

CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2021

MEDWAY CITY STATUS BID

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader of the Council

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

Author: Emma Dartnell, Executive Assistant

Summary

Medway will be bidding to gain City Status recognition, 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 which 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 investments in Chatham Placemaking and the Medway Development Company projects underway in our City Centre.
 - 2.2. Medway's Bid will include our 5 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 best preserved Dockyard dating from the Age of Sail, the home of the Royal Engineers as well as rich associations with Dickens, providing the inspiration for some of his greatest works.
 - 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 for 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 started in 2016, but which has its roots in the closure of the Dockyard in 1984.
- 2.8. 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 in where they live and study, and encourage our young people to want to stay in Medway, continuing their education, leading into employment and pursuing successful careers in Medway.
- 2.9. Our known competitors include Reading, Dudley, Milton Keynes, Boston, Middlesbrough 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.
- 2.10. The Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny (RCE O&S) Committee is supportive of the Bid and has agreed to share Medway's story and narrative with residents and across networks to garner additional support for Medway's bid.

2.11. The RCE O&S Committee suggested the following for the Bid:

- Undertake an assessment of the City of Culture Bid with a view to identifying why the bid had been unsuccessful
- Recognise that Medway encompasses five towns, each with its own unique identity
- Include reference to Medway's Green Flag sites, Medway's history of both its woodland area and the Dockyard, other historic information and recognition of the excellent sporting and leisure facilities on offer in Medway including The Strand, the Ski Centre, Gillingham Ice Rink, Gillingham Football Club and Rochester Rugby Club.

2.12. The full minutes of the discussion at the O&S Committee are set out in section 3 below.

3. Regeneration, Culture and Environment O&S Committee

3.1. The RCE O&S Committee considered the report at its meeting on 14 October 2021 and its comments are set out below

3.2. **Discussion:**

The Committee received a report setting out information concerning Medway's intention to gain City Status recognition and setting out proposals to enter the Civic Competition launched to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

3.3. The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive referred to the recent announcement that Medway had not been successful in being shortlisted for designation as City of Culture, but advised that multiple partners had since contacted the Council and given encouragement for the journey to continue and build on the cultural relationships that had been developed through the City of Culture bid process.

3.4. He outlined the timeline for the City Status bidding process and confirmed that a report would be submitted to Cabinet in November.

3.5. During discussion, it was suggested that officers undertake an assessment of the City of Culture bid with a view to identifying why the bid had been unsuccessful.

3.6. In response to a concern that Medway had a number of Universities with multiple campus sites and could benefit from its own designated 'Medway University', the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the Vice Chancellors of the various Universities were extremely supportive of Medway and the City of Culture bid.

- 3.7. It was also suggested that within the City Status bid, there should be recognition that Medway encompasses five towns, each with its own unique identity.
- 3.8. The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive commented that many of the greatest cities were made up of a patchwork of individual communities and he confirmed that the City Status bid would be centred on the five towns of Medway, the Peninsula with its villages and communities across the breadth of Medway.
- 3.9. It was suggested that the City Status bid should include reference to Medway's Green Flag sites, Medway's history of both its woodland area and its Dockyard, other historic information and recognition of the excellent sporting and leisure facilities on offer in Medway including The Strand, the Ski Centre, Gillingham Ice Rink, Gillingham Football Club and Rochester Rugby Club.

3.10. **Decision:**

The Committee supported Medway's City Status bid and agreed to share Medway's story/narrative with residents and across networks to garner additional support for Medway's bid.

4. Risk management

- 4.1. There are no risks associated with this Report.

5. Financial implications

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

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. Cabinet is 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.

8. Suggested reasons for decision

- 8.1. Achieving City Status will bring an enhanced sense of pride in Medway and will further raise Medway's profile as a great place to live, work, learn and visit.

Lead officer contact

Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Telephone: 01634 332764 E-mail: richard.hicks@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A – Criteria for the application

Background Papers

None