

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 7 October 2021
7.30pm to 11.30pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next Full Council meeting

Present: The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway (Councillor Aldous)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Carr)

Councillors Adeoye, Barrett, Brake, Buckwell,
Mrs Diane Chambers, Rodney Chambers, OBE, Chitty, Clarke,
Cooper, Curry, Doe, Etheridge, Fearn, Filmer, Sylvia Griffin,
Gulvin, Hackwell, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Mrs Josie Iles,
Jarrett, Johnson, Kemp, Khan, Lammas, Lloyd, Mahil, Maple,
McDonald, Murray, Opara, Osborne, Pendergast, Potter,
Prenter, Price, Purdy, Sands, Chrissy Stamp, Tejan, Thompson,
Thorne, Tranter, Mrs Elizabeth Turpin, Rupert Turpin and
Williams

In Attendance: Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

344 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Bowler, Browne, Patterson, Andy Stamp, Van Dyke and Wildey.

345 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Doe declared an OSI in agenda item no.14, Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2021/22, because he is the Chairman of Medway Development Company (MDC) Ltd. Councillor Doe relied on a dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in discussion and determination of item 14.

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Councillor Gulvin declared an OSI in agenda item no.14, Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2021/22, because he is a Director of Medway Development Company (MDC) Ltd. Councillor Gulvin relied on a dispensation granted by the Councillor Conduct Committee to enable him to take part in discussion and determination of item 14.

Other interests

Councillor Cooper declared an Interest in Agenda Item No. 13, Medway Youth Council Annual Report, as she is the Chairman of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust.

346 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 22 July was agreed by the Council and signed by The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway as correct.

347 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway confirmed that Agenda Item Number 11, the Medway Local Plan had been withdrawn from the agenda. An announcement to this effect had been previously published on the Council website and in the media.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Executive said important analysis and assessments were being undertaken and that it was difficult to give a date by which this would be completed in order for the Local Plan to be presented to Full Council.

The Mayor reported on recent by-elections where two new Councillors had been elected to replace Councillors Bhutia and Steve Iles. The Mayor welcomed Councillors Lammas and Van Dyke on to the Council.

The Mayor announced that Alderman Baker's wife, Sylvia, had recently passed away. Alderman Baker had served as either Mayor or Deputy Mayor four times and Sylvia had been his Consort on each occasion. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor extended condolences to Alderman Baker and his family.

348 Leader's announcements

There were none.

349 Petitions

Public:

There were none.

Member:

There were none.

Councillor Maple advised that the relevant paperwork would be forthcoming from 21 members of the public calling for the land at Chatham Docks to be added to the register of Assets of Community Value.

350 Public questions

A) Stephen Francis of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

“Kent Police publish ‘Your Community Safety Unit is a group of local police officers, PCSO’s with a Sergeant and Inspector dedicated to serving your community.’

In April 2017, The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner published ‘Safer in Kent: The Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan’ (which has been continued): ‘5 Provide visible neighbourhood policing...’ and ‘Neighbourhood policing is fundamental to delivering policing in the County.’

The College of Policing published guidance on neighbourhood policing to Chief Officers includes... Targeted visible presence in neighbourhoods; Regular formal and informal contact with the Community; Community engagement in neighbourhoods should: Provide an ongoing two-way dialogue between police and public.

Kent Police currently publish on their website that one neighbourhood PCSO is shared between Princes Park and Lordswood & Capstone Ward and there is no dedicated neighbourhood police constable for Princes Park and other Medway Wards.

The delivery of visible neighbourhood policing, as described in the paragraph above, should be at the heart of policing to help residents feel safer. The reality of the situation regarding ‘boots on the ground’ appears to fall well short of historic published promises made to the local residents in the paragraph above.

Given the Council’s membership of the Medway Community Safety Partnership and Kent & Medway Police and Crime Panel, what can the Council do to encourage and hold Kent Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner to account for the non-delivery of an effective dedicated visible neighbourhood policing team of at least one police constable and one PCSO in Princes Park and other Wards?”

Councillor Gulvin thanked Mr Francis for his question. He said that the Council did have opportunities to hold Kent Police to account. This was done through the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel, which was made up of cross party elected Members from across Kent and Medway, including Councillor

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Etheridge and Councillor Tejan. This was an open forum, which could be viewed live online and the minutes of these meetings were published.

Councillor Gulvin said that Kent Police were also an integral part of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), where each of the responsible authorities was able to hold each other to account. The Council supported Kent Police's commitment through the Community Safety Unit (CSU) to ensure that there were 'boots on the ground'. This comprised police officers, PCSO's a Sergeant and an Inspector. The policing model was that the visible Ward based policing be provided by PCSO's, where two were dedicated to Lordswood and Capstone and one to Princes Park.

Councillor Gulvin advised that the CSU's responsibility was wider than just visible policing, amongst other things it was also responsible for Town Centre policing, Licensing and the Joint Family Management Programme.

B) Pete Valente of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

"I would like the Council to tarmac and turn into an ordinary looking road the dirt track running between Ingram and Gillingham Roads, by the rail track parallel with Granville Road.

The road is a magnet for fly tipping, vandalism, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. There have been incidents of graffiti, theft of vehicles, damage to vehicles and property, and incidents of attempted arson on fencing etc. It is also a hazard for vehicles and pedestrians, especially when wet because the surface is so uneven – also for the vulnerable.

Local people do not complain about the various incidents because there is a sense that nothing will be done. I myself have had windows smashed on my van, and the newsagent at the end of the road, which is run by people of south east Asian heritage is a constant target for attempted theft and harassment.

The cost to the local community is significant and I feel sure that upgrading the environment of the road would reduce the problems, which in the end, one way or another probably ends up costing the Council/law enforcement more money than it would cost to sort the road out. I for one would be happy to pay a small yearly fee for the proper discharge of such a service. I am a landlord who lets 48 Granville Road, which backs onto the property - I have spoken to longstanding residents who just 'put up with it' because they have no choice they feel - this in my view is precisely the kind of local issue the Council should take the initiative on - I know my wife for one refuses to go down this road after dark with our two year old because it is an intimidating environment for the vulnerable especially. Please help."

Councillor Gulvin thanked Mr Valente for his question. He said that he was sorry to hear about the problems that were being experienced. The access track at the rear of the even-numbered properties in Granville Road was Council owned but the track was not public highway and there was no budget

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to regularly maintain it. However, from time to time, the Council had carried out some maintenance and cleared the track of rubbish for health and safety reasons.

Councillor Gulvin said that the estimated cost of surfacing the track was between £80,000 to £100,000 and that there was no budget available for this. However, the Council would continue to carry out reactive pothole repairs and clearing of fly tipping. There was no guarantee that resurfacing of the track would reduce fly-tipping.

C) Dr. Charles of Rochester submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:

“When will the Council take action regarding the excessive congestion across Strood/Rochester bridge? The journey from the Esplanade is taking anywhere from 30 minutes and I hate to think of the amount of pollution being caused as a result.

I would like to know what will be done and when?”

Note: As Dr. Charles was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.

D) Rebecca Waterworth of Strood asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

“As the University for the Creative Arts is closing its Rochester campus in 2023 what provision has Medway Council put in place to ensure that creative industry education is fully maintained and supported at both FE and HE level in Medway by ensuring that the provision for the Art and Design Foundation Diploma is maintained and supported across Kent county and that the provision for the ACCESS to HE Art and Design qualification is maintained particularly in Medway?”

Councillor Potter thanked Ms Waterworth for her question. He said that the Council was working closely with local education providers to support a broad range and offer of subjects and skills. There was already an extensive offer for Art and Design at various levels from Mid Kent College. The College currently offered a range of access courses for art and graphic design and the University of Kent a range of art design and fashion degrees at two campuses in the county.

The Medway Adult Education offer also included courses in art design and textiles and some students aged 19 plus would be eligible for free tuition. Providers, such as Mid Kent College were currently undertaking skills mapping exercises to help ensure they could provide meaningful career opportunities whilst meeting the needs of local business providers. Medway's Skills and Employability team and the Medway Cultural Education Partnership would continue to work together with key strategic partners and would respond to recommendations relating to different sectors.

E) Vivienne Parker of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“How is the Council going to encourage commercial river use if Chatham Docks are closed?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Parker for her question. She said that the River Medway was of great importance for Medway and its role and function had changed, particularly over the last 30 years. Councillor Chitty highlighted how the Esplanade, Temple Waterfront, Strood Riverside, Rochester Riverside, St Mary’s Island, Chatham Maritime and Gillingham Riverside had been transformed during this period.

Medway also had a number of wharfs at Frindsbury and Cliffe as well as the deep water port facility at Grain and an old Jetty at Kingsnorth. There were numerous businesses operating elsewhere on the river in Medway, including at Port Medway Marina, Medway Bridge and at Lower Upnor.

Councillor Chitty said it was important to properly consider the role of the river. A number of pieces of work were ongoing, including the Employment Needs Assessment, employment policies within the emerging Local Plan, the refresh of Medway 2035 and work on a River Strategy. This work would enable a strategic view to be taken on the economic, ecological, leisure, tourism and placemaking impact and the potential of the river Medway and its waterfront and how this could support Medway’s wider ambitions and aspirations.

F) Stuart Bourne of Rainham submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

“Like many other residents, I have noticed that the demolition of Splashes hasn’t taken place despite approval being granted at the beginning of June. And without any detailed updates from the Council on what is happening, there’s lots of negative speculation on what is happening and whether it’ll be ready by 2022 as promised.

Please can you me tell me when the demolition is scheduled to take place and what is the exact timetable for the rest of the project?”

Note: As Mr Bourne was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.

G) Rev. Kerr of Rainham asked the Portfolio Holder for for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“In June of 2002 Cabinet considered a report from Mouchel Consulting recommending the construction of a light rail transit or tramway for Medway. However, while the report was received, with the intention of giving further consideration to the proposal, it was not followed up. In the light of:

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(a) the rapidly growing population of Medway and the need to connect new housing with Medway's commercial centres and transport hubs;

(b) the grave nature of the impending climate crisis, which demands that we find sustainable alternatives to the burning of carbon-based fuels, and

(c) the need to reduce atmospheric and ground pollution in the Towns,

is the time now right for the recommendation of a tram network in Medway to be reconsidered?"

Councillor Filmer thanked Rev. Kerr for his question. He said that Medway Council had no current plans to consider establishing a tram network in Medway. The Council's Climate Change Action Plan set out the Council's commitment to the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles on bus routes in Medway.

Councillor Filmer said that, in partnership with local bus operators, the Council would develop a strategy to facilitate the use of vehicles with lower emission Euro 6 engines, and electric buses. This would enable the pursuit of funding opportunities, which it was hoped would be forthcoming as part of the Government's National Bus Strategy.

H) Bryan Fowler of Chatham asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

"Why has Chatham's cherished and historic greenspace known as "The Paddock" been re-branded "Paddock Island"?"

Councillor Doe thanked Mr Fowler for his question. He said that the Council had referred to the site as Paddock Island to avoid confusion with two other nearby places in Chatham that were also named The Paddock.

Councillor Doe advised that the name, "Paddock Island", referred to the fact that the greenspace was once built up to reclaim it from the surrounding marshland. Until the early 20th century, the site had been known as the Shrubbery, Medway had simply drawn from its history in naming this important local facility in Chatham.

I) Bernard Hyde of Rochester, asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following

"Is the £170 million funding, of the Housing Infrastructure Fund, dependent on the Medway Local Plan being adopted?"

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr Hyde for his question. He said that the £170million of funding was not directly dependent on the adoption of the Local Plan. However, it was a condition of the agreement with Homes England that the Council continued to undertake the Local Plan process. The Council would

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continue to keep Homes England updated as the examination process progressed and to discuss with it the consequences of any changes.

J) John Castle of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“Chatham Docks generate over £250m a year. Employing 800 people directly and 1400 indirectly. The jobs are mostly held by residents of Medway, the jobs are high skilled jobs paying above the national average wages. Many of those employed either walk or cycle to work, which is highly sustainable and environmentally friendly. Use of the river for transportation also cuts emissions for road transportation, replacing with housing puts more cars directly feeding into the AQMA in the area.

Employers at the docks have a strong track record of employing apprentices and graduates.

A viable Local Plan must provide employment opportunities within the authority's boundaries. Should Medway Council back making the land available for housing, what would the Council have to offer in the Local Plan that gives equivalent standards of high value and environmentally sustainable employment in Medway?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Castle for his question. She said that work being done in relation to the draft Local Plan would set the tenure for many years to come. However, the difficulty was that the Council did not own Chatham Docks with it being owned by Peel Ports. Councillor Chitty hoped that Peel Ports would engage with the relevant people to reach a resolution on these matters.

K) Paul O'Neill, on behalf of Medway Liberal Democrats, asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Medway Liberal Democrats opposes the harm caused to our LGBT+ community in the past through the denial of rights and equal treatment and further recognises that discrimination does still occur today.

They recognise and oppose the ongoing harm the practice of so-called conversion therapy brings to LGBT+ people. There has been significant support recently from the local community with the party's national petition calling for a ban on conversion therapy.

Will this Council call on the Government to follow through on the promises made, not just in this year's Queen's Speech, but for the past three years, to outlaw the practice of so-called conversion therapy and also call on the relevant government department and Minister to introduce an effective ban on conversion therapy within England, supported by a programme of work to help tackle these practices in all their forms?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr O'Neill for the question. He said that the Council recognised that not enough was being done to fairly represent the LGBTQIA+

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Community and that for this reason, the first Medway Pride event had been hosted in August this year. The positive response to this had been pleasing.

He stated that it had been wonderful to see such unity and celebration of individuality and the Council wanted to ensure that this continued and that a more inclusive and tolerant society was supported. It was also pleasing to see Medway represented on an international scale in RuPaul's drag race, with the local star being called River Medway. This put Medway on the map and showed that Medway was a welcoming and diverse place, which could only benefit the LGBTQIA+ community.

Medway Council was doing what it could as an equal opportunities employer and by offering support through its talented Children's and Adults teams. In relation to conversation therapy, this was not something the Council supported but there would need to be change at national level.

L) Paul O'Neill of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

"In early 2020 Medway Council bid to become Britain's first all-electric bus city, just months before it was revealed that Chatham was listed as one of the worst towns in the country for air quality.

"Independent think tank, Centre for Cities, reported that at least one in 16 deaths in Chatham are attributed to long-term exposure to PM2.5 pollution (particulates with a diameter less than 2.5 micrometres), ranking the Medway town close behind chart-topping Slough and London.

One local operator had low emission vehicles in its fleet but sent them to Leicester to comply with the new regulations by Leicester City Council.

The people of Medway need to be assured that the Council still has aspirations to make Medway greener, therefore, what actions have been taken in partnership with local bus operators to encourage a greener fleet and the introduction of more Low Emission Vehicles?"

Councillor Filmer thanked Mr O'Neill for his question. He said that the Climate Change Action Plan set out how Medway Council would work to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and deliver improvements in air quality. There were specific actions relating to transport and these confirmed the Council's commitment to facilitating the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles on the bus routes in Medway. These ambitions closely aligned with the Council's emerging Bus Service Improvement Plan, which was due to be published by 31 October 2021.

In partnership with local bus operators, Medway would develop a strategy that sought to improve fleets wherever possible, incorporating vehicles with lower emission Euro 6 engines and electric buses. The Action Plan committed the Council to identifying funding opportunities to deliver this, which it was

anticipated would be forthcoming as part of the Government's National Bus Strategy.

M) Catriona Jamieson on behalf of Medway Green Party submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:

"Medway Green Party are wondering if you agree with the quote below from the RSPB who are clearly not convinced that fences will prevent cat roaming and that cat covenants are enforceable.

"We have been consistent in our advice to Medway Council that a 400m buffer is the only secure and sustainable way to safeguard the nightingale population at the Chattenden Woods & Lodge Hill SSSI. We do not believe that lesser distances are consistent with the evidence based on cat roaming distances, and we remain unconvinced of the efficacy of alternative mitigation measures such as fencing or cat covenants. We believe that building substantial numbers of new houses within less than 400m of the boundary of the SSSI will create a significant and permanent predation problem for the UK's most important population of nightingales - a problem that can and should be avoided."

Note: As Ms Jamieson was not present at the meeting, she would receive a written response to her question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.

351 Leader's report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader's Report and raised the following issues during debate:

- The return of a regular events programme, including events such as the Medway Mile.
- COVID-19 and the return towards business as usual.
- The continued improvement journey within Children's Services.
- The progression of regeneration projects, such as Innovation Park Medway, Chatham Waters, Mountbatten House and Innovation Park Medway.
- Budgetary pressures in children's and adult social care and provision of Government funding.
- Medway's shortlisting for Local Government Chronicle Award regarding housing works.
- Housing Infrastructure Fund consultation.
- The future of Chatham Docks and its designation as Employment Land.
- The performance of Medway Norse.
- School attendance in Medway, which was higher than the national average.
- Concerns about the performance of Medway Norse.

352 Overview and scrutiny activity

Discussion:

Members received a report on overview and scrutiny activity and raised the following issues during debate:

- Covid-19 and particularly long Covid.
- Concerns relating to the timescales and scrutiny of the new Local Plan.
- Concern about the proposed closure of Ruby Ward, which treated older people with mental health difficulties and wider concerns about mental health service provision.
- Long waits faced by some patients for GP appointments and the variation across Medway.
- The development of Medway Suicide Prevention strategies.
- Waste collection services.
- Continued improvements to Children's Services and the availability of resources.
- The potential use of Russell House as a Foyer Project for vulnerable young people aged 16-25.
- School bus provision in relation to specific routes.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

353 Members' questions

A) Councillor Murray asked the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

"There is a national crisis in social care and here in Medway more than 50% of the workforce has left leaving many vacancies in residential homes and domiciliary care.

The shortage of staff is starting to impact on Medway Maritime Hospital as vulnerable patients ready for discharge cannot go home because there are not enough care packages available to support them. In the community, many families are left trying to care for loved ones who need a care assessment. There is huge pressure on Council staff, and those left in the workforce are tired and often traumatised from the loyalty and commitment they showed by working throughout the pandemic.

We need new solutions, and we need to act quickly. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that Social Care in Medway will be given the funding needed to resolve this crisis, and will he ask officers to bring forward a plan for Medway Council to set up a social care agency to offer carers good training, security of work and wages that reflect the contribution they make to our community?"

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Councillor Brake thanked Councillor Murray for her question. He acknowledged that there was a national pressure on Adult Social Care, sadly Medway faced this too. Providers across Medway were finding it very difficult to attract and recruit staff. The Council was working closely with the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, acute hospital trusts and community hospitals to ensure a system wide approach and understanding of the current pressures. Meetings were held with all partners five times a week.

In August 2021 there had been a vacancy rate of 28% amongst homecare providers. Medway was working hard to ensure patients were discharged from hospital in a timely way. Any problems with delayed discharges would be escalated and where significant issues identified, these would be discussed directly with Senior Leaders in Adult Social Care and Adult Partnership Commissioning.

Adult Social Care staff had shown incredible commitment and resilience throughout the pandemic. The increased volume of work meant that assessments were having to be prioritised to ensure that clients and their families were not left at risk. It was acknowledged that families were having to go above and beyond to care for their loved ones and resources were being prioritised to target those most in need. These challenges were being seen nationally not just in Medway.

Councillor Brake said that on 28 September 2021, the Cabinet had considered the Financial Outlook 2022/23 Report, which articulated the significant pressures projected in Adult Social Care. To fund these projections, almost £11million would need to be added to the Adult Social Care budget. However, funding was only projected to increase by around £7.7million, so it would not be possible to afford those budget increases within expected resources. The Council continued to lobby the government for a finance settlement that reflected the growing burdens in social care and the Chancellor's Budget Announcement on 27 October 2021 was awaited, which it was anticipated would bring some clarity around specific funding for Adult Social Care.

Councillor Brake was working with officers to review the key projections; examining the latest activity data, challenging current costs and reassessing the trends projected to develop solutions to help mitigate the projected financial pressures. He was shortly due to meet with the Adult Social Care management team to further discuss options. In relation to the suggestion that the Council should set up a social care agency, all options available to provide the care needed to support Medway residents were being considered, but a measured and logical approach would be required to ensure that actions taken did not further destabilise the care market.

B) Councillor Price asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Price for his question. He said that the Council had been informed by central government that 600 Afghan families would be arriving in the UK with local authorities having been called on to place

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as many families as they could within their authority areas. The 600 families were amongst those who had directly supported allied forces in Afghanistan and were therefore at greatest risk.

If all 354 councils in England hosted two families each then each would be playing its part without there being negative effects impacting on Medway residents.

To date, only a third of councils across the country had agreed to take in Afghan families, which Councillor Jarrett considered to be a poor response. The question was whether it could be considered that a council that had chosen to host some families could be considered to lack humanity or whether this label applied to those that had not hosted any families.

Councillor Jarrett called on all councils nationally to do their bit and to help these priority families. Considering how to help other Afghan refugees was a different matter and one that would be discussed with the government. In view of the firm approach by Medway and other councils in the South East, the Government was now offering an improved and more sustainable funding package.

Councillor Jarrett concluded by suggesting that the Leader of the Opposition might like to explain to the electorate why he appeared to want to prioritise Afghan families over existing Medway residents.

C) Councillor Johnson asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“What progress has been made in securing a continuing presence within Medway for the University for the Creative Arts?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Johnson for his question. He said that following the motion agreed at Full Council on 22 July 2021, the Vice chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) had been advised of the debate and asked for an update on his discussions with the range of partners that the Council had facilitated. The Council had also questioned whether any progress had been made as a result of the approach from the Medway Creative Cultural Compact, the Medway cultural partnership.

The motion had been shared with the three local MPs and although a meeting with the Minister for Universities had taken place, a meeting with the Skills Minister had also been encouraged by the Council. Medway had been advised by the Vice Chancellor that no concrete proposals had emerged from the Medway partners he had been introduced to.

The Council's Property team had researched options and sent a number of proposals to the Vice Chancellor, but had been advised that the UCA would not be progressing any of them.

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Councillor Jarrett considered that the Council and its partners had done all it could to maintain the presence of UCA in Medway and that it was now time for the UCA to step up to show whether they wanted to stay in Medway.

D) Councillor Maple asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“With the recent Cabinet report showing an alarming budget gap of more than £33 million, what representations have you made to Michael Gove and Rishi Sunak to ensure there is increased funding for Medway to avoid a potential Section 114 notice?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Maple for his question and said that he shared his concern. Council Members and officers across the Council had long been lobbying the Government for a funding settlement that adequately reflected the ever-increasing demand for and new, as yet unfunded, burdens across Children’s and Adults’ social care services.

The Council worked closely with its peers, in groups such as the South East Seven Authorities and through professional networks, including the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Association of Directors of Children’s Social Services.

Councillor Jarrett said that the financial outlook represented the cumulative impact of initial projections and that the Council faced a potential shortfall of £33m. Work was taking place to refine those assumptions through examining activity data, challenging current costs, reassessing the trends projected and a raft of other measures.

It was pleasing to note the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s commitment to delivering a three-year funding statement when he makes his autumn Budget statement on 27 October 2021 as this should give the Council some much needed certainty with regards to its planning.

Councillor Jarrett was also pleased to note that in making recent announcements about social care reforms, the Government had confirmed it would ‘ensure local authorities had access to sustainable funding for core budgets at the spending review’. In terms of a 114 notice, discussion of this was premature and it would be a very serious step to take.

The financial pressures faced by the Council were not unique to Medway and affected every single upper tier authority and arguably affected unitary authorities more than counties because unitaries provided services of both district and county councils.

It would be necessary for the Government to recognise the underfunding, both of Adult Social Care and children’s services, in a realistic local government funding settlement, or the result could be a number of section 114 notices being issued in early 2022. Councillor Jarrett hoped that Medway would not be among those.

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E) Councillor Prenter asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“2022 sees the 40th anniversary of the Falklands conflict which impacted on many families throughout Medway including Members in this council chamber.

Will the Portfolio Holder agree to organise a cross party meeting along with other key stakeholders to look at how Medway can best recognise this important anniversary?”

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Prenter for his question. He said that the Falklands conflict was particularly important to Medway, being the last major conflict before the premature closure of Chatham Dockyard. He acknowledged the efforts made by the Dockyard to provide assistance during the conflict.

Councillor Doe considered that there were two aspects that needed to be commemorated. One was the commemoration of those who lost their lives in service and the effect on their families and the other was the commemoration of the wonderful effort by local people to enable the fleet to depart on time and be effective.

As Armed Forces champion, Councillor Doe sat on a number of committees, along with representatives from the armed forces and other stakeholders and he would be discussing with them and the Dockyard how this would be taken forward. This was particularly the case as part of the celebration of Armed Forces Day in 2022 would be at virtually the same time as this anniversary.

Councillor Doe invited Councillor Prenter to submit any particular ideas that he had for them to be considered in the context of budgetary constraints. With the cooperation of stakeholders, it was anticipated that something memorable could be achieved.

F) Councillor Paterson submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

“In view of the recent shock announcement of the closure of the Huguenot Museum in Rochester, what action has the administration taken to ensure that this key cultural, historic and educational institution, which was featured in the recent tour of diplomats who visited Medway, remains open in Medway?”

Note: As Councillor Paterson was not present at the meeting, he would receive a written response to his question in accordance with Council Rule 8.6.

G) Councillor Howcroft-Scott asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

“We share the rage and sadness at the news of the death of Sabina Nessa. It is dreadful that her life has been taken away in such a horrific way.

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Sabina was a young teacher, and our thoughts and love are with her friends and family her colleagues and the children in the school that she taught.

Women should be safe whenever they are in the workplace at home in public spaces. It is an outrage that another woman has been taken from us in such a violent way.

Sadly, her death is not an isolated incident but part of a catalogue of violence against women. According to the Femicide Census 2009-2018, in the UK a woman is killed by a man every three days. The figures of femicide have hardly changed in four decades and until we educate young boys it never will. Always remember this is not about murder it's about the notion of power and control that ultimately leads to murder of women and girls.

According to the ONS, in the year to March 2020, 207 women were killed. Violence against women and girls must be treated with urgency, gravity and the importance that it deserves. We demand a whole system approach by Government, Medway Council and Kent Police to address the continuance of gender based violence. Sabina's devastating death has also revealed a difference in the treatment of male violence against women. Reports of her death had not been on the same levels of others. Victims from black communities do not receive the same attention and support. This is unacceptable and it has to change, her death is as shocking as that of any other woman and right now, black women and girls in our communities are feeling frightened and vulnerable and the headlines and TV coverage should reflect this.

Last week's HMICFRS report into the police response to violence against women and girls said:

- There should be a radical refocus and a shift in the priority given to violence against women and girls by the police and all partners, including wraparound tailored support for victims,
- Chief constables should review and ensure that there are consistently high standards in the response to violence against women and girls including dealing with breaches of non-molestation orders, using Clare's law to protect potential domestic violence victims and identifying and managing the most dangerous violence against women and girls.

Will you ensure that Medway Council and Kent police work together to combat and prioritise violence against women and girls, including committing to ensuring this includes educating our children that violence against women and girls is and always will be unacceptable?"

Councillor Gulvin thanked Councillor Howcroft-Scott for her question. He said that in addition to the terrible death of Sabina Nessa there were many other similar tragedies that could have been mentioned. Councillor Gulvin said he wholeheartedly agreed that until young boys were taught that violence against women and girls was totally unacceptable it would be very difficult to tackle the issue. There was a need, to support parents to enable them to give this

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guidance to young boys and this could perhaps be an area to be looked at by a Council Task Group.

The Government was beginning to take action in this area. In July 2021, it had published a paper 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls'. One particularly frightening statistic within the report was that for 84% of victims aged 16-59, who had experienced rape since the age of 16, the perpetrator was known to them, 44% being a partner or ex-partner, 4% a family member 12% a friend, 10% a date and 15% another known person.

Action was also being taken locally. Medway Council was working with partners in Kent Police and the Kent Community Safety Partnership and Medway's Community Safety team was embedded within the Community Safety Unit at Medway Police station. There was also a joint venture, the Medway Taskforce, that involved the Council and a number of partners.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was currently collating information to enable development of a new strategic assessment. Through the CSP and led by the Taskforce, officers within a number of Medway Council departments, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Violence Reduction Unit had commenced a programme of Safety in Action.

Safety in Action involved education about healthy choices and healthy lives across Medway secondary schools. 1,600 students had so far attended a course. The CSU had been active within the national operations sector, which looked at tackling knife crime through regular weapon sweeps and knife operations at public sites, such as train stations and in retail areas. The CSU supported close links internally with investigators to ensure seamless evidence capture, thereby increasing the chance of successful prosecutions.

H) Councillor Curry submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

"The Leader of Council may recall that when he was held to account at the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 1st July he expressed a degree of cynicism around the ability of his party to deliver sustainable transport for Medway.

He was not impressed by our efforts to encourage more cycling even though this has increased greatly during the pandemic. May I quote a remark of his on this evening,

"We are a car-based country.....it will be a long time till I'm weaned off mine, I can tell you!"

How long will it take for the Leader of this Council to show some real leadership and go electric?"

I) Councillor Osborne submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

“I want to ask the Leader of the Council whether he has the full confidence of the Medway Conservative Group in light of the fact that 14 colleagues, including Cabinet members, are voicing concerns around his personal leadership around the forthcoming Local Plan proposals. If he could send a message to his 14 rebellious and mutinous colleagues what would this be?”

J) Councillor Mahil submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

“The Leader of the Council will have seen the recent reports about the campaign to designate Chatham Docks as an employment hub for Medway and instead of being changed to housing.

He has lost the argument with the local MP, his own back bench and with the Medway community as a whole. Will he please see sense and not destroy the jobs and businesses at the Docks?”

K) Councillor Hubbard submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:

“Over two years has passed since the council effectively walked away from its unfinished Strood Waterfront regeneration development. And there is a promise of no more progress on the horizon. Visitors arriving by train are given a bird's eye view of the two shabby abandoned sites, the former Civic Centre site and Canal Road's Strood Riverside, either side of the railway line at Rochester Bridge. Not exactly the welcome to the City of Culture most would want to see.

The Council will be aware of the unsightly and dominating large pile of gravel on the former Civic Centre site, that still needs to be removed. Strood Riverside is a derelict dust bowl and health hazard. It is obvious that the Council should seed the area with grasses to ensure that the dust is stabilised and rooted rather than being constantly blown into homes of neighbouring residents.

The Road to Nowhere, the Council's expensive new Station Approach, is two years old. The Council needs to urgently agree a programme of works, with Network Rail, to link the road into Strood Station's forecourt. That programme of works includes the removal of the current Station Approach and making good its junction with Canal Road.

Can the Portfolio Holder clarify whether any progress has been made with any of the above issues relating to the Strood Waterfront regeneration development?”

L) Councillor Browne submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

“It has been two years since Medway declared a climate emergency thanks to the successful campaign by the Medway Labour and Co-op group. At the recent Rainham Eco Hub awards it was clear that there is a huge amount of support in the community for action on air pollution, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

The new Climate Change Action Plan has as one of its key targets to:

“Ensure that climate change is incorporated and embedded into the refreshed Council Plan and all other relevant council policies, strategies, plans and contracts.”

The timescale for this target is *“Do it now”*

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us if this has now happened?”

M) Councillor Adeoye submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles:

“Given the concern raised at the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 29th July by Councillor Curry, what progress has been made in assessing the potential contextual safeguarding issues at the proposed Russell House foyer?”

N) Councillor Cooper submitted the following question to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

“I went to the UB40 concert quite recently. The music was brilliant but selling bottles of wine for £24.00 each was not - it was a rip off. Those who bought wine discarded the bottles leaving them as a potential hazard. Adding insult to injury the bars were packed and were short staffed so subsequently long queues formed. Although the Castle Concerts are now run independently, situations like this still damage the reputation of the Council.

Will the Deputy Leader work with the promoter to review the sales and services at the Castle Concerts to achieve fairer prices and a better service in future recognising that many people would want to see the return to the policy allowing concert goers to take their own food and drink in?”

O) Councillor Bowler submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:

“The Medway Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021-26 has now been published in draft form.

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The plan covers several issues around the delivery of public transport based upon an understanding of Medway that is clearly flawed. It states that:

“Medway is primarily an urban area with a small rural hinterland....”

In reality, over half of Medway is countryside with a terrible bus service!

The Plan also states that:

“Air quality in the area is not so poor that immediate action is required, according to the annual report 2020”

This statement is inaccurate as there are clearly major air pollution issues in Medway as identified in the Air Quality Action Plan 2015 that require immediate action. These areas are designated as Central Medway AQMA, Pier Road, Gillingham AQMA and High Street, Rainham AQMA.

I would also add Luton Road into this along with Four Elms Hill! The Bus Plan states that:

“The average age from figures supplied by the operators is 11.7 years, with individual fleets ranging from 9.7 years to 14.2 years. This compares to a national figure of 8.8 years, for non-metropolitan areas of England (Source: DfT Bus Statistics Table 0605)”

Can the Portfolio Holder please put the replacement of buses at the top of the climate change and transport agenda including an assurance that these will be new ULEVs and EVs and not simply cheap second-hand vehicles brought from other parts of the country?”

P) Councillor Khan submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles:

“A key driver of Medway's improvement journey from 2019's Ofsted 'Inadequate' judgement is building a stable Children's Services workforce.

Given the continuing challenges in attracting permanent social workers to Medway, what new initiatives is the Portfolio Holder intending to implement?”

Thank you for your question. Building a stable Children’s Social Care workforce continues to be a key driver and enabler of improvement in our services for children and young people in Medway. This is matched against a national shortage of social workers, and challenges in competing for scarce resources with neighbouring local authorities and locum agencies.

Our Workforce Development team have been working hard with the service to implement a number of initiatives to address this challenge.

We have a comprehensive workforce development programme to support our staff to develop their careers in Medway and are doing further work to identify

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aspirations and support staff and managers to prepare for the next steps in their career.

Our Principal Social Worker now runs a weekly staff wellbeing group, to support all Children's Services staff and managers following the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on their mental health and wellbeing.

Social media is being utilised along with professional publications to promote Medway as a great place to live and work.

We have used information from exit interviews to better understand why staff choose to leave and are using this information in our recruitment initiatives. Positive feedback from these has been that the majority of staff who leave do so for personal reasons and would recommend Medway to other colleagues and may return to Medway in the future.

Officers regularly benchmark roles against neighbouring authorities and strive to remain competitive in the market which we know is currently challenging. Staying put interviews are being held by the Principal Social Worker as part of our retention strategy. These help us learn what motivates individuals and where they would like to see improvement. The benefit of these is that it provides us with an opportunity to address factors, where possible, before an individual reaches a decision to find another role outside of the organisation.

Looking forward we will be introducing....

A 'Golden Hello' payment to attract new social workers to areas where there is the highest level of vacancies. Based on current data this will apply to Children's Social Work Teams and Assessment only.

An internal transfer policy to facilitate transfers across the service and help retain skills within Medway.

Q) Councillor Van Dyke submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:

"At its meeting on 2 September 2021, the Planning Committee approved the two Manor Farm Development Planning Applications MC/21/0302 and MC/21/0303. At the meeting concerns were raised about:

- The steps the Council intends to undertake to mitigate the impact of the works at Manor Farm on residents in Parsonage Lane generally, because of the 'temporary' use of Parsonage Lane for 'an undefined period' for access to the site and the barn/wedding venue.
- The preventive and/or remedial action to be undertaken to ensure that personal injury and/or damage to property arising from dust, vehicle fumes, unacceptable noise pollution and or excessive vibration, ensuring that Parsonage Lane residents do not suffer similarly to the ongoing experiences of residents of Commissioners Road and environs during

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the raising of ground level works in the Commissioners Road Pit housing development.

- The monitoring the Council intends to employ to carefully record use of Parsonage Lane, assessing levels of use by non-residents and works vehicles and consult with residents, with a view to determining appropriate mitigation of effect.

Can the Portfolio Holder clarify whether any progress has been made with any of the above issues relating to the Manor Farm Development?"

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, a written response would be provided to questions 10H – 10Q.

354 Medway Local Plan

This report was withdrawn from the agenda and was not discussed.

355 Statement of Gambling Policy 2022 to 2025

Background:

This report asked the Council to approve the Statement of Gambling Policy 2022 – 2025.

The report included the consultation responses received in respect of the draft revised Policy as well as an evaluation of each response and a recommendation as to whether or not to amend the draft revised policy statement and, if so, in what way and to what extent.

The report had previously been considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 13 July 2021, the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 August 2021 and by the Cabinet on 28 September 2021. These comments and decisions were set out in sections 5, 6 and 7 of report respectively.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Resources Councillor Gulvin, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council noted the responses to the consultation as attached at Appendix 2 to the report and officers' proposed amendments to the policy document as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- b) The Council noted the comments of the Licensing and Safety Committee, the comments of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet decision, as set out in sections 5, 6

and 7 of the report.

- c) The Council approved the draft Medway Statement of Gambling Policy 2022-2025, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

356 Medway Youth Council - Annual Report

Background:

This report provided the Council with the findings and recommendations from the MYC Annual Youth Conference 2021, which was entitled 'Covid-19: The Effect on Youth'.

At its meeting on 5 August 2021, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the report be reported to Full Council.

Councillor Kemp, supported by Councillor Johnson, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the Medway Youth Council report, Covid: The Effect on Youth, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, along with the comments from the Director of People – Children and Adults Services, as set out in section 4 of the report and the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 6 to the report.

357 Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2021/22

Background:

This report presented the mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/2022, which had been approved by Full Council alongside the Capital and Revenue Budgets on 18 February 2021.

The report included an economic update for the first part of 2021/2022 and reviews of: the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy; the Council's Investment Portfolio and Borrowing Strategy; any debt rescheduling undertaken and compliance with Treasury and Prudential limits.

The report had also been considered by the Audit Committee on 23 September 2021 and by the Cabinet on 28 September 2021. The comments and decisions of this Committee and of Cabinet were set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 to the report.

The Leader of the Council, supported by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

358 Proposed Delegation to Screen Complaints

Background:

This report set out a referral from the Councillor Conduct Committee (CCC). This recommended to full Council that a delegation be granted to the Monitoring Officer (MO), who shall seek the views of the Independent Person, to undertake the initial screening for some complaints.

The report advised that this would enable the Councillor Conduct Committee to work more efficiently in dealing with the complaint cases, it would seek to focus on complaints that had been pre-screened and contained substantive details.

A Member requested that, subject to agreement of the recommendations by Full Council, that the decision be communicated to all parish clerks and parish Chairs.

Councillor Mrs Diane Chambers, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council agreed to grant the following delegation and to add it to the employee scheme of delegations, as set out in Chapter 3, Part 4 of the Medway Council Constitution.
- b) The Council agreed to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, who shall seek the views of Independent Person, to undertake the initial screening process for complaints and determine, if appropriate, that there is to be no further action (subject to the Independent Person sharing this view) on the following types of cases:
 - 1) No Councillor has been identified.
 - 2) No potential breach of the code has been identified.
 - 3) Insufficient detail to make a determination.
 - 4) The complaint is more than 6 months old and no cogent explanation for the delay in reporting.
 - 5) The complaint relates to matters that are not within the Councillor Conduct Committee's remit.
 - 6) The complaint is considered trivial, malicious or vexatious.

Note: If either the Monitoring Officer or Independent Person considers that a matter should be referred to the Councillor Conduct Committee for formal assessment, then this will be the action taken.

359 Allocation of Committee Seats

Background:

This report provided details of the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on Committees on receipt of notices from the two political groups requesting a review following the Princes Park and Strood North by-elections on 26 August 2021.

Councillor Kemp, supported by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council noted the review of the allocation of seats on the Committees of the Council as set out in section 3 of the report.
- b) The Council agreed to vary the size of the Appointments Committee from six Members to five Members.
- c) The Council agreed to vary the size of the Governor Ad-Hoc Committee from four Members to five Members.
- d) The Council agreed the allocation of seats on the Committees of the Council as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- e) The Council noted that the Licensing and Safety Committee will be asked to review the membership of its Sub Committees at its next meeting.

360 Approval of Reason for Absence of a Councillor From Meetings

Background:

This report set out that, on 16 July 2020, Full Council had approved the reasons for failure by any Councillor to attend meetings because of the COVID-19 pandemic from 16 July 2020 until the Annual Council meeting in May 2021.

This report updated the Council on this matter and sought approval of the reasons for failure by any Councillor to attend meetings for a consecutive period of 6 months from 7 October 2021 to the Annual Council meeting, currently scheduled to take place on 18 May 2022.

This report also asked the Council to approve the reason for failure to attend meetings by Councillor Nick Bowler owing to ill health.

Councillor Kemp, supported by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

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Decision:

a) The Council agreed that, from 7 October 2021 to the Annual Meeting of the Council (currently scheduled to take place on 18 May 2022) inclusive, under the provisions of Sections 85 (1) and Section 85 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following reasons shall be approved for the non-attendance of a Member at any meeting throughout a period of 6 consecutive months (including in the case of executive members attendance at meetings of the Cabinet):

- the protection of the health of the residents of the area or;
- the health of the individual Member.

Or

- Illness, with apologies sent if at all possible;
- Maternity, paternity, adoption or other parental leave;
- Caring responsibilities;
- Cancellation of meetings which the Member would otherwise have been expected to attend;
- Agreement between the Council's political groups to reduced numbers at some meetings;

b) The Council agreed that Councillor Nick Bowler should not cease to be a member of the Council, if as a consequence of his ill health, he is unable to attend any meeting of the authority for any period of six consecutive months or longer, under the provisions of Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

361 Motions

A) Councillor Lammas, supported by Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, submitted the following:

“The Prohibition of Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty

So-called ‘virginity tests’ and the practice of hymen ‘repair’ surgery are both currently legal and are being conducted by doctors to ‘check’ or ‘restore’ the virginity of a woman. These traumatic practices have no basis in medical science, harm women and girls and perpetuate dangerous myths of ‘purity’.

The WHO states that so-called ‘virginity testing’ is:

“a violation of the victims human rights and is associated with both immediate and long-term consequences that are detrimental to her physical, psychological and social well-being.”

Medical experts from The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Royal College of Midwives, Karma Nirvana, IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation and the Middle Eastern Women & Society Organisation are

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seeking to prohibit the practice of so-called 'virginity tests' and hymen 'repair' surgery through New Clause 1 & 2 to the Health and Care Bill in Parliament.

Women and girls deserve to grow up free from notions of 'breaking their womanhood' so they 'bleed on their wedding night'.

Over 55 MPs have now signed the cross-party New Clauses to the Health and Care Bill including Tracey Crouch MP. Virginity Testing is mentioned in the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. PCC Matthew Scott is conducting a Kent wide survey.

In light of the recent events in Afghanistan, recognising Medway's Muslim population, this Council calls on HM Government to criminalise so called 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty at the earliest opportunity."

Councillor Khan, supported by Councillor Murray proposed the following amendment:

"The Prohibition of Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty

So-called 'virginity tests' and the practice of hymen 'repair' surgery are both currently legal and are being conducted by doctors to 'check' or 'restore' the virginity of a woman. These traumatic practices have no basis in medical science, harm women and girls and perpetuate dangerous myths of 'purity'.

The WHO states that so-called 'virginity testing' is:

"a violation of the victims human rights and is associated with both immediate and long-term consequences that are detrimental to her physical, psychological and social wellbeing."

Medical experts from The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Royal College of Midwives, Karma Nirvana, IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation and the Middle Eastern Women & Society Organisation are seeking to prohibit the practice of so-called 'virginity tests' and hymen 'repair' surgery through New Clause 1 & 2 to the Health and Care Bill in Parliament.

Delete:

~~Women and girls deserve to grow up free from notions of 'breaking their womanhood' so they 'bleed on their wedding night'.~~

~~Over 55 MPs have now signed the cross-party New Clauses to the Health and Care Bill including Tracey Crouch MP. Virginity Testing is mentioned in the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. PCC Matthew Scott is conducting a Kent wide survey.~~

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Add:

This council recognises that there is cross-party support for this issue in Parliament, including from local MP Tracey Crouch.

Amend:

~~In light of the recent events in Afghanistan, recognising Medway's Muslim population,~~ Given the physical and psychological impacts of this practice on women, ~~this~~ we call on this Council ~~calls on HM Government~~ to support the wider end violence against women and girls agenda, and call on the Government to criminalise so called 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty at the earliest opportunity.

Amended motion reads:

"The Prohibition of Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty

So-called 'virginity tests' and the practice of hymen 'repair' surgery are both currently legal and are being conducted by doctors to 'check' or 'restore' the virginity of a woman. These traumatic practices have no basis in medical science, harm women and girls and perpetuate dangerous myths of 'purity'.

The WHO states that so-called 'virginity testing' is:

"a violation of the victims human rights and is associated with both immediate and long-term consequences that are detrimental to her physical, psychological and social wellbeing."

Medical experts from The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Royal College of Midwives, Karma Nirvana, IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation and the Middle Eastern Women & Society Organisation are seeking to prohibit the practice of so-called 'virginity tests' and hymen 'repair' surgery through New Clause 1 & 2 to the Health and Care Bill in Parliament.

This council recognises that there is cross-party support for this issue in Parliament, including from local MP Tracey Crouch.

Given the physical and psychological impacts of this practice on women, we call on this Council to support the wider end violence against women and girls agenda, and call on the Government to criminalise so called 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty at the earliest opportunity."

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Decision:

The Prohibition of Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty

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So-called 'virginity tests' and the practice of hymen 'repair' surgery are both currently legal and are being conducted by doctors to 'check' or 'restore' the virginity of a woman. These traumatic practices have no basis in medical science, harm women and girls and perpetuate dangerous myths of 'purity'.

The WHO states that so-called 'virginity testing' is:

"a violation of the victims human rights and is associated with both immediate and long-term consequences that are detrimental to her physical, psychological and social wellbeing."

Medical experts from The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Royal College of Midwives, Karma Nirvana, IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation and the Middle Eastern Women & Society Organisation are seeking to prohibit the practice of so-called 'virginity tests' and hymen 'repair' surgery through New Clause 1 & 2 to the Health and Care Bill in Parliament.

This council recognises that there is cross-party support for this issue in Parliament, including from local MP Tracey Crouch.

Given the physical and psychological impacts of this practice on women, we call on this Council to support the wider end violence against women and girls agenda, and call on the Government to criminalise so called 'virginity testing' and hymenoplasty at the earliest opportunity.

B) Councillor Murray, supported by Councillor Johnson, submitted the following:

"There are 29,117 families in Medway on Universal Credit who over the last few weeks have received the devastating news that as of 6th October they will be £20 a week worse off. The families cite excessive housing costs as the main reason for their claim followed closely by being unable to provide adequately for their children. In both cases, many of the families are working or seeking work.

The cut to Universal Credit is indefensible because it is socially divisive and economically short sighted. Charities warn it will push thousands of families into poverty, exacerbated by rising household energy costs. Business leaders say it will make it harder for local businesses to recover from losses during the pandemic because UC claimants will have even less to spend. Furthermore, there are plans to restart the migration to Universal Credit from legacy benefits which will reduce incomes for another group of vulnerable people. In September, while the Prime Minister was in the United States, he defended the cuts to reporters, yet refused repeatedly to say whether he could live on the basic Universal Credit payment of £118 a week.

This Council recognises the damaging impact of the cuts to Universal Credit and resolves to write to the Prime Minister and the three Medway MPs calling on them to reinstate the payments and by doing so show our support for families in Medway and local businesses who are facing hardship this winter."

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In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the motion was taken.

For – Councillors Adeoye, Cooper, Curry, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Johnson, Khan, Lloyd, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Osborne, Prenter, Price and Sands (15)

Against – Councillors Aldous, Barrett, Brake, Buckwell, Carr, Chitty, Doe, Fearn, Filmer, Griffin, Gulvin, Hackwell, Mrs Josie Iles, Jarrett, Kemp, Lammas, Opara, Potter, Purdy, Tejan, Thompson, Thorne, Tranter, Mrs Elizabeth Turpin and Rupert Turpin (25)

Abstain – Councillors (0)

Note: In addition to the Councillors named in the minutes of agenda item no. 2, apologies for absence, the following Councillors were not present for the vote: Councillors Mrs Diane Chambers, Rodney Chambers OBE, Clarke, Etheridge, Mahil, Pendergast, Chrissy Stamp and Williams.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

Mayor

Date:

Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services

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