

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

Thursday, 2 December 2021

6.30pm to 9.27pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Browne, Carr, Curry, Etheridge (Chairman), Fearn (Vice-Chairman), Hubbard, Andy Stamp, Thompson, Tranter and Williams

Substitutes: Councillors:
Sylvia Griffin (Substitute for Rupert Turpin)
Osborne (Substitute for Mahil)

In Attendance: Councillor Adrian Gulvin – Portfolio Holder for Resources
Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Katey Durkin, Head of Finance Strategy
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Anna Marie Lawrence, Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

Representatives of the Community Safety Partnership

Councillor Adrian Gulvin – Chairman
Neil Howlett – Community Safety Partnership Manager
Superintendent Rob Marsh – Kent Police
Chief Inspector Shona Lowndes – Kent Police
Rosie Baur – NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group
Aeilish Geldenhuys – Head of Public Health
Tracey Kadir – Probation Service

498 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarke, Mahil and Rupert Turpin.

499 Record of Meeting

A Member sought clarification on a statement in minute 389 – Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation and questioned whether the date recorded in the minute was correct. The Chairman agreed that this matter be checked prior to the minutes being signed as correct.

500 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

501 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Tranter referred to the Annual Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership and informed the Committee that as a Council appointed representative on the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, whilst he would participate in the debate on this item, he would not take part in any scrutiny of the performance of the Fire Authority.

502 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organiser by officers.

The Committee was informed that there had been one petition referral for consideration at this meeting as follows:

Request to take action in implementing effective traffic calming measures along the entirety of Marlborough Road, Gillingham where they are not already in existence

Mr Plumb, petition organiser, accompanied by Ms May, was in attendance and they outlined the basis of the petition and the reasons for the referral request as follows:

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- Marlborough Road was located between Brompton Westbrook School and the Great Lines Heritage Park on one side, residential properties on the other side and an entrance to Medway Hospital at one end. It was therefore a very busy road not only for traffic but also heavily used by pedestrians, many of whom were school children who tended to cross the road between parked cars when there were breaks in the traffic.
- There have been many accidents in Marlborough Road, involving pedestrians and animals and frequent damage to parked vehicles. Therefore residents were requesting that consideration be given to introducing traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of traffic.
- Damage to residents' vehicles parked in Marlborough Road has resulted in increased insurance premiums.

The Head of Integrated Transport thanked the petitioner for attending the meeting and advised that in response to the petition, investigations were currently being undertaken into road user speeds in Marlborough Road along with the most recently reported road casualty history. This information would assist in informing any potential next steps to be undertaken. As this work had already commenced and was programmed within the current financial year it would be concluded by 31 March 2022. Once completed, the Road Safety Team would contact the lead petitioner to provide a formal update of the outcome of the investigations.

The Committee discussed the petition and noted that should any traffic calming measures be introduced in Marlborough Road such as speed restrictions, this would then be the responsibility of the Police for enforcement.

The Committee requested to be updated on the outcome of the investigations.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the petition responses and appropriate office action set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- b) noted the petition referral request and the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive's response set out in paragraph 4 of the report and requested that the Committee be informed of the outcome of the investigation work into the request for traffic calming measures in Marlborough Road Gillingham.

503 Annual Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership including an update on the Community Safety Plan 2020 to 2024

Discussion:

The Chairman welcomed the partners of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to the meeting.

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The Committee discussed the following topics:

- **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)**

- Increase in ASB - A Member referred to the 59% increase in incidents of ASB between April 2020 and March 2021 and requested the reason for this increase.

Superintendent Marsh advised that this reporting period covered the Covid-19 lockdowns and during this period, the Police had received an increased number of calls relating specifically to breaches of Covid rules. He reminded the Committee that one incident of ASB could generate multiple calls.

Superintendent Marsh was confident that the next reporting period would show a decrease in incidents of ASB. Superintendent Marsh gave an assurance that ASB remained a priority for the Police and that work undertaken by the Task Force in Gillingham had successfully reduced levels of ASB in this area of Medway.

- Comparisons with other areas for levels of ASB - A Member sought clarification as to where Medway was ranked when compared to other area for incidents of ASB. Superintendent Marsh advised that Medway ranked the highest for levels of ASB in Kent when compared to other districts but confirmed that Medway was resourced to reflect this. He was satisfied that in the next reporting period, levels of ASB would reduce to levels previously seen prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Superintendent Marsh also advised that Kent Police was one of the top Police forces in the Country for the way in which crimes were recorded and therefore, this reflected in the crime statistics for the area.

- ASB during the Christmas/New Year Period – In response to a question, Superintendent Marsh advised that it was anticipated that there would be increased numbers of people celebrating during the Christmas/New Year period and, as a result, there would be increased night time patrolling. He informed the Committee that with Covid rule enforcement, the Police took the line of engaging and encouraging compliance and using enforcement as a last resort.

- **Youth Crime** – In response to a question as to whether the Police should take a more active role in trying to discourage youths who were on the edge of entering a life of crime, Superintendent Marsh advised that Kent Police now had a dedicated Schools Team comprising 4 Police Constables who undertook work in secondary schools with a focus on prevention of crime.

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Superintendent Marsh advised that it was not always necessary or beneficial to take a young person into custody if alternative interventions were available.

He further advised that Kent Police had 2 Safety Officers specifically working on disrupting county lines gangs and grooming, and work was also undertaken in schools by the Youth Offending Co-ordinator and the Task Force.

- **Probation recruitment** – In response to a question concerning recruitment to the Probation Service, Tracey Kadir advised that there were staffing challenges in the Probation Service but this was not a new issue. Due to Kent being located in close proximity to London, potential recruits were attracted to working in London where they could receive London Weighting Allowances. She advised that there were 35 vacancies in West Kent currently being advertised.
- **Public Health** – Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health advised that whilst Public Health was not a statutory organisation in its own right it was treated as statutory with equal status on the Community Safety Partnership. She stated that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would be around for a while and this was being addressed in Public Health.
- **Mental Health Services/CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)** - Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health confirmed that nationally there had been an increase in funding for CAMHS as part of a 10 year plan by the National Health Service.

She confirmed that although local waiting times were within the national target, there was a lengthy wait for neuro developmental assessments and help was being provided to those on the waiting list to identify possible alternative strategies.

- **LAC (Looked after Children) Foyer in Luton** – A Member expressed concern about the location of a LAC Foyer in the Luton area of Chatham as he considered it was not suitable to place vulnerable children.

Councillor Gulvin as Chairman of the CSP informed the Committee that the Safeguarding Board had undertaken work in the Luton area of Chatham and discussions had taken place with MHS Homes concerning their proposals for Russell House. However, he appreciated and shared the concerns expressed on this issue.

- **Modern Slavery** – In response to a question, Superintendent Marsh advised that the issue of modern slavery was the responsibility of a central team which formed part of the Serious Crime Directorate and confirmed that the Task Force had been involved in securing intelligence for the Team. This work involved a multi-agency approach and included Safeguarding officers.

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- **Domestic Abuse** - Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health advised that it was difficult to confirm whether the level of domestic abuse had increased in the last reporting period as many incidents had not been reported during the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. However, it was noticeable that as lockdown restrictions had eased, reports of domestic abuse had begun to increase.

She advised that in cases of domestic abuse, whilst every attempt was made to keep the family in their home, especially where children were involved due to their schooling and local friends, this was not always possible.

Superintendent Marsh advised that the primary concern was always to reduce the initial risk and to give all sides breathing space whilst options were considered. The Police had specific Domestic Abuse vehicles to ensure a rapid response.

It was also confirmed that the Violence Reduction Unit was involved in cases of Domestic Violence so as to ensure wrap around care especially where children were involved.

Councillor Gulvin as Chairman of the CSP referred to a report submitted to Cabinet on 16 November 2021 which sought agreement to update the existing Domestic Abuse Strategy to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The report focused on the safe accommodation addendum to the existing Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy.

- **Covid rule enforcement in the Pentagon and availability of lanyards** – In recognition that the Council now owned the Pentagon Shopping Centre, information was sought as to who had responsibility for enforcing Covid-19 rules and whether there was information available as to where to obtain lanyards for those who were exempt from wearing face masks.

Councillor Gulvin as Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the Pentagon Shopping Centre security had been proactive in asking members of the public to wear face masks and face masks were available for sale in the Centre and in individual shops.

Concerning the availability of lanyards for those exempt from wearing face masks, Rosie Bauer from the North Kent Clinical Commissioning Group advised that these were usually available within public areas but she would obtain this information and report this to the Committee outside of the meeting.

- **Victims of Grooming** – A Member referring to recent national press reports on the issue of grooming sought an assurance that any victims reporting incidents of grooming would be taken seriously. Superintendent Marsh provided an assurance that reports of grooming

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were treated seriously by Kent Police and confirmed that one active investigation was currently being undertaken in Kent.

- **Request for the impact of COVID to be more central in future reports** - A Member suggested that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic be made more central in future reports.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the partners of the Community Safety Partnership for attending the meeting and:

- a) noted the findings of the strategic assessment.
- b) endorsed the Community Safety Partnership priorities in light of the strategic assessment findings.
- c) noted that further information would be supplied to the Committee concerning the availability of lanyards within the Pentagon Shopping Centre for those individuals who were exempt from wearing a face mask.

504 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Discussion:

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Resources which fell within the remit of this Committee.

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

- **Flyover /marketing tool** – The Portfolio Holder for Resources introduced a short video produced by Medway Development Company (MDC) to be used as a marketing tool to promote development at Chatham Waterfront. He provided an update on how works were progressing at the Chatham Waterfront site.

Concern was expressed that despite the extensive development taking place in Chatham, it had not been possible to include affordable housing provision in all of the various developments and where allocation was to be provided but could not be accommodated within the development site, this was being located elsewhere in Medway.

The Portfolio Holder advised that good quality off site provision of affordable housing had been provided in White Road, Chatham and would soon be provided at Britton Farm in Gillingham. He confirmed that all the current schemes were providing 25% affordable housing provision.

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The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that as a Director of MDC and Chair of the Subsidiary Company undertaking development works, MDC was taking on the development of some challenging and difficult sites which were not always attractive to private developers. Therefore, it was not always possible to include provision of 25% affordable housing within all development on viability grounds.

- **Strood development** – A Member requested an update on potential development of sites in Strood. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that at the current time, as a small team, MDC was unable to take on the development of sites in Strood due to its other projects at Chatham Waterfront and Britton Farm in Gillingham.
- **Medway Development Company (MDC)** – The Committee discussed the issue of developments being undertaken in Medway by MDC and in particular the information that MDC is a small company. Concern was expressed as to the risks of a small company taking on large development projects and the Portfolio Holder explained that beneath MDC was another company acting as managing agents for the developments. The Committee requested further information as to the relationship between MDC and the managing agents along with the make-up of MDC's Board of Directors, and requested a staffing matrix, an oversight of minutes of Board meetings, information on cash flow and forecasts, draw down loans, balance sheets and information on risk analysis. It was noted that this information would be commercially sensitive when circulated. The Portfolio Holder offered for MDC to attend a meeting of the Committee to undertake a presentation on its work but the Committee requested that the information requested be supplied in the first instance.
- **Gillingham Town Centre** - Concern was expressed as to the lack of investment in Gillingham Town Centre in comparison with that being invested in Chatham. Whilst it was acknowledged that attempts were being made to obtain investment from various funding streams, a view was expressed that by locating affordable housing away from development sites in Chatham and providing this elsewhere in Medway, e.g. Britton Farm, Gillingham did not make for sustainable communities and resulted in the Chatham Waterfront development not being inclusive.

The Portfolio Holder supported the view that Gillingham would benefit from investment but unfortunately a recent bid for funding, had been unsuccessful. However, he gave an assurance that bids would be submitted if other funding opportunities became available.

- **Development timescales** – Information was sought as to the timescales for the completion of development projects and the Portfolio Holder advised that residents would be living in Whiffens Avenue by December 2022 and it was hoped that marketing of Chatham Waterfront would

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begin soon. The marketing of Mountbatten House would be at a later stage so as not to compete with other sites being marketed in the Chatham area.

- **Bishops Palace and Brook Theatre** – The Portfolio Holder provided an update as to works being undertaken on the Bishops Palace to stabilise the structure and advised that work on The Brook Theatre would begin soon. He agreed to supply information as to the anticipated start date of work at The Brook Theatre outside of the meeting.
- **CCTV** – A Member requested whether a CCTV camera could be provided in Pig Alley, Luton. In response, the Portfolio Holder suggested that this request be formally made to the Community Safety Partnership Manager.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that no CCTV cameras had been removed in the past 12 months and one additional camera had been provided. He advised that a number of cameras had been replaced to provide improved definition and zoom capacity and apart from the request received this evening for a CCTV camera to be located in Pig Alley, no additional requests had been received for CCTV cameras. He reminded Members that if Ward Councillors wanted CCTV cameras located at specific locations in their Wards, they should submit a request to the Community Safety Partnership Manager for consideration by the Community Safety Partnership.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Committee that CCTV camera activity levels were regularly monitored and if activity fell below a level set by the Information Commissioner, then the positioning of the CCTV camera would need to be reconsidered and possibly result in its removal.

The Portfolio Holder also reminded the Committee that arrangements could be made for Members to visit the CCTV control room upon request.

- **Community Safety Team** – In recognition of the 56% increase in anti-social behaviour referred to in the Community Safety Partnership report, a Member asked whether the Portfolio Holder considered that the Community Safety Team was adequately resourced. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Community Safety Team was a small but very effective team and that there were two Anti-Social Behaviour Officers employed by the Council. Unfortunately, due to a timing restriction on available funding, it had not been possible to recruit to a third post to cover Chatham Town Centre but alternative sources of funding was currently being investigated.
- **Heat Networks** Referring to the new Chatham Heat Network Study, the Committee asked that when available, an update be supplied to the Committee along with a copy to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder

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for Housing and Community Services in his role as Chairman of the Climate Change Member Advisory Group.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the report and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.
- b) noted that if any Member wished to ask for a CCTV camera to be located in their Ward, they should submit a request direct to the Community Safety Partnership Manager for consideration by the Community Safety Partnership.
- c) requested that when available, an update on the Chatham Heat Network Study be supplied to the Committee along with a copy to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services in his role as Chairman of the Climate Change Member Advisory Group.
- d) noted that the Portfolio Holder has agreed to supply information as to the anticipated start date of works to The Brook Theatre.
- e) requested that information be supplied as to the relationship between MDC and the managing agents along with the make-up of MDC's Board of Directors, a staffing matrix and an oversight of minutes of Board meetings, information on cash flow and forecasts, draw down loans, balance sheets and information on risk analysis. It was noted that this information would be commercially sensitive when circulated.

505 Draft Capital and Revenue Budget 2022/23

Discussion:

The Committee received a report providing an update on progress towards setting the Council's draft capital and revenue budgets for 2022/23.

The report set out the process by which the budget would progress through to Cabinet and Council in February 2022.

In response to a question as to whether there was a likelihood of reducing staffing levels to assist in bridging the budget gap, the Head of Finance Strategy reminded the Committee that the Council was a lean establishment insofar as staffing was concerned and that the majority of the budget pressures came from the cost of adult and children's social care placements. This was therefore an area that was under review to assess the potential for reductions.

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Decision:

The Committee noted that Cabinet has instructed officers to continue to work with Portfolio Holders in formulating robust proposals to balance the budget for 2022/23 and beyond.

506 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Risk Register Quarter 2 2021/22

Discussion:

The Committee noted that this would be the last meeting attended by the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence as she was due to leave Medway Council to take up a post elsewhere. Members expressed their best wishes and thanked her for supporting the Committee over past years.

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 2 against the Council's two priorities Place and Growth insofar as they fell within the remit of this Committee, along with a review of the Council's Risk Register.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Discontinuation of a new shared cycle route connecting Cuxton to Medway Valley Park** – A Member sought further information on the discontinuation of a new shared cycle route connecting Cuxton to Medway Valley Park and the Assistant Director Front Line Services offered to meet with the Member concerned to discuss this outside of the meeting.
- **Strategic Plans** – A Member referred to the number of strategic plans in place across the Council and requested a list of all current plans along with information as to how they connect to each other. In response, the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence advised that a diagram showing all the various strategies and their relationship to each other had been drawn up a few years ago and she planned to refresh this diagram and publish online. She agreed to circulate a copy to the Committee.
- **NI 167 – Average journey time along 5 routes across Medway** – A Member sought clarification as to the method by which the average journey times were calculated for this performance indicator. In response the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence explained that this was calculated using vehicle GPS and that this topic had been the subject a briefing note to the Committee. She agreed to send this to the Member concerned.
- **Risk Register** – A Member asked whether the risk register was being updated to reflect the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence confirmed that this was a new

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risk that had been added to the risk register and would cover all risks relating to Covid-19, including the new variant.

- **Street lighting and street cleansing** – A Member complimented the provision of LED street lighting in his Ward but referred to issues concerning street cleansing which still needed to be addressed. The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive advised that the issue of street cleansing had been discussed in detail by Committee on 14 October 2021 and was being investigated but if there were any new areas of concern these should be drawn to the attention of officers.

Decision:

The Committee considered and noted the Quarter 2 2021/22 performance against measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities and:

- a) noted that the Assistant Director Front Line Services will meet with the Member concerned to discuss the discontinuation of a new shared cycle route connecting Cuxton to Medway Valley Park and that the outcome of the discussions be fed back via email to all Members of the Committee.
- b) noted that the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence will be refreshing the current list of Council Strategies with a view to publishing this information online and circulating a copy to Members of the Committee.
- c) the Corporate Head of Performance and Business Intelligence will provide a copy of the briefing note relating to NI 167 (average journey time along 5 routes across Medway) to the Member concerned.

507 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out the current work programme.

Decision:

The Committee noted the current work programme.

Chairman

Date:

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