

REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2022

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Report from: Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor
Hackwell

Summary

This report sets out progress made within the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell which fall within the remit of this Committee.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee covered by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management are:

- Bereavement
- Community Wardens
- Emergency Planning
- Registration

1.2 Achievements are detailed by services area below.

2. Bereavement

2.1 Cremation and burial statistics for the last 5 years are as follows (adult numbers are given as these attract a fee):

Calendar Year	Total Cremations	Adult Cremations	Total Burials	Adult Burials
2021 (Covid pandemic)	2794	2666	442	413
2020 (Covid pandemic)	2678	2593	328	303

2019	1936	1845	322	299
2018	1995	1877	349	330
2017	2046	1925	343	321

2.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a large impact the cremation numbers, with so many people unfortunately losing their lives. Throughout the first wave Medway Crematorium offered the best service to families and as a result saw cremations from out of area deceased rise to over 50% for two months running.

2.3 There has also been a large increase in demand for “Direct Cremations” (a cremation without a funeral service). We are still to establish the cause of this shift whether it was due to people unable to attend funerals due to the pandemic or due to the rising costs of funerals a Direct Cremation is the cheapest option. The table below highlights the increase in demand.

Calendar Year	Total Cremations	Direct Cremations	%
2021 (Covid pandemic)	2794	306	11%
2020 (Covid pandemic)	2678	225	8.4%
2019	1936	104	5.4%
2018	1995	94	4.7%
2017	2046	89	4.3%

2.4 Medway Crematorium has been working with a newly built private cemetery (Blue Bell Cemetery) situated in Sevenoaks since June 2019, where we cremate their cremation funeral services. This private cemetery is having their own crematory built and we expect this relationship to cease March / April 2022. As a result, Medway Bereavement Service will seek out other private cemeteries to see if we can take over their cremation services.

2.5 With the new Cremators installed 2018/19 we are now operating at 97.5% abated cremations in 2021. Like all machines there are occasions where there are issues which means we by-pass the abated system. There are also two occasions through the year during service maintenance where cremations need to be reviewed in the by-pass system, hence why this is not 100%

2.6 Obitus, the company who supplies Webcasting and Visual Tributes of funerals continue to be popular. The company have only recently started to provide statistics on these services and they are as follows. From July to December 2021 out of the 760 funeral services, 269 services used the webcast facilities and 223 used a form of visual tribute during the service.

2.7 By law each cremation/burial authority must return the green Disposal Certificate back to the Register Office, where the death was registered as confirmation of the disposal. Medway Register Office can use these

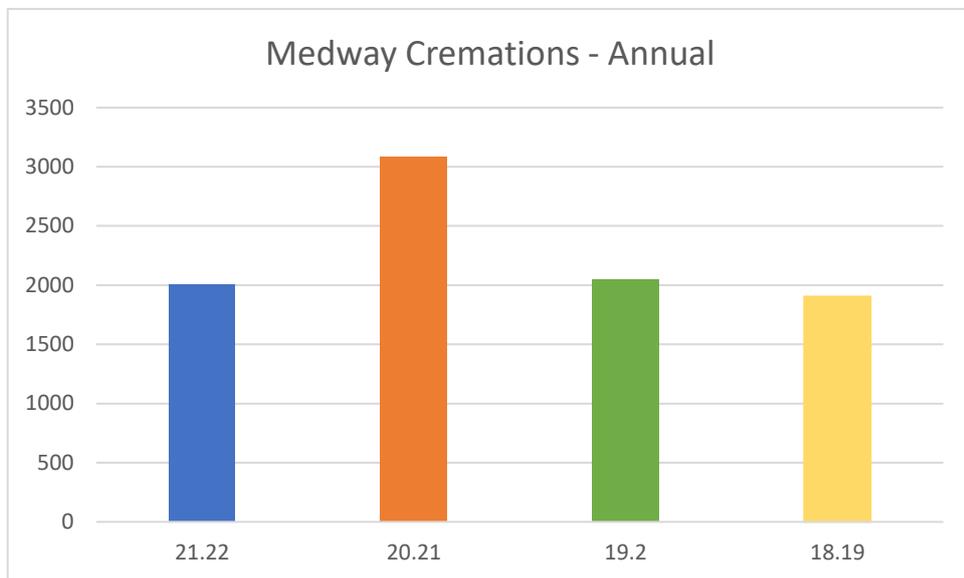
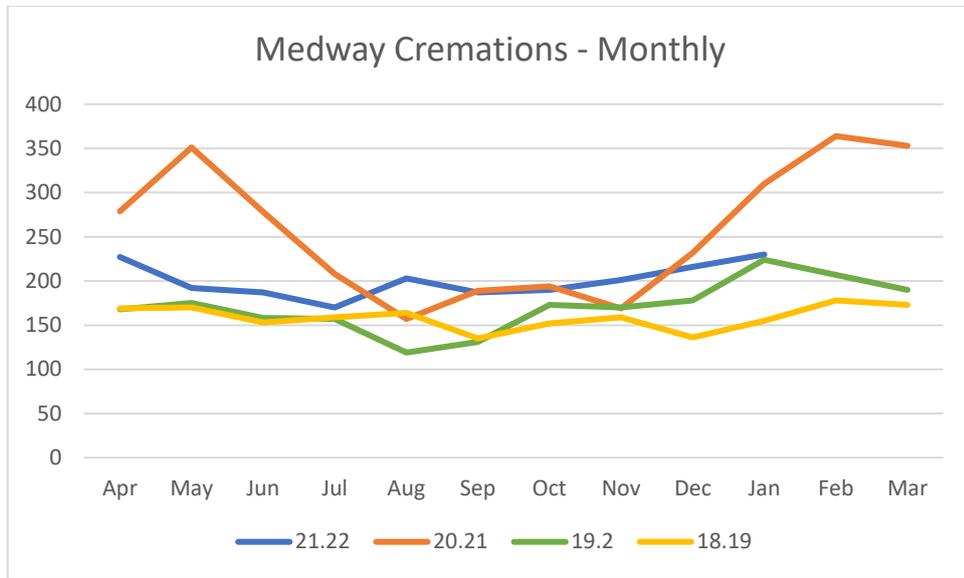
returns to identify the percentage of Medway Residents using Medway Crematorium. From the data provided by the Register Office it would seem Medway Crematorium is the chosen destination for 56% of Medway Deaths so far this financial year, a figure which used to be around 48-52%

2.8 Bereavement Services saw a large increase in workload during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cremations saw a 50% increase in 20/21 and a predicted 25% increase in 21/22 compared to pre-Covid levels.

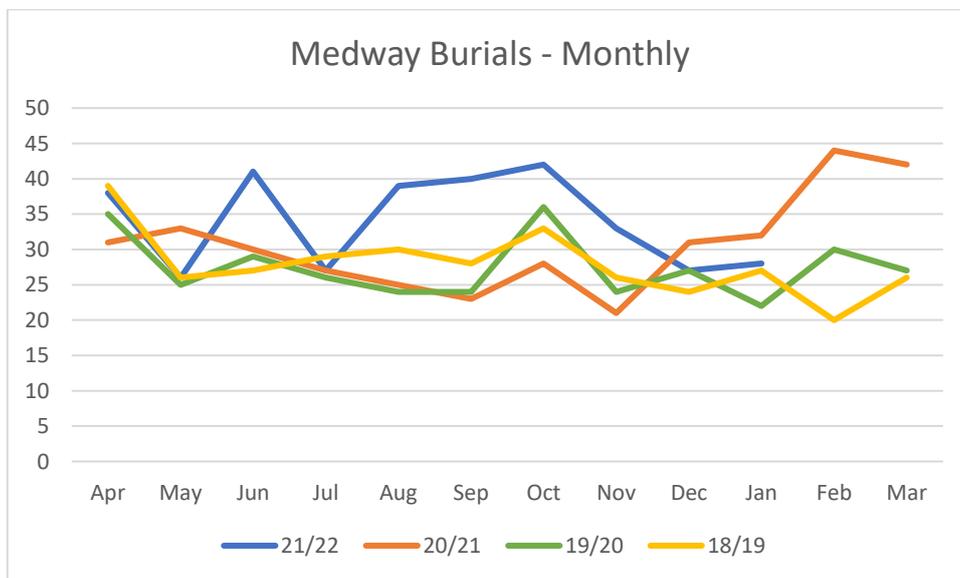
Cemeteries were also busy during the Covid-19 pandemic with a 12% increase in 20/21 and a predicted 25% increase in 21/22 compared to pre-Covid levels. I believe that a lot of the increase in 21/22 is due to the fact that Bereavement Services had to limit the internment of Cremated Remains during the peaks to focus on the burial requests. The various graphs below highlight this.

Throughout the pandemic Bereavement Services did everything in their power to ensure the funeral was as normal as possible for attending families and put in the following measures.

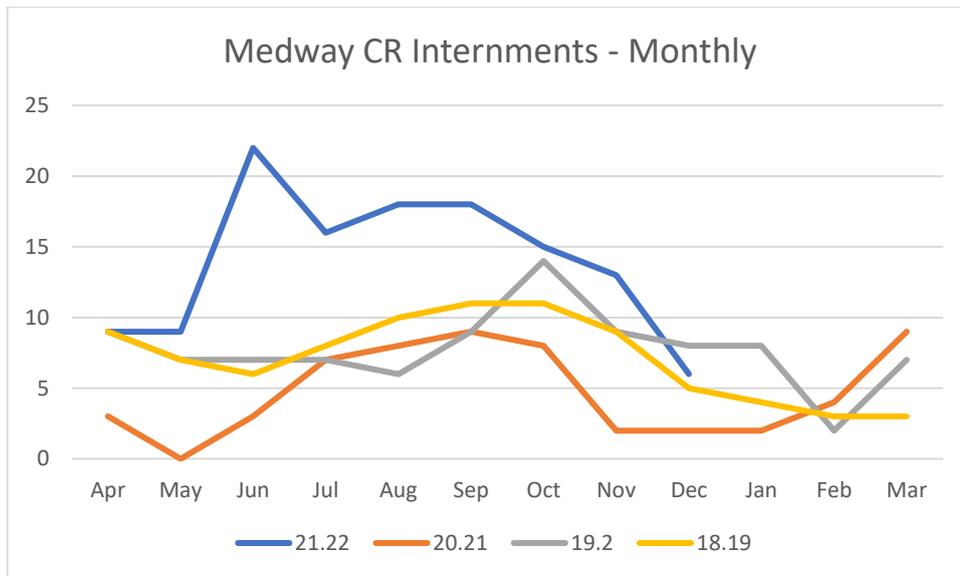
- Chapel attendance was based on social distance rules meaning a maximum of 24 to a service before the government extended this to 30. All other local crematoria did not exceed 15.
- Every chair, lectern, catafalque and touch point was cleaned after each service. This allowed curtains to remain open if the family wished. Other crematoria imposed rules to the committal part of the service.
- Due to limited numbers allowed in the chapel, live webcasting was provided free of charge for every funeral.
- Medway Crematorium continued to allow witness charges for the Sikh and Hindu community. Other local crematoria suspended this highly religious service.
- East Chapel was reduced to 30min services from May 2020 to allow more services to be booked at a cheaper rate.
- East and West Chapel was reduced to 40min for March 2021 to allow more services to be booked at a cheaper rate. No other local crematoria adjusted their times to allow more capacity during the pandemic.



* 21.22 financial year still on going the graph above represents Apr-Jan. end of year prediction to be around 2,450 cremation.



* 21.22 financial year still on going the graph above represents Apr-Jan. end of year prediction to be around 410 burials.



2.9 Due to commitment and dedication of Bereavement Service staff the team was invited to attend the Medway Inter Faith Action group where we were rewarded a Certificate of Appreciation.

2.10 Bereavement Services have also seen a large increase in Public Health Funeral referrals. There is no solid reason as to why, but I believe it to be that during the pandemic people became isolated, or that a lot of these people would usually die in hospital, however due to the pandemic were unable to attend hospital.

In 2019/20 we received 14 referrals, which increased by nearly 100% to 27 referrals in 2020/21 and has continued to increase into 2021/22 with 32 current referrals (Apr-Jan).

Due to the large increase in referrals the procedure for processing these funerals was made more efficient, creating an easier way to reclaim council expenses from the deceased estate.

3. Community Wardens

3.1 Community Wardens (Enforcement)

3.2. The Community Wardens (Enforcement) who operate as the Street Scene Team have been extremely busy during the COVID-19 pandemic operating as close to normal as possible. The team also played an important role supporting the various COVID-19 testing centres

3.3 The Street Scene team is currently operating with five officers and two loader drivers. They are operating with 1.6 FTE vacant posts. This team deals holistically with a very broad remit of enforcement issues and this year they carried out the following outcomes:

Refuse out early

- Refuse out early is often misreported as Fly Tipping, officers will visit and assess, if deemed refuse they will issue a Community Protection Warning (CPW), this year 1283 Community Protection Warnings have been issued for household waste related issues.
- Of the 1283 CPW's, non-compliance has led to 7 Community Protection Notices (CPN) being issued, representing an interim compliance rate of 97.5%.
- All the Community Protection Notices issued were subsequently adhered to, representing a 100 % compliance rate.

Abandoned Vehicles

- Officers have dealt with 1365 reports of abandoned vehicles.
- Of these 1365 reports:

649 were not deemed as abandoned,
190 were not found,
230 were referred to contractors as untaxed,
169 were duplicate reports,
38 Vehicles have been removed as abandoned,
89 further reports were closed as unjustified.

Footway/carriageway obstructions

- 220 reports, all actioned.

Fly tipping removals and investigations

- This year the Street Scene Officers have removed 809 reactive reports of fly tipping.
- A further 1114 incidents were cleared proactively, these covered an extremely broad range fly tipped materials.
- A further 791 collections were made as part of a *Service Level Agreement* with the Housing Services to remove reported fly tipping from their property.
- The total tonnage removed this year by Street Scene team is a remarkable 179 tonnes.

Trade waste compliance

- The year the Scene Officers have issued 168 s34(5) notices, dealing with Trade Waste. This resulted in twenty fixed penalty notices being issued for non-compliance, of these four are now under further investigation for non-payment.
- 3.4 The Street Scene Team's overarching objective is compliance, which it achieves primarily through education and engagement with local residents and businesses. The team takes an innovative approach to their work and responds dynamically to the emergent issues in Medway.
- 3.5 Engagement Wardens
- 3.6 Under the revised structure, there are two Engagement Officers (1 x Environmental Engagement and 1 x Recycling) and three Community Engagement Wardens, who are all managed by the Environmental Engagement Manager. The Engagement Wardens main areas of work fall into the following categories:

Attendance at PACT meetings

During the pandemic, we have seen a decline in the number of PACT meetings being held, with almost all of them now turning to 'virtual meetings' via Zoom and Teams. The Engagement Wardens have attended 6 PACT meetings including New Road (Intra) PACT, Hoo Chatham PACT's

Community surgeries

Wardens also engage with the local community through local Community Surgeries. These have been dormant for some time due to restrictions that have been in place, but we have started to resume them with the PCSO's. These surgeries take place at local community hubs, such as libraries, and provide an accessible location for local residents to come along and ask questions / find out more about the services we offer. The most recent surgery was held at Hook Meadow library. We will be scheduling dates and locations over the coming weeks to be advertised on our website and social media.

Litter picks

As part of the Great British Spring Clean (28 May – 13 Jun 2021), The Engagement Wardens helped to organised 34 community clean-ups and litter picks, encouraging the local community to take ownership of problems in their locality and do something positive about them. The Engagement Wardens have been working with 9 local community champions and litter picking groups throughout the year to undertake a series of litter picks. The Engagement Wardens plan to arrange litter picks with local schools once further restrictions are removed. The

Great British Spring Clean 2022 runs from 25 March 2022 to 10 April 2022 and the Engagement Wardens hope to run this alongside the Great British Schools Clean this year.

School and community talks

As part of a programme of engagement, the Wardens have visited:

- the 38th and 40th Sea scouts to give a talk to 25 Scouts and 8 leaders.
- St Augustine's Church (Place of welcome coffee morning).
- Plans to talk at Swingate School (once restrictions lifted)
- Scheduled talks with the Girl Guides.
- Scheduled talks with the Women's Institute

Events

As the restrictions eased some months ago, a programme of events restarted and the Wardens have been able to interact face-to-face with the public again. Since April 2021, Wardens have assisted the Engagement Officers at Roadshows which have taken place at

- Rainham Library for Earth Day, the Pentagon Shopping Centre and Dockside Shopping Centre.
- Attended the 8 'Responsible dog ownership' events alongside the Animal Wardens promoting the waste team and recycling services we provide.
- Undertaken the small electrical (WEEE) trial as part of recycle week and attended 14 locations to collect 63 items which has diverted them from landfill.
- Two Engagement Wardens attended the Clarion Housing – Summerson Close event day at Copperfield's – the Deputy Mayor + Consort attended this event too.
- Attended the Cherry Trees consultation and spoke to 6 people and gave out 6 x blue and 6 x white reusable recycling bags.
- The Wardens also attended the Recycle week events at the main shopping centres – two at Hempstead Valley, The Pentagon Centre and Dockside. At these events, they assisted the Engagement Officers in speaking to residents and delivering supplies.

Resident communication and Door Knocking campaigns

- Written to 1643 residents in relation to issues such as refuse out early, fly-tipping, contaminated recycling in flats and community clean ups.
- Assisted on the Gillingham North "Safer streets" recycling behaviour change project (participation surveys, reusable bag deliveries and letter drops). In the past few weeks, one of the wardens wrote to over 800 properties offering a free caddy bin and roll of liners as part of the project funded by the PCC.

Monitoring participation of recycling services

As part of our ongoing campaign to improve recycling across Medway, the Wardens have undertaken projects:

- In Chattenden and Chatham to resolve issues around refuse storage and early presentation of waste and to increase recycling.
- Carried out a micro-intervention in Smith Street Strood.
- All of the Wardens took part in the three week, annual participation surveys. These were completed on time this year as the whole team were able to take part.
- Undertaken a recycling intervention in Hoo with 97 households being monitored, bag deliveries and letters delivered over a 3 week period.

Bring site inspections

Wardens continue to undertake weekly 'bring site' visits, checking all areas where recycle bins are located (bottles, textiles and paper) to ensure that they have capacity and the sites are clean and tidy. Any issues are reported on Confirm to Norse.

Social media accounts

The Environmental Engagement team has Social Media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. All three Wardens are trained to use the Facebook page and actively contribute towards content and liaison with direct messages from our followers and promoting the work of all the Environmental Services teams

Delivery of food caddy's, caddy liners and recycling bags to hubs and libraries

The Wardens are responsible for ensuring the community hubs and libraries receive a stock of Caddy bins and recycling bags, to be able to hand out to the public visiting. They also deliver caddy liners, which the library sell on our behalf.

Assisting as Incident Liaison Officers (ILO's) for Emergency Planning as directed by the Environmental Engagement Manager

- The team assisted the emergency planning team with a power outage in Luton Road Chatham and assisted Emergency Planning with visits to 31 petrol stations in Autumn to undertake a fuel audit during the fuel crisis.
- A Warden attended Nile Street, Gillingham to act as ILO following a fire resulting in potential displacement of residents. The Warden spoke to gas and the fire department on site and liaised directly with the Emergency Planning Manager
- Wardens have also been deployed to areas at risk of flooding during the high tides, liaising with the Environmental Engagement Manager to relay information back to the Emergency Planning and Flood Manager.

3.7 Other items of interest

In the interest of finding better ways of interacting with residents, one of the Community Wardens has recently started a course with Learning and Development to become a 'deaf champion'. This will improve communication with residents and children who may be hard of hearing or deaf and make us more inclusive.

3.8 This is not an exhaustive list, more of a snapshot of the excellent work undertaken by the team. The Engagement Wardens continue to be on hand should they be required to assist the team in general.

3.9 Waste Wardens

3.10. Under the revised structure there are four contact monitoring officers and two Waste Wardens who are managed by the Senior Contracts Monitoring Officer. The waste wardens' main areas of work fall into the following categories:

Assisted waste collection visits

The Waste Wardens visit residents who request assistance with their waste collection service through illness, disability or infirmity. The warden would telephone the customer to arrange a suitable time to visit, during the visit the warden will discuss and agree a location for the resident to present their waste for Medway Norse to collect. Since April 2021, 130 assisted collections have been assessed and set up by Waste Wardens (following either telephone consultation and/or socially distanced site visit). In Q4 the annual assisted survey will be sent to all residents receiving an assisted collection the waste wardens will door knock residents who've not responded to the survey. This can be a very involved task when residents require additional support through other agencies and the waste wardens are ambassadors for Medway Council.

Proactive collection and cleansing contract monitoring

To ensure Medway Norse are collecting waste and cleansing to the contract standard the waste wardens have proactively attended 210 locations relating to missed waste collections, dog fouling, and litter picking. Where possible they carry out remedial litter picks and escalate, if need be, to Medway Norse. The waste wardens monitored 93 separate locations of missed waste collections raised through the stage 1 complaints process.

Contract Monitoring Activity	Proactive monitoring locations
Missed Collection Monitoring	93
Dog Fouling	77
Litter Picking	40
Total	210

Table 1 Proactive Contract Monitoring

NI195 street inspections

The Waste Wardens conduct 1200 NI195 litter inspections yearly to ensure a high standard of cleanliness is achieved by Medway Norse.

The inspections are spread across 22 wards which includes a selection of land classes: Main Retail and Commercial, Local Shopping areas, Residential streets, Main Roads, Waste Bins (litter, canine and combined) Rural Roads, Alleyways, Footbridge and subways.

A visual inspection of 50 meters is reviewed for the amount of litter present and graded. This is a transect. A - B grades are acceptable for litter C – D are unacceptable. The number of sites that are at an acceptable standard at the time of inspection grade A- B are then reported as an overall % of good standard sites. For example, 97 sites at grade A-B / 100 x 100 = 97% of areas inspected were at an acceptable standard for litter.

The Waste Wardens conduct the NI195 litter inspections (100/month). Where unsatisfactory graded (C/D) the waste wardens have raised service requests/direct emails to Medway Norse instructing the areas to be cleansed to a grade A standard. The results from April 21 in Q1 96% Q2 96% and Q3 97%

Targeted street cleansing inspections

In addition to the NI195 inspections and reactive service requests, the Waste Wardens have an annual programme of street cleansing monitoring to ensure quality standards are met using the NI195 method. Since April 2021, 720 inspections have been logged at A/B standard and where the standard is not met the waste wardens report issues for resolution with Medway Norse. In 2020-21 the Wardens proactively monitored manual barrow schedules, this year 2021-22 has focused on 10 mechanical schedules (Scrab type street sweepers), in 2022-23 proactive monitoring will focus on the 9 mobile schedules.

Weekly High Street Cleansing Inspections

Following the opening of the hospitality sector in July 2020 after the first Covid-19 lockdown, the Waste Wardens inspected the additional high street evening cleansing completed by Medway Norse. They continued this practice to ensure the high street cleansing standards are maintained to a satisfactory standard. Any issues identified during the inspections are raised with Medway Norse who rectify the problems. The High Streets do not generate many service requests because of the continuous cleanse. However, it is important that we monitor the contract and at the same time look at the overall perception of the high street.

Reactive customer service requests

Residents report issues with street cleansing using the online form or by telephone. The Waste Wardens investigate each report to resolve these issues which may involve site visits, liaising with residents and neighbours and then instructing Medway Norse to rectify any problems. These can take some time to resolve where issues are complex and may involve neighbours, require land searches or other council departments. In the period between April 21 and January 2022, 719 'street not clean' service requests were raised for the Waste Wardens to investigate.

- 3.11 The Waste Wardens are mobile officers who spend much of their time attending waste issues, however they will report issues on behalf of other departments for example untidy land, green spaces, highway obstruction or graffiti.
- 3.12 Animal Wardens
- 3.13 Under the revised structure there are three Animal Wardens who are managed by the Environmental Protection Officer. The team sits under the Animal and Environmental Protection Team within Regulatory Services. The team respond to a variety of animal related issues.

Stray Dogs

The Animal Wardens work on a duty stray dog rota for the week. The duty officer will be the first to respond to a report of a stray and will also cover the weekend callout service that operates 9am to 4pm Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays.

Outside of the above hours, reports can be made via the Council's out of hours line. If an Animal Warden is not on duty, the public are advised to take dogs to VetsNow at PDSA Gillingham where they will be checked for a microchip and attempts will be made to contact the owner. If the dog is not microchipped or the owner is not contactable then the dog will be held and collected by an Animal Warden the following day.

During normal working hours, once a dog has been collected, it will be scanned for a microchip. A picture of the dog will also be posted on Medway Council's Stray Dog Facebook page requesting that the owner makes contact.

After the statutory 7 days, the Animal Warden team continue to manage the rehoming and fostering of dogs that were not claimed. On some occasions, we work with animal charities and rescues to rehome dogs that may require more specialist knowledge or assessment and on occasions when we have been unable to find a suitable home within the area. A dog will only be euthanised due to medical reasons following advice from a vet or if they have severe behavioural issues.

Within this period:

Total number of service requests for the Animal Warden Service	760
Number of stray dogs reported	298
Number of dogs placed in foster care	27
Number of dogs adopted	24
Number of foster applications received	106
Dogs to rescue	8
Cases requiring assistance from Police Dog Legislation Officer	4
Number of dogs microchipped by the team	9
Number of notices served for non-compliance of Microchipping regulations	6
Community Protection Warnings served	3

Service Awards

The Animal Warden service has been awarded the RSCPA Gold PawPrints Award which recognises and celebrates the Council's continued work with stray dogs. In addition to this, the team were awarded the RSPCA Bronze PawPrints Award for Contingency Planning, this recognises the procedures in place for assisting pet owners in emergencies.

Engagement

The Animal Warden service has led in the planning and organisation of responsible dog ownership roadshow events through the summer. They were also joined by the Engagement and Community Safety teams, who were on hand to offer advice to the public. Battersea Cats and Dogs Home and 'Friends of' groups have participated in some of the events.

During the events, the Animal Wardens have offered advice and promoted responsible dog ownership. Free dog microchipping and free chip checks were undertaken to help ensure that owner details are kept up to date.

Education for children on how to interact safely around dogs was also provided using the Kennel Club's Safe and Sound Scheme.

The following events have taken place:

23rd July 2021 – Gillingham Park

29th July 2021- Broomhill Park

2nd August 2021 – Capstone Country Park

17th August 2021 – Riverside Country Park

1st September 2021 – Great Lines Recreation Ground

16th September 2021 – The Vines Recreation Ground

The team has also attended local fun days organised by Housing Associations and resident associations. This includes two community events at Copperfields Recreation Ground on 11th September and 28th October and another at Capstone Country Park on 26th September offering microchipping and responsible dog ownership advice.

Free dog waste bags and dispensers have also been provided free of charge at these events.

Social Media and Newsletters

The team are due to publish the 6th edition of their stray dog service newsletter. Each edition gives responsible dog ownership advice, updates on the dogs that come into our care and seasonal activities for dogs and their owners. There are currently 188 subscribers.

The Medway Council Stray Dog Facebook page has nearly 12000 followers and is regularly used to promote responsible dog ownership messages and national campaigns. It is also an excellent tool to help quickly reunite dogs with their owners. The team are also posting regular good news stories including unclaimed strays in their new homes. This has generated donations to the Stray Dog Fund which is used to help pay for dogs that come into the Council's care, to date there has been 17 donations made to the fund

In addition to this, the team also post good news stories on the Medway Stray Dog Service Instagram page which currently has 114 followers.

3.14 Reactive Complaints

Dog Fouling:

The Animal Wardens have responded to 104 dog fouling complaints. These complaints will be investigated in a number of ways working closely with Waste Services to ensure any fouling is cleared and also making referrals to the District Team if the issue is a recurring problem and in need of patrol work.

The team carry out stencilling of footpaths as part of their 'bag it and bin it' campaign and do have the ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices should they witness an offence of dog fouling whilst on duty.

The team are currently working with the Street Scene Team and Medway Task Force to develop a project on tackling environmental issues including dog fouling in the area of Luton.

Dangerous Dogs

Complaints of dangerous dogs in terms of dogs attacking other animals are investigated and the team have received 84 complaints. These have mainly been dog on dog incidents and many would be a civil matter. Should the incident be caused by irresponsible actions of the owner, the team will investigate further. These cases have primarily been resolved through education but, if necessary, they will be pursued under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

If the report is regarding a dog injuring someone, or if someone is in fear of being injured it would be referred to the Police for investigation.

Dog barking and nuisance complaints

The Animal Wardens assist the Environmental Protection Team with the investigation of Statutory Nuisances involving animals. This includes dog barking and odour complaints. This year they have investigated 18 nuisance complaints.

Animal Licensing complaints

Although the role of licensing animal activities falls to the Environmental Protection Team, the Animals Wardens take the lead in the initial investigation of complaints concerning unlicensed activity. This includes unlicensed home dog boarders and unlicensed dog breeders. Should the complaint require formal action, the case is referred back to the Environmental Protection Team. The team has investigated 52 complaints this year.

4. Emergency Planning

- 4.1 The Permanent fixed Post of Senior Emergency Planning Officer has had a Temporary Contract Extension. It is hoped a further extension will see the postholder in post until the end of January 2023.
- 4.2 The Medway Council Heatwave Emergency Plan was written to cover seasons from 1 June– 15 September 2020 and again the same period in 2021. The team assisted the Consultant Public Health in developing the Cold Weather Plan for 1 November 2020 – 31 March 2021 and again for the same period in 2021/22. These plans are refreshed each season to reflect the arrangements set out in the National NHS & UK Health Security Agency National Emergency Plans.
- 4.3 The Emergency Planning team continues to monitor the Severe Weather Warnings and Alert Service, jointly run by the Meteorological Office and NHS/UK Health Security Agency, which advises Council services and voluntary organisations when trigger levels are met. To date response and action has been necessary on the following occasions:

Cllr Turpin			
Thunderstorms Storms/Wind	Cold/Snow	Rain	Heatwave
14 Aug 20 24 Aug 20 24 Dec 20 13 Jun 21 27 Jun 21 07 Jul 21 24 Jul 21	28 Dec 20 04 Jan 21 08 Jan 21 11 Jan 21 14 Jan 21 28 Jan 21 01 Feb 21 05 Feb 21 (Large scale power cuts)	02 Oct 20 21 Dec 20	14 Sep 20 15 Jul 21 19 Jul 21 23 Jul 21
Cllr Hackwell			
02 Jan 22	23 Nov 21 30 Nov 21 20 Dec 21 24 Dec 21 30 Dec 21 06 Jan 22 11 Jan 22 18 Jan 22	20 Oct 21	

- 4.4 To complement the COMAH External Emergency Plan, a live test was conducted on the alerting systems that would be used in the event of an external emergency associated with an emergency at the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) site on the Isle of Grain. This test is carried out on an annual basis, last held on 14 July 2021.
- 4.5 Medway Council's duty to carry out a three yearly review, consultation, rewrite, and development of the External Emergency Plans for Grain's Upper Tier Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites has been carried out. The Plans have been rewritten (Dec 21) and will be tested during a Teams meeting style tabletop Exercise on 28 April 2022.
- 4.6 Most Live training was suspended/postponed during the COVID crisis however, the Emergency Planning Team has arranged for senior officers from across the Council to attend the following multi-agency events:
- Oil Pollution Shoreline Clean-up Assessments Techniques Cse (SCAT) 13-14 Sept (6 Officers)
 - Oil Pollution Beach Masters Cse 12-14 Oct 21 (3 Officers)
 - KRF Winter Preparedness Workshop – 04 November (3 Officers)
- 4.7 The Emergency Planning team has provided additional internal training and represented Medway Council at the following Exercises:
- MCG Control Centre Grain Siren & Rapid Reach – July 2021
 - Incident Liaison Officer training (Duty Engineers) - 02 Nov 21
- 4.8 The Emergency Planning Team contributed to the planning and response for four multi-agency operations: Op Fennel Road disruption

in Kent (all 2020 and continuing through 2021) Op Stack, Op Perch and Op London/Forth Bridge.

- 4.9 The Team were involved with the following Major Exercise:
- Lundy (Traffic disruption due to EU Exit).
 - Medway London Peel Ports Oil Pollution Exercise (Feb 22)
- 4.10 The Emergency Planning team has represented the Council on 18 separate standing Kent Resilience Forums (KRF) groups and task and finish groups, which are established as and when necessary, to undertake specific projects. These Groups are consolidated by means of a KRF Delivery Groups Day which incorporates the three-core function Groups, Plans and capabilities, Risk and Exercise & Training.
- 4.11 Throughout the year the Team has responded to a number (13) of flood alerts ranging from potential coastal area flooding to river/severe surface water flooding. All evidence was passed to our Flood and Drainage Officer. The team has also supported two incidents where residents experienced major water disruption. In September 2020, the Team also responded to a very large fire at an Industrial unit in Hoo that caused a temporary Evacuation of 250 residents and a fire effecting 10 families at St Marys Island. A third fire in October 2021 also required EP assistance resulting in a six-person family and dog from Strood needing temporary accommodation. We also assisted in a major Power outage (Nile Road, Gillingham) just before Christmas 21/22 in which there was a possibility of a full evacuation of 28 properties due to suspect Carbon Monoxide and the subsequent Power outage as a result.
- 4.12 The Team has been involved with Medway Council Resilience Partners in identifying any risk and threat associated with the move away from the European Union. A response was needed during New Year 20/21, when France closed its borders and imposed heavy restrictions on Lorry Drivers and other visitors who tested COVID positive near the boarders. The Government sent these COVID Positive people to a Hotel in Rochester where Medway Council had to facilitate/administer wellbeing.
- 4.13 The Team has contributed to the following emergency plans/reports:
- KRF Drought Plan
 - Network Rail Emergency Plan
 - Medway London Peel Ports Oil Pollution Plan
 - Pan Kent Strategic Emergency Response Plan
- 4.14 Emergency Planning were involved with the initial planning with Public Health colleagues, for the threat of a global pandemic COVID-19. Although this materialised as a public health emergency, Emergency Planning led on establishing the Strategic and Tactical response for the Council, putting in place a Command-and-Control structure from late March 2020. During this period the Team were busy in identifying a permanent COVID 19 PCR Testing Station (Curtis Way, Rochester) and setting up the first bespoke LFT (D) Testing Centre outside of a

hospital environment in the country (Hoo Leisure Centre). Near Christmas, the Team worked on five LFT (D) testing stations ensuring that the sites were fit for purpose and designed and built to plan. We also helped with the Military 'request for assistance' project, in which the project was to scope the assistance required and then convincing Central Government and the Military firstly of the need in our area, secondly, we were able to run these prepared centres following withdrawal of the Military. The Council were successful at both. At Christmas 2021/22, the team again assisted Public Health and other Health partners in identifying Vaccination sites on the peninsula and more pop up LFT (D) testing sites in the Rochester and Luton areas

The Assistant Director for Emergency Planning took the role of Tactical Commander working with the Local Resilience Forum and was aided by the Emergency Planning Team who formed a Tactical Advisory Group. They established emergency structures across the Council and with partners to respond and to ensure that critical services continued, and resources were targeted to helping vulnerable adults and children. This Team liaised with Kent and the Deaths Process Group to manage excess Death predictions and expectations for our Area. The Team also carried out the Command & Control Lessons Identified process

4.15 Medway's Emergency Planning Team also took over the Role of Chair for Kent and Medway's Local Authority Emergency Planning Group providing Coordination throughout the COVID crisis from November 2020 continuing till June 2022.

4.16 Other Projects the Team has been involved with are:

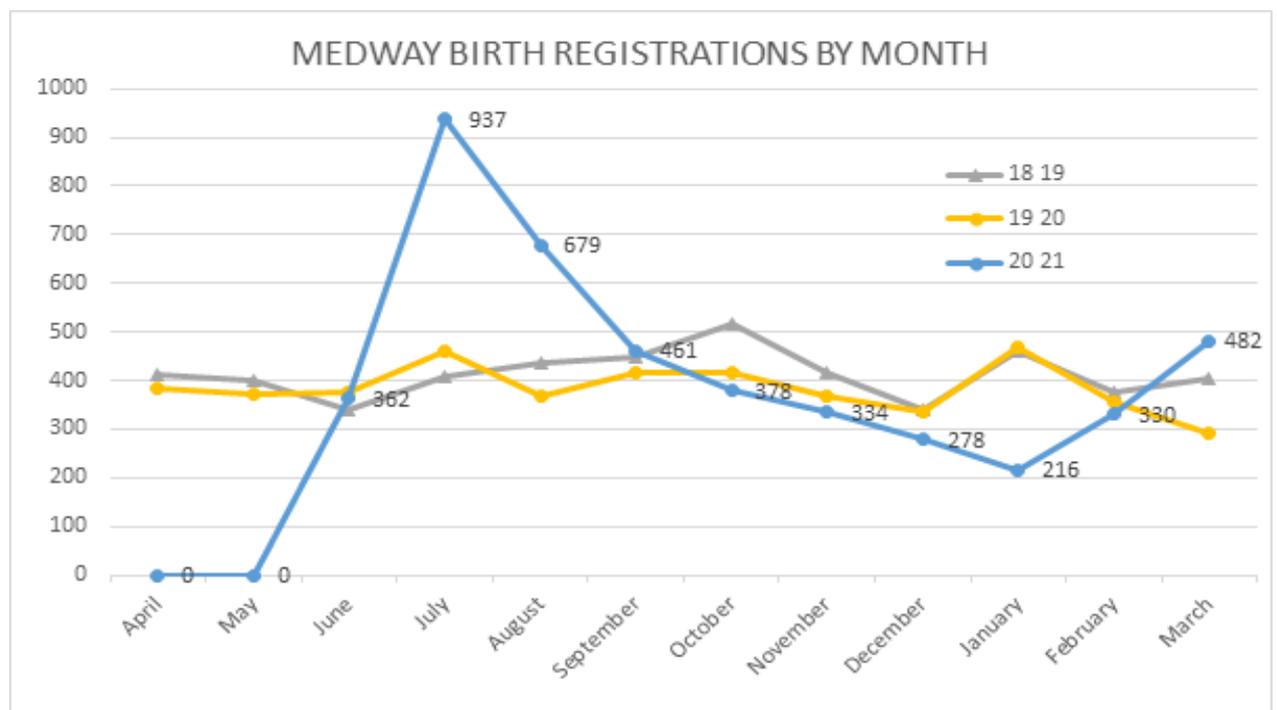
- Avian Flu Monitoring (Animal Health)
- Fuel Disruption (Sept 21, Public scare and panic buying, Tanker driver crisis)
- Department for Transport planned works to the SS Montgomery (EP was able to organise a member briefing from the Receiver of Wrecks direct on the current condition of the vessel).
- Climate Change project.
- Mutual Aid for Call Centre Staff and Drivers to assist Medway Hospital.
- Oil Pollution at Motney Hill
- Council readiness for Counter Terrorism Threat Level changes and Incidents.
- Afghan Refugee support scoping.
- Illegal Migrants.
- Dead Dolphin off All Hallows Holiday Park.
- Sunk Vessel off Rochester Pier.

5. Registration

5.1 There were 4954 birth registrations in 2020/2021 with 67% being registered within the target 42 days of birth. In 2019/2020 the service registered 98% of births within this target and the drop in performance is solely due to the restrictions put in place by Government at the

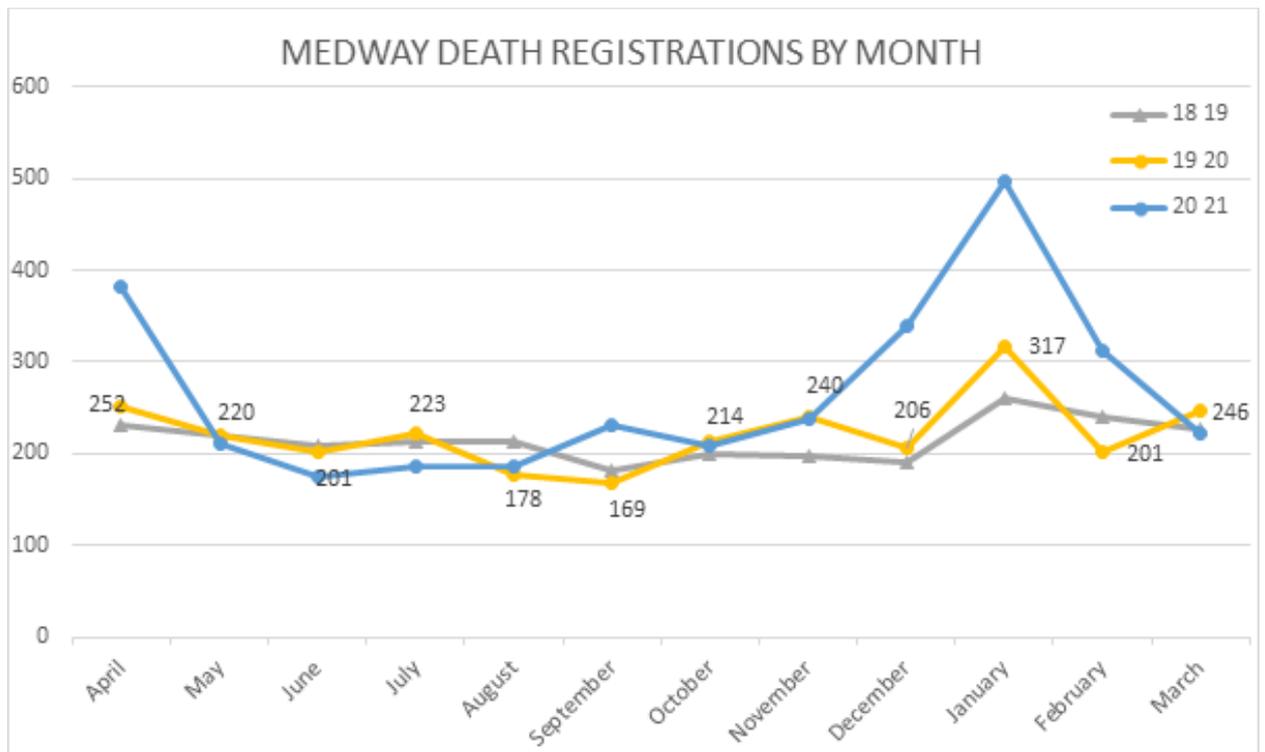
beginning of the year to curb the spread of pandemic infection. On 28 March 2020 birth registrations were ordered to cease, and as indicated in the below illustration only re-commenced on 1 June 2020. It can also be noted how quickly the service recovered, back capturing the outstanding births, and returning to (as close as possible) “business as usual” by September of the same year.

5.2 Priority of service provision has always been given to the registration of deaths for reasons of public health. This explains the drop in birth registrations in January where there would historically be an increase, and correlates precisely with the indicated increase in death registrations for the same period. Again, these birth registrations were recovered as quickly as possible and normal service resumed by the end of March.



Data source - The General Register Office

5.3 In 2020/2021, 3185 deaths were registered with 99.5% of informants being offered an appointment within the target 2 working days of notification. This is compared to 2667 death registrations in 2019/2020, an increase of 518 registrations in total.



Data source - The General Register Office

- 5.4 To facilitate the registration of deaths during lockdown the Covid 19 Bill allowed for the registration to be made over the phone by the informant, and the electronic transmission of the required documents from the certifying Doctor to the Registrar. This required a complete re-design of the service within a couple of days and was achieved with excellent results. The changes were embraced whole heartedly by both the service users and professional partners. This bill expires in March 2022, and whilst thankfully primary legislation was laid to continue with the electronic transmission of the required documents, unfortunately this was not possible for the telephone element and the face-to-face registration of deaths will become mandatory again.
- 5.5 258 marriages were registered in the 2020/2021 against 752 registered in 2019/2020. This decline was largely due to successive lockdowns/restrictions and couples moving their celebrations to another year rather than compromise their dream day.
- 5.6 1954 Notices of Marriage were taken in 2020/2021 against 2153 in the previous year. As with birth registrations, notice appointments were not permitted until June as they require a 30-minute face to face appointment.
- 5.7 Medway Register Office facilitated the granting of British Citizenship to 250 foreign nationals in 2020/2021. Despite the restrictions these were all small personal Covid secure ceremonies rather than the normal large groups. This avoided causing delays for citizens as the required paperwork issued by the Home Office is time sensitive and vulnerable to expiry.

5.8 In June 2021 Medway submitted its annual performance report to the Registrar General's Office (the General Register Office) and received the following assessment

"We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank Medway registration service for the hard work undertaken during 2020/21 and for the continued effort to maintain service delivery in the face of the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about.

We acknowledge the efforts by the team to continue to ensure high levels of performance was maintained throughout the year and the continued progress in reducing volumes of outstanding birth registrations during this period has also been noted. In addition, the utilisation of wider council administrative colleagues contributing to excellent levels of customer access to the service is also reflected in levels of customer satisfaction recorded and the efforts made by registration colleagues."

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Appendices

None

Background documents

None