 risk review, a new risk had been added to the strategic risk register in Quarter 3 – SR49: Income reduction due to Covid-19.

The Committee was then advised that in line with discussions at the Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG), although the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) was included in the risk register under SR17 – Delivering Regeneration, it was considered that the HIF project warranted inclusion as a separate risk in its own right and therefore this would be added under Quarter 4 risk monitoring.

The following issues were discussed:

LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded – In acknowledging the challenges for the Country as a whole as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, concern was expressed that the report failed to provide information as to how Medway planned to address the creation and safeguarding of jobs in Medway and it was suggested that further work was required to support existing jobs in Medway and to secure new investment.

In response, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence informed the Committee that from Quarter 4, more detailed information would be included on this individual performance indicator and she advised that both Cabinet and the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee were receiving reports on the Council's response and recovery after Covid-19 on 30 March 2021.

The Assistant Director Regeneration also informed the Committee that from April 2021, the Economic Development and Skills and Employment Teams would be transferred to his division and he confirmed that this was a priority area and further information would be available in Quarter 4.

NI 154 – Net additional homes provided – Referring to the section of the report titled 'Encourage the delivery of homes to meet our targets – Strood Waterfront' it was suggested that consideration be given to alternative uses of sites that cannot be developed at the current time e.g. provision of box parks so as to provide an income.

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In response, the Assistant Director Regeneration advised that the Innovation Studios Strood, essentially shipping containers similar to the box park principle had been successfully delivered at Strood Riverside and whilst income could be derived from this type of facility, it could not be provided without some initial grant funding. He referred to the former Civic Centre site (Strood Waterfront) and provided an update as to potential development of this site. He advised that if development was not feasible at the current time, then temporary alternative uses could be considered.

Members suggested that alternative temporary uses of undeveloped land could include income generating initiatives such as markets, pop-up shops or boot fairs which would boost economic development, add to the creation of jobs and generate an income

Commercial use of the River – Referring to the importance of the river it was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the possible opportunities for increased commercial use of the river.

NI 167 – Average journey time along 5 routes across Medway - Referring to the ongoing management and delivery of the LGF project for journey time and accessibility improvements on Medway City Estate, clarification was sought as to the likely start date of the project. The Assistant Director Front Line Services agreed to provide this information to the Member direct.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted that increased information would be included in the Performance Monitoring Report at Quarter 4 on LRCC4a – Number of jobs created and safeguarded but in the meantime, information was being reported to both Cabinet and the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council's recovery plan after the Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery plan to the Covid-19 pandemic on 30 March 2021.
- b) a report be included on the Committee's work programme on the possible opportunities for increased commercial use of the river.
- c) noted that the Assistant Director Front Line Services will provide information as to the likely start date of the LGF project for journey time and accessibility improvements on Medway City Estate to the Member direct.

In accordance with Council rule 12.6, Councillors Browne, Mahil and Andy Stamp requested that their votes in favour be recorded.

**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 23
March 2021**

833 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report advising of petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee, including a summary of the response sent to the petition organisers by officers.

Decision:

The Committee noted the petition response set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

834 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a copy of its current work programme.

It was suggested that the Committee receive an update on progress on the work of the Climate Change Advisory Board either by way of a summary report or via a briefing note. However, it was subsequently noted that Climate Change currently fell within the remit of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and therefore, to avoid duplication of work, this update would be requested via that Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the first instance and a briefing note requested only if considered necessary.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted that a further update report on the HIF programme would be submitted to the Committee in 6 months.
- b) agreed that a report be added to the Committee's work programme on the potential for increasing commercial use of the river.

Chairman

Date:

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**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 23
March 2021**