

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 20 January 2022
7.00pm to 10.35pm

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, Brake, Buckwell, Mrs Diane Chambers, Rodney Chambers, OBE, Chitty, Curry, Doe, Edwards, Etheridge, Filmer, Gulvin, Hackwell, Mrs Josie Iles, Jarrett, Johnson, Kemp, Khan, Maple, Murray, Osborne, Potter, Prenter, Sands, Chrissy Stamp, Van Dyke and Wildey
- In Attendance:** Neil Davies, Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

626 Apologies for absence

During this period, it was informally agreed between the two political groups, due the Coronavirus pandemic, to run Medway Council meetings with a reduced number of participants. This was to reduce risk. The apologies given reflect that informal agreement of reduced participants.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Barrett, Browne, Clarke, Cooper, Fearn, Griffin, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Lammas, Lloyd, Mahil, McDonald, Opara, Paterson, Pendergast, Price, Purdy, Andy Stamp, Tejan, Thompson, Thorne, Tranter, Mrs Elizabeth Turpin, Rupert Turpin and Williams.

627 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Osborne declared an interest in agenda item number 12 (Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22 - Addition to the Capital Programme) as he is a member of staff at Leigh Academy Trust. Councillor Osborne left the room during discussion and consideration of the item.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

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There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

628 Record of meeting

In relation to the minutes of agenda item number 2 (Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests) of the ordinary Council meeting held on 7 October 2021, it was noted that Councillor's Cooper's interest had been recorded in the minutes as the Chair of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust. Councillor Cooper was in fact the Vice Chair of the Rivermead School Governing Body.

Subject to the amendment highlighted above, the records of the meetings held on 7 October 2021 were agreed by the Council and signed by The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway as correct.

629 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful Mayor of Medway said that Members would be sadly aware of the passing of Councillor Nick Bowler in October 2021, which was not long after Councillor Steve Iles and Councilor Tashi Bhutia.

Having initially served on Rochester Upon Medway City Council between 1997-98, Councillor Bowler had been one of the Council's most long serving Members, having sat on the Council since 2000, initially representing the residents of Troy Town and then Rochester East since 2003. Councillor Bowler had served as Mayor of Medway during the 2003-2004 municipal year, and then as Deputy Mayor during the 2007-2008 municipal year.

The Mayor highlighted that Councillor Bowler had been passionate about planning, having served on the Planning Committee since 2000 and as spokesperson for the Labour and Co-operative Group since 2001.

The Mayor had attended the memorial service held on 19 January 2022 at Rochester Cathedral and was pleased that so many people had attended. The Mayor considered that this had been a fitting tribute.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, said that Councillor Bowler had performed his role very well, which had included being Planning Spokesperson for many years. He had worked on the cross party group looking at the Local Plan. Councillor Jarrett said that Councillor Bowler had been particularly open minded and had been a keen fan of Arsenal FC. He had previously been Mayor of Medway and his good humour would be much missed.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Maple, said that Councillor Bowler had been one of a kind who was not afraid to voice his opinion. He had a

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passion for a diverse range of things, such as American football and music. It was particularly sad that the Council had now lost three serving Councillors in such a short space of time.

Other Members of the Council added their tributes to Councillor Bowler. Tributes included his committed and diligent work as ward councillor and planning spokesperson and the strong working relationships that he built with colleagues across the Council. Councillor Bowler's bravery in dealing with illness over a long period of time was acknowledged and that he had worked hard despite this. His integrity and commitment were also highlighted.

A minute's silence was held in memory of Councillor Bowler.

The newly elected Councillor Edwards was welcomed to the meeting by the Mayor. The Mayor wished her well in her role.

630 Leader's announcements

With reference to the Motion agreed by the Council at the October 2021 meeting to call on the Government to ban virginity testing and hymenoplasty, in order to tackle violence against women and girls, the Leader informed the Council that the Government had supported the request. MPs had since voted to ban virginity testing and would vote on banning hymenoplasty during January 2022. The Council's voice had, therefore, made a difference on this important matter.

631 Petitions

Public:

There were none.

Member:

There were none.

632 Public questions

Discussion:

The Mayor stated that as Council Member and public attendance at the meeting was reduced due to COVID-19, it was proposed that everyone who had submitted a public or Member question would have their question answered during the meeting, irrespective of whether they were present, within existing time limits.

The Mayor, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed that Council rules 8.6 and 9.1 be suspended for the duration of the meeting.

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Decision:

The Council agreed to suspend Council rules 8.6 and 9.1 for the duration of the meeting.

Public Questions Asked:

Question A – Giovanni Nasillo of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following:

“Gillingham is almost forgotten about in the Council’s 2035 regeneration document, there is a lack of vibrancy in the High Street that the Council says it hopes to maintain. Councillors should look at Gillingham on the Nextdoor social media site.

Why is the Council treating Gillingham residents with such contempt?”

Councillor Chambers said he appreciated that the current climate was challenging for most town centres due to the changing retail trends and the advent of online shopping.

In Gillingham, regeneration sites in the High Street area had been identified at Britton Farm Mall, the Railway Station public realm and the Riley’s building in Green Street. The Council was also undertaking extra general cleaning and maintenance of the general public realm.

At Britton farm, a £850,000 project had been completed to convert the former supermarket into office accommodation and this was now occupied by the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust. It was hoped that this would positively impact on the local economy with 170 staff members using and supporting the high street businesses.

Medway Council had worked hard to secure £1.99million of Government funding for the upper floor of Britton Farm Mall to create an Adult Learning Skills Employment Centre. This would have flexible classroom space with high quality digital training equipment.

Councillor Chambers said the project also included funding towards 44 affordable homes at the rear of Britton Farm, alongside additional public realm improvements within the mall. This included greening, new flooring and the installation of new gates. These developments all aimed to bring more people into Gillingham High Street to shop.

Gillingham High Street was a priority for external investment and the Council’s external investment officers were working closely with the town centre team to ensure that advantage was taken of future funding opportunities.

Question B - Keith Slucock of Halling asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“In response to the above proposals [Cuxton Winery Development] the Kent Downs AONB unit sent Medway Council a detailed and strongly worded objection.

Yet, at the planning meeting held on 8th December, it was clear that few of the most significant objections raised by the Kent Downs AONB unit had been considered by Medway Council's Planning Department, whose head spoke passionately in favour of approval of the proposal.

Noting the exceptional circumstances and public interest (as required by Paragraph 177 of the NPPC), the legal clarification of the agricultural building status and that the Council's Planning department has so strongly recommend approval of the winery development, can the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation please clearly state why the Planning Department has rejected the majority of concerns raised by the Kent Downs AONB unit?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Slucock for his question. She said that the application would be considered again at a future Planning Committee meeting where Members would consider and balance all the material planning considerations before determining the application.

When the application was initially considered by the Planning Committee, Members had received a detailed report presented by the Head of Planning. He had explained the proposal and summarised all the issues. In particular, he drew the Committee's attention to the objections from the AONB unit and the Parish Council. He set out the various issues, both in favour and against the application and explained that Members would need to balance those issues in reaching a decision. It was also explained how officers had balanced those issues and how they had come to recommend the application for approval.

Councillor Chitty said that the report provided to the Planning Committee was available for the public to view and that when the application returned to the Committee, this report would be available to view five working days in advance. The meeting would be open to the public to attend or watch online.

Question C - Jonathan Pearce of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“On the evening of 10 January, I arrived home at 21:25hrs and was unable to park in my street and despite 5 minutes of driving around adjacent streets there were no spaces, so I left my car on a single yellow. Walking back to my house I noted that there were at least 4 vehicles, the majority of which were work vans, without permits, parked in residential bays.

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I got a parking ticket at 21:51hrs, however none of the vehicles without permits were fined, and these vehicles were the reason I had to park illegally. Please could I ask that parking be enforced properly!

I also believe 10pm is far too late for restrictions, I would suggest 8pm is late enough, (Victoria Street is 6pm) and it is unsafe for elderly and vulnerable people walking to find spaces.”

Councillor Filmer thanked Mr Pearce for his question. He said that the Council asked its Civil Enforcement Officers to check that all vehicles parking in a controlled parking zone had the appropriate permit or voucher and he apologised if this had not happened on this particular occasion. The matter had been passed to the Enforcement Team for further consideration.

Councillor Filmer said that the times of restrictions were subject to consultation before being implemented but that they could be reviewed from time to time where residents felt that they were unsuitable. It was requested that Mr Pearce contact the Parking Team should he want the matter to be considered further.

Question D – Sarah Manuel of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

“How do the Council intend on dealing with the short fall in waste capacity from 2028 onwards in light of the extra housing proposed for Medway?”

Councillor Filmer thanked Ms Manuel for her question. He said that the Council had a waste disposal contract with Veolia for all residual household black sack waste until 2035, with a possible five-year extension to 2040. This contract would be sufficient to deal with Medway’s residual household waste needs until then regardless of the additional house building planned.

When contracts were due to expire, a new procurement process would be commenced to ensure that Medway had sufficient capacity for its household waste.

Question E – Bill McLennan of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“The Town and Country Planning Act 1932 was enshrined into law in 1933. The Act principally sought to rid the UK of its slum housing by introducing uniform planning guidance and regulation which promoted a healthy living environment for all.

In accordance with the government directive at the time, the City of Rochester Council tasked their surveyor William Law to produce a draft Town Planning Scheme No1.

The draft Planning Scheme No1 received Housing ministerial approval in 1935 and was officially adopted by Rochester Council May 1936.

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The Council Planning Scheme No1 and latterly No2 identify areas designated for housing, business use and general amenities in the Medway area. The plans detail roads, pathways, passages and housing estate layouts specific to thousands of homes built across the towns during the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's.

The plans detail tens of miles of passages to the rear of thousands of Medway properties as an amenity for local residents. Collectively these four feet wide passages total a significant amount of land the boundaries of which have been respected by abutting property owners for decades.

In recent years Medway Council under its Gating Policy has paid for many of the passageway entrances to be secured. However, it has failed to direct on the retention and protection of the passages themselves.

Many of the passages are now unused and overgrown due to their natural soil surface. However, despite the passages today being compromising for human traffic they play an important role spawning a host of local flora and fauna acting as an environmental amenity.

Mother Nature in her wonderful way has repurposed many of the overgrown passages into an array of wildlife sanctuaries and habitats. The natural vegetation, decaying leaves and carbon capturing soil provides vital bio diversity for grubs and insects at the bottom of nature's food chain supporting a host of animals from Toads, Frogs, Hedgehogs, Butterflies, solitary Bees, small nesting birds and the like.

The neglected passages not only provide shelter and food for wildlife but vital contiguous corridors for small animals such as hedgehogs through the urban landscape invisible to residents who have fenced their gardens to their entitlement and estate planning scheme.

Unlike respectful home owners of the past, possibly emboldened by the Council Gating Policy restricting access, a new generation of residents view the passageways as an opportunity to profit by incorporating them as part of their own property, unlawfully fencing, clearing, excavating, concreting, and building across the amenity, desecrating Mother Nature's years of excellent work.

Similar to our protected country roadside hedgerows small overgrown tracks of land play an important part in the cycle of life.

Should local residents wish to use the passageways, the clearance of debris or natural growth is often deeded to be at their own expense and not a Council responsibility. However, an alteration to the amenity boundary, changes to designated land use and modification to estate structure and layout prescribed and in accordance with an adopted Council planning scheme is unlawful without local planning authority approval.

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Today's Town and Country Planning act supports environmental action in combating climate change however small.

Medway Council's initiative, "Action on Climate Change" has been well received by residents. The retention and protection of the overgrown natural soil passages is within the Council's legal jurisdiction and will combat climate change.

Can you please state Medway Council's view or policy on the retention and protection of these important passages not simply for local residents but as a benefit to our natural environment, wildlife and wellbeing as a whole?"

Councillor Chitty thanked Mr McLennan for his question. She was particularly pleased to be answering this question as it was an issue that affected lots of people and caused lots of challenges.

The alleyways were private and therefore the responsibility of those that had the right to use them. As a result, their condition varied throughout Medway. Some were well maintained by surrounding residents and used to provide rear access to properties. Others had fallen into disrepair and were mis-used, while a number of others had been impacted by garden extensions and fences. Such incursions could be with the agreement of the residents with rights of passage and were seen as a way to enhance security and privacy. Where there were disagreements, that was a civil matter between those residents and was not something that the Council would be involved in.

Councillor Chitty expressed her sympathies to residents who were unable to contact the original owners or developers of alleyways and had therefore needed to take on responsibilities themselves.

Question F – Vivienne Parker of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“What is the Council going to do about the building on the corner of Marlborough Road and Gillingham High Street which is made of asbestos, is dangerous and is now falling down?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Ms Parker for her question. She said that the site had been sold by the Council in reasonable condition in 2017. At this time, the future of the site had been discussed with the new owner. However, the owner was not considered to have taken appropriate action and the Council's Planning Team had raised concerns in relation to the continued deterioration of the site and buildings. The site had recently been sold again and Planning officers were engaging with the new owners in relation to site security, condition of the buildings and the action needed as a result. This could include the demolition of the building and the safe and careful removal of material from the site. Additionally, early stage discussions were taking place regarding the potential long term future of the site.

Question G – Stuart Bourne of Rainham asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Last summer saw large areas of Medway’s grass verges and parks uncut and long, which not only led to Medway being untidy but also dangerous to drive in. Councillor Jarrett blamed this on the poor organisation of the No Mow May scheme and threatened to end this vital programme set up to protect our dwindling bee population. Yet in a Medway Norse update to the Cabinet on the 19th October 2021, their green space team said they have 20% less staff and this is what ‘led to delays in grass cutting this spring and summer.’

I trust Councillor Jarrett is going to apologise to Medway Council staff for blaming their poor organising of No Mow May, and what is he doing to ensure Medway Norse has a full complement of staff by the summer?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr Bourne for his question. He said that 2021 had been an exceptional year as Medway Norse had needed to deal with unusual weather patterns, which had led to fast growing grass, as well as depleted staffing levels due to the pandemic. Despite this, Medway Norse had worked more hours on grass cutting in 2021 than in any previous year. However, the weather conditions had meant that they had been unable to catch up with the grass cutting cycles.

In readiness for the current year, Medway Norse and Medway Council had been working together with the Kent Wildlife Trust and Plantlife to ensure a programme was in place to take a balanced approach to ensure verges were a haven for insects, while maintaining road safety. Medway Norse was also working to increase summer working hours which would have a positive impact on the 2022 season.

Councillor Jarrett said that along with the Deputy Leader, he would be meeting with officers in the week following the Council meeting to ensure that all the arrangements were in place.

Question H – John Castle of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“The draft Local Plan published before the meeting in October 2021 allocated 3,625 homes to site B.8, currently the commercial dockyard Chatham Docks, which is the same as the number published by Peel L&P in December 2021.

Setting aside that the site is best used in its current allocation for employment as a viable Dockyard, the site is not particularly large and the number of homes allocated is considerable. The density of building looks unreasonable for such a location without a significant number of high rise buildings, which require large footings which limits the feasible density of housing in the location.

Does the Council believe this density of housing is viable in the location?”

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Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Castle for his question. She said that the site was an urban site and not a suburban green field site where the density would be much lower and, therefore, the land take much greater. Therefore, any development, should it come forward, was likely to reflect what had been achieved at the award-winning Victory Pier site and what was being delivered at Chatham Waters as well as on part of St Mary's Island. Recognising this, Councillor Chitty was satisfied that the provisional density was appropriate. Should the site be allocated for development, the owners would need to develop a masterplan. Exact housing numbers would depend upon detailed design work that would ensure that what was delivered would be appropriate and of the highest quality, including provision of open spaces and amenities for residents.

Question I – Paul O'Neill of Chatham asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

“As part of the landmark Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill, new laws will introduce a new criminal offence where a person resides or intends to reside on any public or private land without permission. The Government has made it clear that only a minority of travellers are causing problems, such as through abusive behaviour and extensive litter and waste at illegal sites. The vast majority of the travelling community are decent law-abiding people and we must ensure that there are legal sites available for travellers.

Behind Aldi on the Gillingham Business Park is a 1.4 hectare derelict car park site which has no residential properties nearby and could be used for both temporary and settled traveller plots.

Is the Council prepared to turn the above site into a traveller site?”

Councillor Gulvin thanked Mr O'Neill for his question. He said that the Government was encouraging councils to have a site or sites that the travelling community could temporarily go to when in that authority's area.

Whilst welcoming the positivity of Mr O'Neill's suggestion, although the Council owned the freehold of the land, it was held on a long lease until 2280 and it would be up to the head lessee as to the appropriate future use of the land.

Question J – Chris Spalding of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“At the Cabinet meeting in September when the draft Local Plan was unanimously approved for publication, with Councillor Potter stating he was happy to support the recommendation, because "without it, it is a road to ruin", you were at great pains to stress the need for compliance stating:

“The reason I am pushing about complying with government requirements, the first thing the Inspector will do is measure Government requirements and what this authority has done to comply and I have to say with absolute honesty if we

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had missed out on one of those compliances it would fall at the first hurdle and we cannot allow that to happen.”

There can be no doubt about the emphasis you placed on the compliance requirement because you confirmed:

“Compliance has to be the key word. And we have actually employed people to check and double check to ensure that that compliance is fully understood.”

How much did this checking and double checking cost the people of Medway? I hope we got our money back because they clearly did not do their job properly.”

Councillor Chitty thanked Mr Spalding for his question. She said that the first hurdle she had been referring to was submission of the draft Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in public. This was because there were a significant number of Plans across the country that had failed at that point, including some locally.

In order to ensure this did not happen, Medway’s draft Plan was being checked by Counsel and by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The work engaging with Counsel, the PAS and with an Inspector was continuing. The advice being given was that the emerging work showed no significant signs of weakness and that the Plan was being informed by a strong evidence base, following Government planning policy and guidance. Councillor Chitty considered this to be a clear demonstration that officers had been doing their job thoroughly and properly and that some people disagreeing with the conclusions of the work did not mean that the work itself was deficient.

633 Leader's report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader’s report and the following issues were raised:

- Covid-19, the now decreasing numbers of cases and hospitalisations and the end of Plan B measures.
- The Council’s summer programme of events held in 2021, such as the Gaming and Creative Festival and the Medway Mile.
- The second Future Hoo Consultation that had recently finished.
- Phases 1 to 3 of the Rochester Riverside development which was nearly complete. Design meetings were now being held in relation to Phase 4.
- The Garrison Point apartment development which was nearing completion.
- The opening of the Woolwich to Grain section of a coastal path. Medway Council had completed significant work on its section of the route.
- The Brook Theatre’s successful bid to the Levelling Up Fund.
- Improvement work planned for St John’s Church.
- A public engagement survey had been undertaken from December 2021 to January 2022 in relation to the public realm Paddock scheme.

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- In order to improve the centre of Chatham a report would soon be considered by Cabinet in relation to acquisition of the former Debenhams building.
- The refurbishment of two hangars at Rochester Airport.
- Progress on the development of Innovation Park Medway.
- The significant and continued progress made to improvements to Children's Services and new funding secured.
- Serious concerns about Covid-19 rule breaking by officials at national level, the message this gave and the unfairness for people in Medway who had followed the rules.
- Concerns around delays to development of the new Local Plan, the future of Chatham Docks and whether it was a particular concern to the people of Medway.
- A suggestion that climate change work was not progressing quickly enough.
- The rebuild of Splashes Leisure Centre.
- The rising cost of living and the affordability of council tax.

634 Overview and scrutiny activity

Discussion:

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

- The development of the Council's People Strategy was welcomed and its importance highlighted.
- Ongoing improvements to Children's Service were welcomed and the importance of implementation and monitoring acknowledged. The Child Friendly Medway engagement events were also highlighted.
- The development of the Children and Young People and Young Adults' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Transformation Plan and the urgent need to address lengthy treatment delays.
- Concern around plans to move some mental health services away from Medway following relocation of some other services away from Medway.
- A request for information in relation to Medway Development Company, previously requested at a meeting of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to be provided to the Committee.
- Progress in the sale of property at the Garrison Point housing development and whether the Chatham Waterfront development would be viable going forward.
- Members thanked Council officer, Anna-Marie Lawrence, who would shortly be leaving the Council, for her service.
- The impact of Covid-19 in schools and the excellent work by staff to keep them open in the face of the Omicron variant.
- The importance of cybersecurity and the Member Briefing note that would be provided on this topic.

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- Medway Norse and the maintenance of bin collections over the Christmas period despite the Covid challenge.
- The importance of combatting climate change, the rollout of electric vehicle charging points and tree planting.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

635 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Tranter asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

“In October 2021 the Local Plan was withdrawn from the Council agenda because (a) it was not complete and (b) because a majority of members had made it very clear they will not support it. Public consultation would have changed nothing in the plan and so it was pointless until there is agreement. Three months have passed and still Members have not seen a complete plan; also there appears to be no attempt to discuss or resolve Members' key concerns, such as the proposed mixed use designation of Chatham Docks which will destroy an important local industry.

Are the Cabinet still hoping this current plan will be accepted by this Council, or will they amend it in order to reach agreement?”

Councillor Chitty thanked Councillor Tranter for his question. She said that the Draft Local Plan had been withdrawn from the Full Council meeting in October 2021 as there was work that was still needed to be completed. Considering that, Councillor Chitty felt that it was appropriate to withdraw the draft Plan from the Council agenda and to come back when all the necessary work on the draft Plan, supported by all the required evidence, had been completed.

Officers were continuing to work on the draft Plan and were following national planning policy and guidance, as was required. Once that work had been completed, a decision would be made on the appropriate timing to bring the Plan to Full Council.

Engagement had been taking place with representatives of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and officers had met with an experienced Planning Inspector recommended by the Department.

Feedback provided had stated that the Council should be positive about the position reached with the Plan and that there were no significant weaknesses in the work that had been undertaken. These comments were reiterated by the Inspector, who was encouraged by Medway's emerging Spatial Strategy, which she advised was consistent with National Planning Policy and guidance. The Inspector advised that to move from that position would carry greater likelihood of the Plan being found to be unsound.

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It was important that Council officers and their consultants completed the work being undertaken and that the draft Plan that emerged being led by the evidence base.

The PAS had been very clear in a presentation to Members of the Council that the consequences of the Council not agreeing a Plan that had evolved from the evidence base and that had been developed in accordance with National Planning Policy and guidance and of the implications of moving to a different spatial strategy.

Question B – Councillor Rupert Turpin asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“The current target for Medway’s housing need is an eye watering 27,000 homes by 2037. However, this is based on out of date population statistics which go all the way back to 2014. More up to date figures were rejected by a group of Kent MP’s and in January the government acceded to their demands as set out in a letter and scrapped the more up to date calculations based on 2017 population statistics which would have reduced Medway’s target by 8,000 homes.

This, and other factors, such as the unique ecology and character of the Hoo Peninsula which includes large amounts of marshland liable to flooding, RSPB sites, RAMSARs, NPZs, SPAs, grade 1 agricultural land and SSSIs including the most important breeding site for nightingales in the country, gives Medway a unique natural heritage to protect and along with a supportive MP gives the Council a strong argument to present a case for lowering the housing numbers for Medway, which would benefit Medway as a whole, and Rochester and Strood in particular, since the constituency has 90% of the future pipeline of housing in Medway.

In addition, since 2014 there have been major changes to society, such as our departure from the European Union, the effects of a worldwide pandemic and an election result based on the promise of levelling up the North of England none of which was a factor in the 2014 statistics.

What steps have been taken or will be taken to work with Kelly Tolhurst MP and present to the DHCLG and Michael Gove strong arguments buttressed with scientific evidence from the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulation Assessment (assuming they have been completed) amongst other sources, to argue persuasively for a reduction in the housing target by at least the 8,000 calculated with the 2017 figures?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Rupert Turpin for his question. He agreed that the Government’s standard methodology was flawed and said that along with officers, he had taken every opportunity to challenge the figures with the Government, be it ministers or civil servants within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

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Council Members were aware that at the beginning of 2021, a strongly-worded letter had been received from Chris Pincher, Minister for Housing, essentially saying that the Council needed to get on with its Local Plan as the Government wanted all Local Plans to be adopted by 2023.

Medway had challenged the housing figures flowing from the standard methodology but had been told clearly that the exception test was an incredibly high one and that it was highly unlikely that Medway could justify a lower housing figure. The exception had only been agreed once and in that case the housing need was absorbed by another local authority. Medway was not in that situation.

Following more work on the Local Plan, consultants and Counsel had advised that Medway would be required to use the standard methodology housing need figure. Further meetings were subsequently held with the DLUHC and Planning Advisory Service (PAS), with PAS having given a presentation. All Council Members had been invited to this meeting. PAS had been very clear regarding the very high bar relating to any exception test argument. Members were advised of examples of other authorities who had tried and failed and were told what the consequences could and would be for Medway.

A representative of PAS had undertaken an initial assessment of work completed on the Local Plan and his initial findings were that officers and the Council should be encouraged by the position reached in the Plan and that there were no signs of significant weakness in the work undertaken so far.

A Planning Inspector, who was very experienced in Local Plan examinations had recently given an overview of the work undertaken and her findings were similarly positive, particularly in relation to the emerging Spatial Strategy.

Councillor Jarrett said that Medway would continue to challenge the use of the standard methodology where possible, but not in a way that would prejudice the Local Plan. The consequences of doing so had been clearly set out by the PAS to all Members attending their presentation. Councillor Jarrett concluded that the problem was the housing targets that had been imposed on Medway by Government and that it was for local MPs to tackle the issue and achieve the result that Medway needed, which was an acceptable housing target. This should be based upon the latest available 2018 figures and not the 2014 figures used by Government.

Question C – Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“In January 2021 a disappointing decision (from the Medway perspective) was made by the MHCLG to pay heed to a letter written by a consortium of Kent MPs which did not include Kelly Tolhurst. This letter was in protest at the revision of housing needs assessments released in August 2020, which for many boroughs of Kent had resulted in a rise in required housing, but for Medway had resulted in a lowering of the housing needs assessment by 8,000 homes over the period of the Local Plan. The revision, which was scrapped,

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was almost certainly more accurate as it was based on more recent population figures.

Medway Council was informed that if they submitted their Local Plan within 6 months of the reversal decision, i.e. by June 2021, then the lower figure (8,000 homes fewer) would have been accepted. Previous to this timeline, in the Full Council meeting of January 2020, the Council was reassured in a written answer to public questions that the draft Local Plan would be released in the summer of 2020.

For the residents and the nationally renowned wildlife of the Hoo Peninsula reeling under the proposed impact of a quadrupling of the population of Hoo, taking its population higher than that of Strood, and for the businesses in Chatham Docks under threat of flatted regeneration, this delay seems, to put it mildly, a missed opportunity of epic proportions.

As this deadline was over a year later than when we were led to expect the draft Local Plan would be ready, why were we unable to take advantage of this situation and submit a far less controversial plan likely to have gained the support of a majority of Members of the Council?"

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin for her question. He said that she was incorrect as the proposed revision to the standard methodology had been included in a Government Consultation in August 2020. In December 2020, the Government had confirmed that it would not be proceeding with the proposed revisions to the methodology and so there had never been any opportunity to use the proposed figures. Legal advice had been taken at the time to confirm this. On that basis, there had never been any advice at any time that Medway Council or any other Council could use the proposed revised methodology in its calculation of housing need.

Since the standard methodology came into effect, Councillor Jarrett and his officers had taken every opportunity to challenge the figures and the formulae behind the method, both with Ministers and with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Therefore, Councillor Jarrett stated categorically that there had not been a missed opportunity.

Question D – Councillor Williams asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

"With a huge number of homes in the pipeline for the Hoo peninsula it is vital that we as Councillors, and the public, get the most detailed and accurate information needed for consultation purposes. With regard to the latest consultation I, as Councillor for Strood Rural, would like to thank the HIF team for their efforts, and in particular for the removal of the flyover option for Higham Road, which has been welcomed by residents.

I would like the Council to ensure that all efforts are made to co-ordinate and bring forward the Local Plan in synchrony with the HIF bid as far as humanly possible. With this in mind I am disappointed that the Habitats Assessment, the

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Sustainability Appraisal and the Air quality data for Four Elms Hill roundabout was not available in time for the latest HIF residents' consultation which closed on 10th January. These documents were promised to us by November 2021 to support the s19 Draft Local Plan as late additions and seem to be even now not available.

Can I request that these are made available to the public at the earliest possible convenience?"

Councillor Chitty said that in relationship to housing numbers on the Hoo Peninsular, it was vital that Councillors and the public got the most detailed and accurate information. All information was freely available and it was vital that Members had confidence to know that information would be forthcoming.

Question E – Councillor Etheridge asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

"It has been identified, that Chattenden and the Hoo Peninsula, has a unique Military Heritage, possibly the only one in the world. During World War One, this area was specifically used because of its location for the development of Zeppelins, the testing of new weapons, especially explosives, and the experimentation and design of trench warfare. Various branches of the Military, were based here, including the Royal Naval Air Service. Today, we can still see the remnants of the very first torpedo launch pad, along with the world's first anti-aircraft gun emplacement. These measures had a major effect on the course and final outcome of World War One, saving countless British and Allied soldiers' lives. This area was at the centre of military technology.

This, and other factors, such as the unique ecology and character of the Hoo Peninsula, which includes large amounts of marshland liable to flooding, RSPB sites, RAMSARs, SSSIs, gives Medway a unique natural and military heritage to protect.

Can you tell me what measures are being put in place to document this particular piece of history, whilst protecting this unique military heritage, ensuring that it will be in a condition to be viewed by generations yet to come?"

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Etheridge for his question. He said that he was correct in pointing to the significance of the area. Councillor Doe agreed that Medway was a very special place with a unique natural and historic heritage, and this was specifically referred to in many of the Council's publications, including the various public consultations that had been undertaken on the Local Plan process.

The Council had worked with a number of bodies as part of the Local Plan work, including Historic England and Kent County Council's Archaeology service. This work would be reflected in the Local Plan as it emerged and would also be used in the consideration of future planning applications, where relevant.

Question F – Councillor Pendergast asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“In recent months areas of the Peninsula have once again suffered power cuts.

On Christmas Day large areas of Hoo were without electricity for several hours ruining what for many is regarded as a very special day.

Can the Leader of the Council please state how much of the much vaunted Housing Infrastructure Fund is allocated for utility infrastructure so the existing homes and all the new dwellings are guaranteed uninterrupted supplies?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Pendergast for his question. He said that the HIF funding of £170m had been allocated to provide improvements for roads, transport and the environment to support the delivery of new homes. The bid for the funding focused significantly on improving the Hoo Peninsula’s transport connections and environmental infrastructure and having these in place before homes were built.

The issue of utilities was captured in the Infrastructure Development Plan and power supply was a matter for UK Power Networks (UKPN). Discussions had been held with UKPN, which had suggested that there would be sufficient capacity in the system to meet the needs of planned growth. When planning applications were received, the required infrastructure would be assessed and delivered through the planning process, with the costs being met by the developers.

Question G - Councillor Curry asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

“Bearing in mind the strength of feeling from the public and the Members of his own party for the protection of Chatham Docks, will the Leader of the Council now support the majority of elected Members in this chamber for the retention of the Chatham Docks as employment land in the forthcoming Local Plan?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Curry for his question. He said that the Local Plan was drafted using an evidence base rather than the power of suggestion and something was not fact because some Council Members had a particular view. Officers were working with Planning Advisory Service inspectors and using evidence to make informed decisions.

Councillor Jarrett said he had not heard one sensible suggestion for an alternate location although he knew that some people were of the opinion that the Historic Dockyard should be demolished as an alternative.

Medway Council had no choice but to build the number of houses the Government had specified, using the standard methodology and their location would be decided based upon evidence.

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Councillor Jarrett concluded that he had seen no evidence that there was strength of public feeling on the matter and he invited Councillor Curry to provide evidence.

Question H - Councillor Khan asked the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“What action is Medway Council taking to support council tenants in light of the sharply rising energy costs that hit record levels last month?”

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Khan for her question. He said that Medway had a Tenancy Sustainment Team to support Council tenants and assist with any welfare needs. The team had been actively working with tenants affected by the increase in household bills, including the increase in energy prices and had been working with them to maximise their income, assist with budgeting and, where needed, access the Household Support Fund.

In addition, Medway regularly provided advice and information to residents on matters such as utility switching services, access to support, reminders, and other types of information.

In a further measure to assist, the Council was currently carrying out a significant amount of planned improvement works to replace and upgrade windows, front doors, and roof insulation and was installing ‘A’ rated boilers across its housing stock. 250 Energy Performance surveys had been initiated with a view to getting those properties up to a much higher standard.

Councillor Doe said that whilst the Council could not entirely insulate Council tenants or anyone else from cost-of-living variations, what it did do was to make the upmost effort to do all it could to assist.

Question I – Councillor Edwards asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

“The government’s announcement regarding 7,000 air purifiers being made available for schools seems woefully inadequate considering there are 300,000 classrooms across the country.

Could the Portfolio Holder give their assessment of the adequacy of ventilation in Medway schools whilst confirming how many air purifiers have been secured from the 7,000 for Medway?”

Councillor Potter thanked Councillor Edwards for her question. He said that the air purifiers were available directly from central Government and only for poorly ventilated teaching spaces. These were for state funded schools, colleges, and early years settings where alternative fixes to improve ventilation were not possible.

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The current guidance stated 'you can use local air cleaning and filtration units to reduce airborne transportation of aerosols where it's not possible to maintain adequate ventilation. These units are not a substitute for ventilation. You should prioritise any areas identified as poorly ventilated for improvement in other ways before you think about using an air cleaning device.'

Schools could apply for the air purifiers based on the need being identified through their risk assessment, in accordance with the guidance. Therefore, it was not possible to say at this time how many would be approved for Medway schools.

Question J – Councillor Van Dyke asked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

"Does the Portfolio Holder feel that, due to the delay in building the Maritime Academy, transporting the first and, potentially, second, cohort of young people from Strood to Stoke is environmentally and educationally acceptable?"

Councillor Potter advised that this was a Department for Education project and that the delays were due to the wider issues associated with the planning process. The most recent issue was related to delays caused by those opposing the provision of the school at Manor Farm and getting the S106 agreement finalised between parties.

The school would need to operate in temporary accommodation for at least the first academic year from September so that the demand for secondary school places in Strood was met.

In order to mitigate the impact of the additional journeys, transport would be provided to significantly reduce the number of individual journeys. The use of dedicated bus services would be the most appropriate and effective option and this was the approach that would be taken. The alternative to the temporary provision would have been to create bulge classes at other schools across Medway and this would have had a far greater negative impact environmentally.

Councillor Potter said that this was because it would have inevitably resulted in many more journeys throughout Medway, with lots of Strood families having children displaced to schools elsewhere. He said that the temporary provision proposal was established practice and that as a long term Strood resident, Councillor Dyke would know that there was already a precedent in the area, with pupils transported to Bligh Primary School from Ebbsfleet Green School.

Question K - Councillor Maple asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

"Whose decision was it to:

1. Publish the local plan draft on the agenda for the 7th October
2. Withdraw the local plan draft from the agenda for the 7th October?"

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Councillor Jarrett thanked Councillor Maple for his question. He said that Council officers had included the matter on the agenda in the normal way and that he had taken the decision to withdraw the Local Plan from the agenda.

Question L – Councillor Murray submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

“There are currently 10,207 households in Medway identified as experiencing fuel poverty. These families will now be forced to choose between eating and heating as the cost of household fuel is rising and set to possibly double by April 2022. Labour have proposed removing VAT on household fuel in order to mitigate the impact of rising costs.

Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that Medway Council should be doing all we can to help the families we represent and in doing so will he sign a joint letter urging the government to act quickly and remove VAT for household fuel?”

Question M – Councillor Osborne submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:

“Despite opposition from nearly 2,000 local residents, Medway Council introduced car parking charges at the Strand Leisure Park on 9th July 2018.

Can the Portfolio Holder advise how much income the Council has received since the charges were introduced, with a breakdown for each of the financial years 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22?”

Question N - Councillor Johnson submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell:

“In view of the fuel shortages during September, I would have expected the Portfolio Holder to have ensured the following:

- To review business continuity plans to identify workforce, key workers and how they travel to work
- To review requirements or consider requiring certain key workers maintain half a tank of fuel at all times to mitigate the impact of disruption
- To establish the potential for some forecourts to prioritise certain groups or to hold fuel back for designated workers or services, such as SEND transport
- To facilitate access to electric bikes or the use of pool cars
- To establish mutual aid agreements with other agencies to share and/or bunker fuel

What actions did the Portfolio Holder take to ensure that essential council services were protected?”

Question O - Councillor Chrissy Stamp submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles:

"According to the Cooperative Party, in Medway there are 1856 pregnant women and children entitled to Healthy Start vouchers, but the take-up rate is only 57%. That means at least £5,843.75 worth of vouchers for fresh fruit, vegetables and milk go unclaimed every week. Given the appalling levels of family poverty and child hunger in Medway, what is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure that the take-up of Healthy Start vouchers is 100%?"

Question P - Councillor Prenter submitted the following to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

"Can the Portfolio Holder please let us know when the work on the redevelopment of Splashes will begin, outlining what consultation has been undertaken with the local community?"

Question Q – Councillor Adeoye submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer:

"Families and communities across Medway will want to come together, safely, to celebrate the platinum jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen.

Can you confirm there will be no charge by the Council for any community wanting to hold a street party in Medway for road closures etc?"

Question R - Councillor Price submitted the following to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

"What measures are in place to ensure that the new housing developments and infrastructure on the Hoo peninsula are carbon neutral and pollution free?"

Question S - Councillor McDonald submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin:

"Following the closure of Splashes as result of serious structural problems with the building, can the Portfolio Holder reassure us that the other leisure facilities under the control of the Council are safe and fit for purpose, confirming when was the last structural survey done on Council leisure facilities?"

Question T - Councillor Hubbard submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty:

"The £1.6million that Medway Council taxpayers are having to stump up to fund the DfE and the Thinking Schools Academy to transport pupils to the former Stoke Primary School site is outrageous. The three-part nature of Manor Farm hybrid planning application delayed Frindsbury's Maritime Academy by many

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months. An application for just the school would have come to Committee much earlier and would have probably not resulted in others referring the granted planning permission to the Secretary of State.

Do you agree that the Council accepting the nonsense hybrid Manor Farm/Barn planning application that developer had embarked on, linking the school to a housing development and the conservation of Grade 1 listed Manor Barn, was pure folly?"

Question U – Councillor Browne submitted the following to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

"What new events are planned as a direct result of making the City of Culture bid?"

Question V - Councillor Paterson submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

"Just like his boss in Downing Street, the Leader was forced to account for his own movements during the first lockdown, a month before the infamous No10 party, when he bragged on Instagram about having shot some "fresh wood pigeon ready for the oven later".

After being challenged about whether he was continuing his wildfowling hobby while the rest of us were still limited to half an hour's outdoor exercise per day, Medway Tories then released a comical clarification that the "fresh wood pigeon" was in fact, and I quote, "fresh out of the freezer".

A new Defra definition of "livestock" includes game birds and will allow gamekeepers to kill wild birds such as crows, jackdaws, magpies and rooks – lest they interfere with the business of shooting game. Does the Leader welcome this new definition as, if so, I would expect his followers to look forward to future Instagram posts of "fresh magpie (from the freezer)" ready for the oven."

Question W – Councillor Howcroft-Scott submitted the following to the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe:

"The number of people sleeping rough in the UK has multiplied since 2010. Shelter revealed 274,000 people were homeless in England alone in December 2021.

But in Finland's capital Helsinki, rough sleeping has been almost eradicated thanks to a groundbreaking scheme. There is a principle that Finnish local authorities must stick to – at least a quarter of homes within each housing project must be genuinely affordable. Medway Council must be brave enough to follow this example - inroads are being made to tackle homelessness in many Labour controlled councils such as Manchester.

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What is Medway Council currently doing to eradicate homelessness in Medway and in doing so explaining the plans they are making to get families out of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation?”

Question X – Councillor Andy Stamp submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Adults’ Services, Councillor Brake:

“There are reports in the national media that the free supply of lateral flow tests to residents may be stopping.

Can you confirm that Medway will continue to supply free lateral flow tests as long as local decision makers feel it is required, not when central government tells us to stop?”

Question Y – Councillor Mahil submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell:

“Residents have raised concerns in the last couple of weeks regarding the disgraceful act of fly tipping taking place in the Chatham Cemetery.

What actions will the Portfolio Holder put in place to both deter future activity of this nature and take action against those individuals who have committed this highly antisocial activity?”

Question Z – Councillor Lloyd submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles:

“In view of the recent Cabinet decision to agree to fund future transport to the temporary site in Stoke for the delayed Maritime Academy, does the Portfolio Holder agree that this is unacceptable pressure from the Conservative government, showing Medway council tax payers and Medway’s young people are paying the price for issues relating to the building of school places that result from government and council delay?”

Question AA – Councillor Cooper submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett:

The return of the Medway Queen after its recent restoration is undoubtedly a positive development for Medway.

Will it be playing any role in the upcoming Platinum Jubilee celebrations?

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, written responses would be provided to questions 10L – 10AA.

636 Public Space Protection Orders Extension

Background:

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This report set out that Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were an order created in relation to areas within the local authority's jurisdiction, where activities were taking place that were, or were likely to be, detrimental to the local community's quality of life. PSPOs imposed conditions or restrictions on people within that area.

Public consultation had been undertaken in relation to proposals to extend the boundaries of the existing PSPOs, which covered the consumption of alcohol in Chatham, Rochester, and Strood. The consultation responses were set out in Appendices 3, 4 and 5 to the report. The proposed extensions to these PSPO areas were shown in the maps at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report sought Council approval to make the extensions to the PSPO areas, as recommended by the Cabinet on 14 December 2021.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, 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:

- a) Noted that although the response rate was low, those that responded to the consultation were in favour of the boundary extensions as was the Police and Crime Commissioner and Kent Police's Borough Commander.
- b) Approved the boundary extension of the existing town centre PSPO in Chatham, as shown in the map at Appendix 1 to the report.
- c) Approved the boundary extension to the existing town centre PSPO in Rochester, as shown in the map at Appendix 1 to the report.
- d) Approved the boundary extension to the existing town centre PSPO in Strood, as shown in the map at Appendix 1 to the report.

637 Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22 - Addition to the Capital Programme

Background:

This report provided an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategy 2018-22, highlighting areas of demand for school places and action taken and made recommendations to ensure that sufficient good quality school places were available.

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The annual review report, and its recommendations were based upon the annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2021, using the latest available data.

The report sought Council approval to make an addition to the Capital Programme in support of the proposals that were agreed by the Cabinet on 19 October 2021.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council agreed to add £1,870,500 to the Capital Programme to complete the resourced provision projects at the Howard School, Strood Academy and Victory Academy, together with the special school expansion at Bradfields, as set out in paragraphs 8.11 to 8.13 to the report.

638 Appointment of External Auditor

Background:

This report set out the options for the Council to appoint an external auditor for the 2023/24 financial year onwards, following the end of the current contract arrangement with Grant Thornton.

The report sought Council approval to 'opt-in' to a Sector Led Body appointed by the Secretary of State under the Act, as recommended by the Audit Committee when it considered the report on 11 November 2021.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, 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:

- a) Noted the comments of the Audit Committee, as set out in section 5 of the report.
- b) Noted the future implications for external audit procurement arrangements.
- c) Agreed option 3 (opt into a sector led body), as set out in section 3 of the report.
- d) Agreed, under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, to

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accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to become an opted in authority for the purposes of the appointment of external auditors for five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

639 Appointments to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Background:

This report requested that the Council agree the appointment of a teacher representative, a named substitute for the same position and a Church of England Diocese – Rochester Diocesan Board of Education representative, to the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Kemp, supported by Councillor Etheridge, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council agreed the following appointments:

- a) Vicky Aspin be appointed as the teacher position on the Committee for a two year term.
- b) Hannah Roberts be appointed as the named substitute for the teacher position on the Committee for a two year term.
- c) Lenny Williams be appointed as the Church of England Diocese representative (representing the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education).

640 Schedule of Meetings 2022/23

Background:

This report asked the Council to consider a provisional programme of meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 18 May 2022.

The report also provided an update on the future of the Kent and Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Board, a report on which would be considered at the next meeting of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board.

It was noted that meetings of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee would now be scheduled to have a start time of 6pm in 2022/23 rather than the time of 6:30pm set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Kemp, supported by Councillor Etheridge, proposed the recommendations set out in the report, subject to the start time of the Business

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Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee being changed to 6:00pm.

Decision:

The Council agreed a provisional programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to start time of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny being amended from 6:30pm to 6pm, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 18 May 2022.

641 Use of Urgency Provisions

Background:

This report provided details of recent usage of urgency provisions contained within the Constitution.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, 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 with regards to the use of urgency provisions set out in the report.

642 Motions

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

“Care Leaver Covenant

This Council notes that in July 2016, the Government published a major policy document ‘Keep on Caring’ to support young people from care to independence.

A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

The aim of the Care Leaver Covenant, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided by local authorities.

This Council is committed to ensuring our care leavers receive the best possible support once they leave the care system. The Council has placed a significant focus on this, as the Leader of the Council announced in his April 2021 Council speech and have created a new service dedicated to the matter.

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This Council has the same aspirations for a Care Leaver as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress, and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves.

This Council is committed to rethinking how services are delivered and what support is provided, with a strong focus on finding new and better ways of helping care leavers.

This Council will continue to strengthen the culture of corporate parenting, so that they better respond to care leavers' needs.

This Council requests the Cabinet to receive a report which will set out proposals to formulate a formal agreement for how everyone in the Council can be involved in upholding and developing this pledge to ensure it is as successful as possible and make sure the Council supports everybody leaving care post 16.”

Decision:

On being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

B) Councillor Osborne, supported by Councillor Van Dyke, submitted the following:

This Council notes that:

1. There were 29,652 recorded crimes (April 20 – March 21, Kent Police Data November 2021).
2. There were 106 crimes per 1000 people according to the Community Safety Partnership report agreed in December 2021.
3. The Victim Based Crime Statistics highlight Medway is the fifth highest Unitary Authority area for reported crime per 1,000 people. Higher than other major urban areas like Bristol, Nottingham, Darlington, Thurrock and Brighton & Hove.
4. There were 9574 incidents between Apr 20 - Mar 21 of anti-social behaviour representing a 59% increase or 3551 additional incidents on the prior reporting period representing a significant spike in anti-social behaviour.
5. That Medway has had a relatively high level of crime for a sustained period; and that the Community Safety Partnership annual report does not provide sufficient contextual benchmarking data for Member scrutiny.

This Council also believes that:

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1. That several inner urban Medway wards are amongst the highest level of reported crime in the South East region.
2. That Medway is not getting sufficient resources from the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and this needs to become a strategic priority for Kent Police.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. To ensure the next Community Safety Partnership Annual Update report includes datasets with peer-based authority comparisons; victim based crime data (per 1,000) and local authority heat map comparisons.
2. To write to the Kent PCC to request allocation of an additional 80 Police officers to Medway from April 2022 in light of additional Kent Police budget capacity, ensuring a visible deterrent to crime.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, supported by the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, proposed the following amendment (see marked changes):

This Council notes that:

1. There were 29,652 recorded crimes (April 20 – March 21, Kent Police Data November 2021).
2. There were 106 crimes per 1000 people according to the Community Safety Partnership report agreed in December 2021.
3. The Victim Based Crime Statistics highlight Medway is the fifth highest Unitary Authority area for reported crime per 1,000 people. Higher than other major urban areas like Bristol, Nottingham, Darlington, Thurrock and Brighton & Hove.
4. There were 9574 incidents between Apr 20 - Mar 21 of anti-social behaviour representing a 59% increase or 3551 additional incidents on the prior reporting period representing a significant spike in anti-social behaviour.
5. That Medway has had a relatively high level of crime for a sustained period; and that the Community Safety Partnership annual report does not provide sufficient contextual benchmarking data for Member scrutiny.

This Council also believes that:

1. That several inner urban Medway wards are amongst the highest level of reported crime in the South East region.

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- ~~2. That Medway is not getting sufficient resources from the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and this needs to become a strategic priority for Kent Police.~~
2. Kent Police has recruited a record number of new police officers, with 788 being gained since 2016 with plans for an additional 185 new officers, which will benefit Medway.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- ~~1. To ensure the next Community Safety Partnership Annual Update report includes datasets with peer-based authority comparisons; victim based crime data (per 1,000) and local authority heat map comparisons.~~
- ~~2. To write to the Kent PCC to request allocation of an additional 80 Police officers to Medway from April 2022 in light of additional Kent Police budget capacity, ensuring a visible deterrent to crime.~~
1. Write to the Kent PCC and thank him for his hard work within Medway which includes providing the Medway Taskforce, the return of town centre Officers in Gillingham, Rochester and Chatham, the Problem Solving Taskforce of PCSOs, Police Cadets, the expansion of the rural policing team, the dedicated teams investigating domestic abuse and sexual violence and the new Schools team which has led to a decrease in all reported crime by 11% for the year April 2020-March 2021.
2. To invite the Kent PCC to a cross-party meeting to discuss some existing challenges with crime in Medway, especially anti-social behaviour, and get his input on how best to manage these.

Amended motion reads:

This Council notes that:

1. There were 29,652 recorded crimes (April 20 – March 21, Kent Police Data November 2021).
2. There were 106 crimes per 1000 people according to the Community Safety Partnership report agreed in December 2021.
3. The Victim Based Crime Statistics highlight Medway is the fifth highest Unitary Authority area for reported crime per 1,000 people. Higher than other major urban areas like Bristol, Nottingham, Darlington, Thurrock and Brighton & Hove.
4. There were 9574 incidents between Apr 20 - Mar 21 of anti-social behaviour representing a 59% increase or 3551 additional incidents on the prior reporting period representing a significant spike in anti-social behaviour.

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5. That Medway has had a relatively high level of crime for a sustained period; and that the Community Safety Partnership annual report does not provide sufficient contextual benchmarking data for Member scrutiny.

This Council also believes that:

1. That several inner urban Medway wards are amongst the highest level of reported crime in the South East region.
2. Kent Police has recruited a record number of new police officers, with 788 being gained since 2016 with plans for an additional 185 new officers, which will benefit Medway.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Write to the Kent PCC and thank him for his hard work within Medway which includes providing the Medway Taskforce, the return of town centre Officers in Gillingham, Rochester and Chatham, the Problem Solving Taskforce of PCSOs, Police Cadets, the expansion of the rural policing team, the dedicated teams investigating domestic abuse and sexual violence and the new Schools team which has led to a decrease in all reported crime by 11% for the year April 2020-March 2021.
2. To invite the Kent PCC to a cross-party meeting to discuss some existing challenges with crime in Medway, especially anti-social behaviour, and get his input on how best to manage these.

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

Decision:

This Council notes that:

1. There were 29,652 recorded crimes (April 20 – March 21, Kent Police Data November 2021).
2. There were 106 crimes per 1000 people according to the Community Safety Partnership report agreed in December 2021.
3. The Victim Based Crime Statistics highlight Medway is the fifth highest Unitary Authority area for reported crime per 1,000 people. Higher than other major urban areas like Bristol, Nottingham, Darlington, Thurrock and Brighton & Hove.
4. There were 9574 incidents between Apr 20 - Mar 21 of anti-social behaviour representing a 59% increase or 3551 additional incidents on the prior reporting period representing a significant spike in anti-social behaviour.

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5. That Medway has had a relatively high level of crime for a sustained period; and that the Community Safety Partnership annual report does not provide sufficient contextual benchmarking data for Member scrutiny.

This Council also believes that:

1. That several inner urban Medway wards are amongst the highest level of reported crime in the South East region.
2. Kent Police has recruited a record number of new police officers, with 788 being gained since 2016 with plans for an additional 185 new officers, which will benefit Medway.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Write to the Kent PCC and thank him for his hard work within Medway which includes providing the Medway Taskforce, the return of town centre Officers in Gillingham, Rochester and Chatham, the Problem Solving Taskforce of PCSOs, Police Cadets, the expansion of the rural policing team, the dedicated teams investigating domestic abuse and sexual violence and the new Schools team which has led to a decrease in all reported crime by 11% for the year April 2020-March 2021.
2. To invite the Kent PCC to a cross-party meeting to discuss some existing challenges with crime in Medway, especially anti-social behaviour, and get his input on how best to manage these.

Mayor

Date:

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