

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCUTINY COMMITTEE

14 OCTOBER 2021

MEDWAY CITY STATUS BID

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
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Summary

Medway will be bidding to gain City Status recognition and we will be entering the Civic Competition which has been launched to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

1. Budget and policy framework
 - 1.1. The Bid document is being undertaken by a number of Council officers and there will be minimal costs incurred.
2. Background
 - 2.1 The Council has previously submitted Bids for this competition in 2000, 2002 and 2012 and they have been extremely beneficial in raising Medway's profile and providing an opportunity to share our ambitions for Medway the Place. Medway has improved beyond measure over the last 10 years, in particular, with key investment in Chatham Placemaking and the Medway Development Company projects underway in our City Centre, and our regeneration agenda has continued at pace.
 - 2.2 Medway's Bid will include our 5 main towns of Chatham, Rochester, Strood, Gillingham and Rainham, together with our thriving villages on the Peninsula and communities across Medway.
 - 2.3 Medway's Bid will focus on our rich heritage, with the finest and tallest Norman Castle in the country, Britain's second oldest Cathedral, Chatham Historic Dockyard, the home of the Royal Engineers as well as providing the inspiration for some of Charles Dickens' greatest novels.
 - 2.4 Our Bid will highlight Medway's outstanding future, with our Universities, MidKent College, the largest FE provision in the County, our monumental regeneration programme, not least our Housing Infrastructure Fund

programme for the Peninsula, Innovation Park Medway which will deliver over 3000 high value, high GVA employment opportunities, as well as our fast train connectivity to the capital and the continent.

- 2.5 Being part of the competition will bring an enhanced sense of pride for Medway's communities and will secure significant coverage and recognition for Medway. Winning the City Status title will put Medway on the map, giving Medway a national profile, which in turn will open up new opportunities such as additional tourism and new businesses locating in Medway, as witnessed by other cities, not least Sunderland with their ongoing relationship with Nissan.
- 2.6 City Status is about celebrating what Medway has to offer and our Place journey focused on 3 key themes as the 'Medway Story', encouraging Medway to act like a City and think like a City, given we are a City in all but name:
 - Making maritime history, celebrating our stories
 - Cultivating Innovation and Creativity
 - Valuing our Waterfront.
- 2.7 The Medway Story celebrates our rich heritage and great future and City Status will be a significant achievement for our communities, building on our Place journey that was started in 2016, but which has its roots in the closure of the Dockyard in 1984.
- 2.8 Our Bid for City of Culture 2025 has a different focus, establishing Medway as a national cultural destination, bringing together communities and ensuring arts and culture are accessible for Medway residents and visitors. The City Status competition and a successful bid will help to support our City of Culture Bid and proposed programme for 2025, promoting Medway's current offer and providing the national recognition Medway has been building over the last 20 years.
- 2.9 Our Child-Friendly City initiative is in its early stages but focuses on putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do, ensuring our young people shape the future of Medway. We have undertaken significant engagement with our young people, which will support Medway's Bid to become a City, as they are keen ambassadors for Medway the Place, providing ideas and energy for new developments and initiatives across the area. Achieving City Status will give our young people even more pride about where they live and study, and encourage our young people to want to stay in Medway, continuing their education leading into employment and successful careers in Medway.
- 2.10 Our known competitors include Swindon, Reading, Dudley, Milton Keynes, Boston and Dorchester, although many others are considering a Bid. The deadline for nominations is 8 December 2021, with the announcement likely to be made around The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration weekend in June 2022.

3. Risk management

3.1 There are no risks associated with this Report.

4. Financial implications

4.1 There have been minimal costs incurred; the Bid is primarily being developed through existing resources.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to support Medway's City Status Bid and to share Medway's story/narrative with residents and across their networks to garner additional support for Medway's Bid.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Criteria for the application

Background Information

None