

Council Priority: GROWTH

Maximising regeneration and economic growth

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

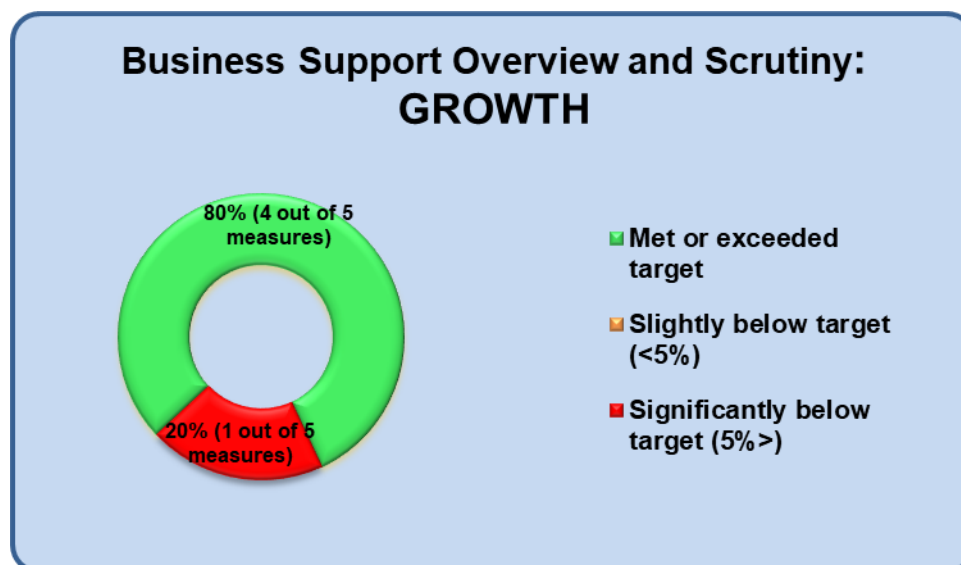
Performance: Quarter 4 2020/21

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

- 60% (3 out of 5*) improved long term (average of previous 4 quarters)
- 20% (1 out of 5*) improved over the short term (since last quarter)

*where data available

Measures in target (green)

Code	Status	Name	Long Trend	Short Trend
MAE 3	Green	Achievement rate (pass rate)	IMP	STATIC
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	DET	DET
NI 156	Green	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	IMP	IMP

Measures significantly below target (red)

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

Strategic Risks

The quarter 4 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	52	Homelessness	AD Culture and Community	CIII	L - significant I - moderate

The following risks pertain to all priorities:

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SRO3B	4	Finances	Chief Finance Officer	AI	L - very high I - catastrophic

Reference	Risk Register Page (app 4)	Risk	Owner	Current residual risk score	L-likelihood I-impact
SR46	8	Medway's Economic Recovery from Covid19	AD Regeneration (Recovery Lead Officer for Medway Council)	BII	L - high I - major
SR32	26	Data and information	Chief Legal Officer	CII	L - significant I - major
SR36	26	Alternative service delivery models	Chief Legal Officer, Chief Finance Officer	BIII	L - high I - moderate
SR37	33	Cyber Security	Chief Finance Officer	CI	L - significant I - catastrophic
SR02	42	Business continuity and emergency planning	Director of Place, Chief Finance Officer	DII	L - low I - major
SR49	59	Income Reduction due to Covid19	Chief Finance Officer	BII	L - high I - major

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
Q2 2020/21	94.0%	89.07%	Red	Maximise	IMP	DET
Q1 2020/21	94.0%	91.68%	Amber	Maximise	IMP	IMP

Comment

This PI is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data is shown for Q2 of Academic Year 20/21 (November 2020 – January 2021).

Although starts have reduced significantly in some areas (particularly in the community learning funded leisure type courses), retention has continued to be good. Despite the issues around the current Covid19 pandemic, retention at the end of Q2 is only 3% below the retention at the end of Q2 in the previous academic year.

Action

Managers and Tutors have worked hard, following lockdown and the closure of Medway Adult Education Centres, to ensure that many of the 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
Q2 2020/21	96.0%	100%	Green	Maximise	IMP	STATIC
Q1 2020/21	96.0%	100%	Green	Maximise	IMP	IMP

Comment

This PI is based on academic year rather than financial year. Data is shown for Q2 of Academic Year 20/21 (November 2020 – January 2021).

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 second 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 Covid19. 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 which includes an e-learning qualification programme. The e-learning programme has expanded to include an increased qualification offer and is recruiting learners well.

However, the Work skills programme remains a challenging area of work due to the current situation with Covid19 and centres being closed to face-to-face delivery due to lockdown. Referrals from the Job Centre Plus (JCP) locally have increased with residents with poor English language skills being most new referrals. The National Career Service (NCS), after meeting with the Information, Advice and Guidance Coordinator, are referring learners to our programme offer. Regular marketing fliers are being provided to JCP and NCS to keep their staff informed of courses and qualifications being planned and available for recruitment of learners.

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 businesses 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.

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.

Education Budget and an event encouraging businesses to use their apprenticeship levy was held.

Medway Council has led as an example by taking on Kickstart placements. 50 vacancies have been created, with 37 advertised in the first tranche. The placements and wraparound support are being delivered in partnership by HR and Medway Adult Education.

The Skills and Employability plan will be reviewed in light of Covid19 when data from the ending of furlough can be analysed.

Medway Adult Education has remained operating during lockdown, by delivering online. It is scheduled to reopen on 6 April. Online learning continues to be well received, and the programme for 2021/22 will incorporate both online and face-to-face learning.

The redevelopment of Britton Farm Mall into a new Skills, Employment & Learning Hub continues to progress well and on schedule.

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
Q4 2020/21	350	301	Green	Minimise	IMP	IMP
Q3 2020/21	350	307	Green	Minimise	IMP	IMP

Comment

At the end of Q4 2021 there were a total of 301 households residing in temporary accommodation (TA) provided by the Council in line with its statutory responsibilities. This is a slight decrease from the 307 households that were accommodated at the end of Q3. 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 September 2020, showed the rate of households in temporary accommodation in Medway was 3.38 per 1,000 households. This is slightly lower than the national rate of 4.03. Further benchmarking has been undertaken to identify how Medway compares with other similar sized unitary authorities. In September 2020, the numbers in temporary accommodation Milton Keynes had a rate of 9.49 households per 1,000 households. Locally, Swale had a rate of 4.57 in the same time period.

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

Quarter	Target	Value	Status	Aim to	Long Trend	Short Trend
Q4 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC
Q3 2020/21	0	0	Green	Minimise	STATIC	STATIC

Comment

A snapshot at the end of Q4 2020/21 identifies that no families were in bed and breakfast accommodation. Additionally, throughout Q4 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 woman 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
Q4 2020/21	175	248	Green	Maximise	DET	DET
Q3 2020/21	175	280	Green	Maximise	IMP	DET

Comment

In Q4 we received 175 new requests for service. 248 private sector households were assisted in having their properties improved via Council intervention despite the restriction over Covid19 on inspections. The Council have continued with its statutory services and targeted work with the taskforce and SOCP, and we will continue this through the coming year.

Nine new Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO) licences have been issued in Q4 bringing a total of 208 licenced HMO throughout Medway. Ten category one hazards, and 64 category two hazards have been identified in Q4. 26 category one hazards, and 97 category two hazards have also been alleviated throughout Q4 with either formal or informal actions. We have been successful in prosecuting three landlords; two for operating unlicensed HMOs and one for non-compliance of an improvement notice. 38 enforcement notices have also been issued in Q4 and our first two Civil Penalty of Intent have been issued to landlords who have failed to licence and maintain their HMOs. 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 fire followed by, damp and mould excess cold and falls on stairs.

Council Plan Projects

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

Last year the Council delivered a total of 333 affordable units and this year we have again exceeded target to deliver a further 216 units, featuring a range of 1-4 bed flats and houses for Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership. 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 schemes, making effective use of the allocations policy and maximising the procurement 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. Over the past year, the focus will be on supporting tenants who have been financially affected by Covid19, 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. We are looking to ensure that all commissioned services work in a Trauma Informed way to increase engagement of people with complex needs.

We are currently working with Category Management on the retender of these services. We will need to build in scope for future uplifts in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as it is realised that the contract rates are too low to be competitive when benchmarked against Kent and bordering Out of London authorities. The Gateway 1 paper will go to procurement board on 21 April for approval to go out to tender. This will align with RSI tendering activity as we should be notified of what expectations there will be on us to provide additional services, and retender existing services, by May. We will also need to tender out an expansion of our current domestic

abuse services following the needs assessment being carried out across April and May in line with the DA Bill 2020.

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.

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 the 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 Programme 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.

We have successfully moved on significant numbers of people from emergency accommodation following our implementation of the short-term Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), which saw as many as 75 people accommodated at times via RSI and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) activity combined and are looking to bring this to a tapered closure between June and the end of July. We have been awarded £60,000 to successfully bring this to a close. We have bid for continuation of funding for our existing Rough Sleeping interventions and a Preventions Officer and employment scheme, in addition to bolstering our service with an enhanced 24-hour scheme. We expect to hear the outcome of our submission in May.

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 for Medway residents. This includes through joint prevention working arrangements with internal partners such as Children's Services, and externally with local landlords and housing providers, to seek to sustain those tenancies of their tenants who are at risk of eviction.

During Q4, there have been 782 approaches for homeless assistance, compared to 575 for the same period in 2019/20. This is an increase and continues the substantial uplift in footfall seen in Q3. Overall footfall for the year stands at 2,621, which is higher than last year's figure of 2,499.

Previous data for accepted cases to the end of Q3 has indicated a 33% reduction in households with children approaching the Council as being evicted, being accompanied by a 39% increase in households (typically single persons or childless) being asked to leave by family or friends. This trend is likely to continue until the current Government stay on possession proceedings are lifted and there is more public confidence around the risks posed by Covid19 to householders from excluded occupiers.

Of remaining concern is that Covid19 has seen a large increase in arrears of housing payments with a February 2021 House of Commons briefing paper estimating that over 750,000 families were behind with their housing payments as of January 2021, 300,000 of which contained dependent children. In addition, there is currently a large backlog of possession cases awaiting administration by the courts, caused by the moratorium on eviction. Once these measures are lifted it is likely that this will feed into a significant increase in our approach figures during 2021/22 with many of these households meeting the threshold for TA. This represents a risk to our service.

Despite the challenges posed by Covid19, during Q4 there have been 247 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 performance is being achieved by robust supervision and monitoring of staff prevention/relief activity, including proactively working with homeless households, and the maintenance of regular contacts with private and social landlords and supported providers to offer early intervention appointments and joint prevention working.

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.

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. Several mailshots have been sent during the year to 1,100 landlords to raise awareness of the support that is available as well as promotions via social media.

During Q4, the CallB4UServe helpline received 29 contacts from landlords compared with 18 for the first 2 months of Q3. 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 Private Rented Scheme (PRS) Team direct. For Q4 to the end of February the Team dealt with 27 such enquiries.

The team also continues to reach out to social landlords, although response is variable with the most consistent being MHS. Further work will be undertaken to seek to improve engagement. Joint prevention appointments with MHS have been restarted when a tenant is at risk of eviction. Contact has also 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 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 mailshots to landlords and messages on social media; this will be repeated. As detailed above, performance in securing properties remains high.

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 Q4, were awarded £22,923 in backdated benefits or DHP. Of this, £13,016 was paid directly onto the rent accounts. They also assisted in achieving £74,361 in annualised benefits for tenants, with £28,484 of this being paid directly onto rent accounts. The team continue to attend all new tenancy sign ups to identify those that require additional support and ensure that benefits are in place. This will enable officers and residents to understand the financial commitments involved in sustaining their own property as well as maximising any other financial support that may be available. A Covid19 secure venue has been identified to be able to see tenants again out in the community and limit the need for going into people's homes. We are currently in talks to see when it is possible to start using this.

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 Q4 are 1.37%, within target. This is a slight decrease from the end of Q3, which was 1.55%.

The team are continuing to face challenges with the rollout 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 an 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, in order 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.

The service will be aiming to re-mobilise routine repairs and some capital works from 12 April 2021 with a view to restarting all works from May. The service will be working with Mears and BDS to ensure that work is caught up, where possible.

Repairs and maintenance contracts

The Mears contract extension has been signed and agreed. This confirms that Mears will continue to be the Council's 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.