

Medway 2037

Summary Paper for Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

SQW has been commissioned by Medway Council to refresh *Medway 2035* – now referred to as *Medway 2037* - alongside a suite of other new and refreshed strategies (including a Town Centres Strategy, Skills and Employability Strategy, Innovation Strategy and the River Strategy).

SQW presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2022 to present the approach being taken to developing this strategy suite and to seek feedback from Members to inform the drafting process.

Since this time significant progress has been made regarding stakeholder consultations and in preparing a first working draft of the strategy suite, with a first working draft issued for Medway Council officer review on 11 February 2022.

Medway 2035 is the Council's core economic and regeneration strategy. The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed overview of the proposed refreshed iteration of this document referred to here as *Medway 2037*.

Feedback from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is welcomed to inform the final draft of the strategy.

Our approach to developing Medway 2037

A number of key principles were presented to Members in January 2022 which have shaped the approach to developing *Medway 2037* which are elaborated below

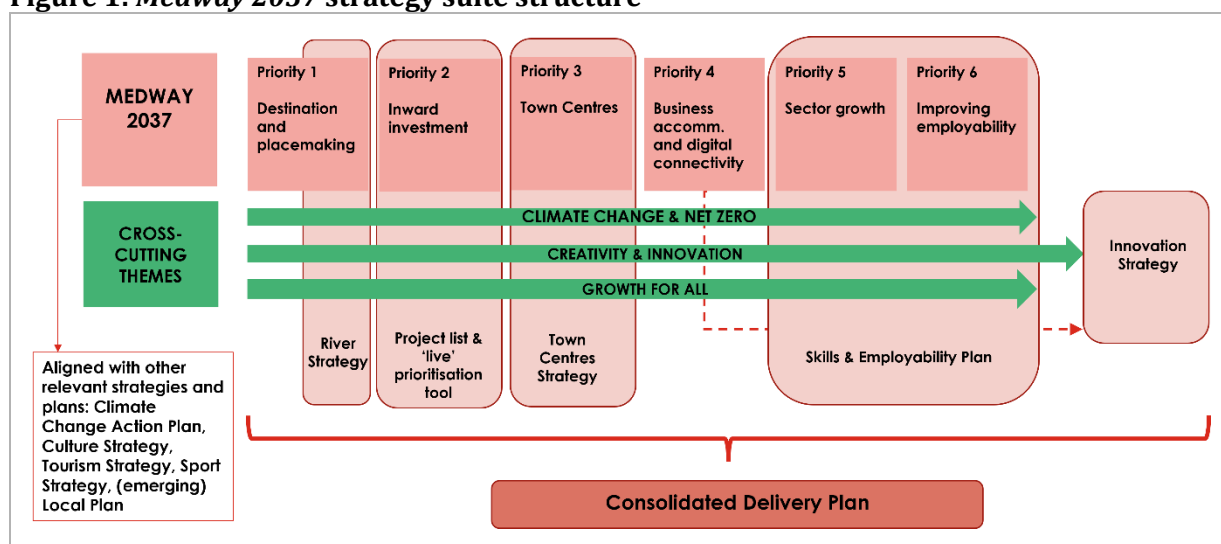
- **No need to reinvent the wheel:** *Medway 2035* is a well-considered, robust vision and strategy which clearly articulates Medway's core economic development and regeneration priorities. It was only adopted in 2018 so whilst it is need of a refresh in response to various technological and socio-economic trends and developments, much of the document remains sound and can be retained.
- **Focus on deliverability** – alongside the development of *Medway 2037* a number of other key strategies have been developed explicitly linking to key priorities and themes - spanning town

centres, the River, innovation and employability and skills – including delivery plans with identification of specific interventions with a focus on ownership, pragmatism, funding sources, governance and resourcing to provide Medway Council with a robust platform for future delivery and priorities for targeting funding opportunities.

- **Balance between ‘top down’ approach....and ‘bottom-up’:** Whilst *Medway 2037* and its supporting strategies articulate a clear vision, priorities and strategy for delivery, it is recognised that it is not possible to have all of the ‘answers’ now; it is important to make space for co-design, partnership working and putting in place a framework for identifying, designing, funding and delivering as yet ‘unknown’ future projects and interventions alongside key stakeholders.

The proposed structure of the *Medway 2037* strategy suite is detailed below. This is in line with the structure presented to Members in January 2022, with some minor amendments to reflect subsequent stakeholder engagement, detailed later in this paper.

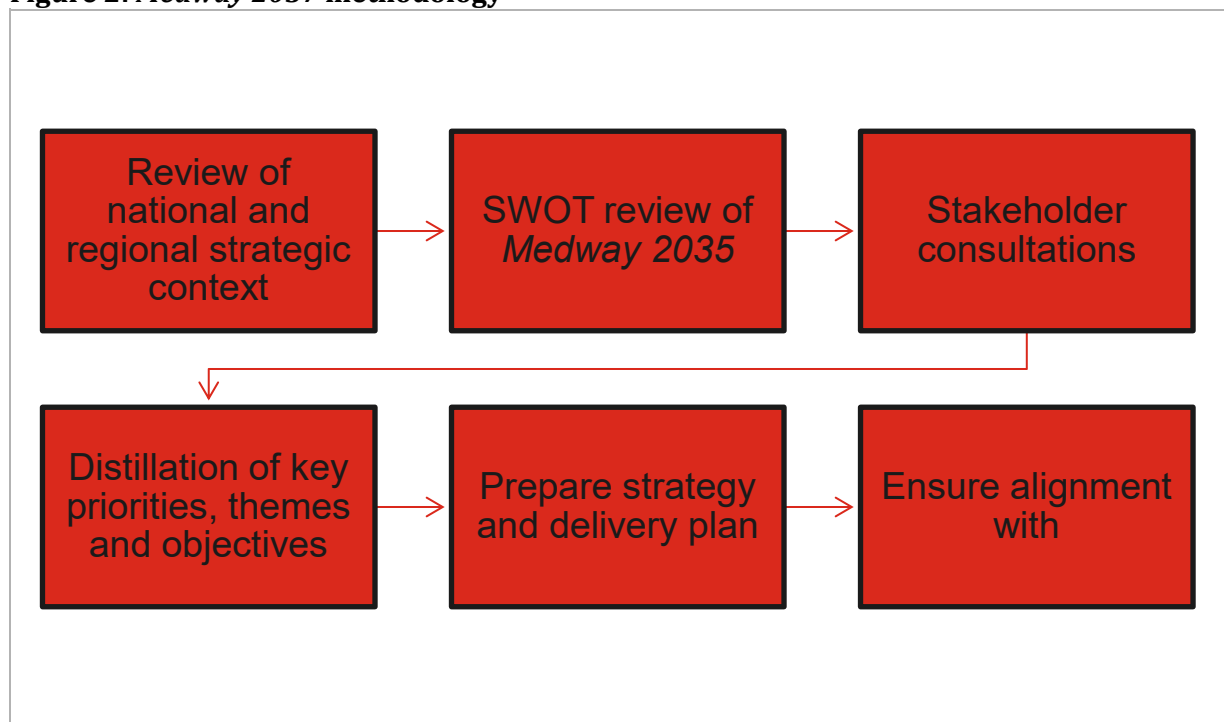
Figure 1: Medway 2037 strategy suite structure



Source: SQW

The approach SQW taken to developing the draft *Medway 2037* strategy is set out in the figure below:

Figure 2: Medway 2037 methodology



Source: SQW

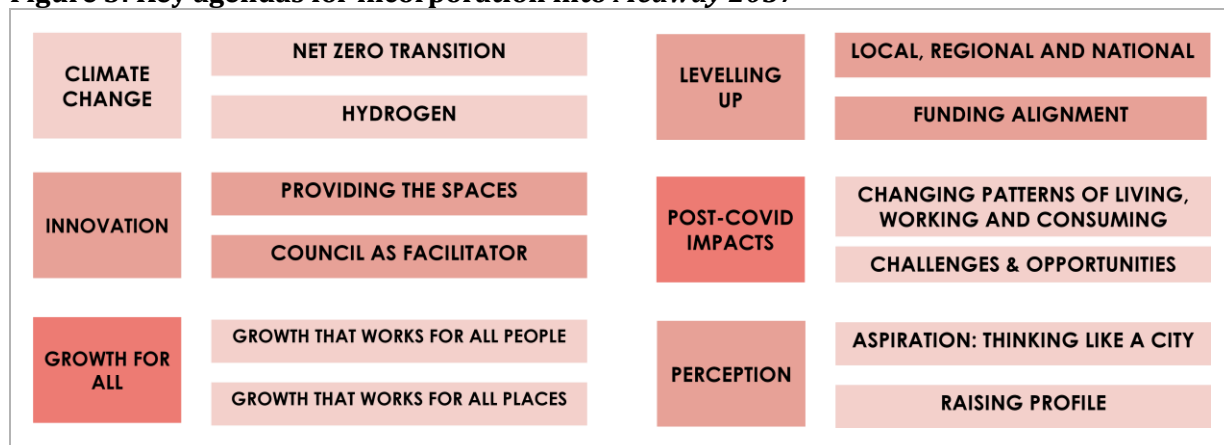
The draft *Medway 2037* strategy has been presented in a storyboard format with integrated SWOT analysis of the existing content presented side-by-side with proposed deletions, amendments and restructured / additional content.

Proposed key moves

As presented to Members back in January 2022, the following key agendas have been identified as being essential for being embedded in *Medway 2037* – these are repeated below in Figure 3 for reference.

Key themes and agendas

Figure 3: Key agendas for incorporation into Medway 2037



Source: SQW

Additional key themes and agendas which have been highlighted during stakeholder consultation – including feedback from the DMT (17 February 2022) include:

- **Creativity** – elevating this theme alongside innovation as a key cross-cutting theme to acknowledge the importance of the Council and its partners thinking and delivering creatively to deliver innovative outcomes across the Council’s key priorities.
- **Culture** – *Medway 2037* as drafted places significant emphasis on culture and the creative industries as an acknowledged strength and opportunity for Medway as a whole. Importantly, *Medway 2037* does not seek to duplicate on the work already being undertaken by Creative Medway in the delivery of Medway’s Cultural Strategy, but instead focuses on the role in which the delivery of this strategic priority can play a role in delivering placemaking, economic and regeneration outcomes.
- **Health and wellbeing** – whilst *Medway 2037* is fundamentally an economic development and regeneration strategy, it is important that health and wellbeing are acknowledged as important outcomes alongside economic growth and prosperity related objectives with interlinkages recognised where appropriate.
- **Child friendly city** – This is a stated priority of the Council and interlinkages will be clearly articulated in *Medway 2037*
- **Leisure and tourism** – the Council is developing a separate leisure and tourism strategy however, in a similar way to the cultural agenda identified above, the interlinkages and role that leisure and tourism can play in delivering placemaking, economic and regeneration outcomes is highlighted in *Medway 2037*

Key moves

Whilst a large number of minor changes, many of which are editorial in nature, have been made in the draft of *Medway 2037*, the following ‘key moves’ are highlighted for particular consideration:

- **Headline vision (front cover):** “**Sustainable** Waterfront University City: **creatively** connecting innovation people place; driving growth for all” – key additions to reflect the increased priority of the climate change agenda and creativity in Medway Council’s approach to delivering economic growth and regeneration.
- **Introduction of a new section: “Medway: the place which delivers”** – this follows the existing section entitled ‘Medway: the place for success’ to articulate the major successes and demonstrable track record of the Council in delivering both directly and in partnership since the adoption of *Medway 2035*; this is an important point to highlight when considering that *Medway 2037* will act as both a strategy and, in part, an inward investment prospectus.
- **Inclusion of cross-cutting themes – creativity and innovation; climate change and net zero; growth for all:** these were introduced to Members back in January 2022 with the rationale articulated previously. *Medway 2037* includes specific content to demonstrate how and why these key themes cut across the six identified priorities.

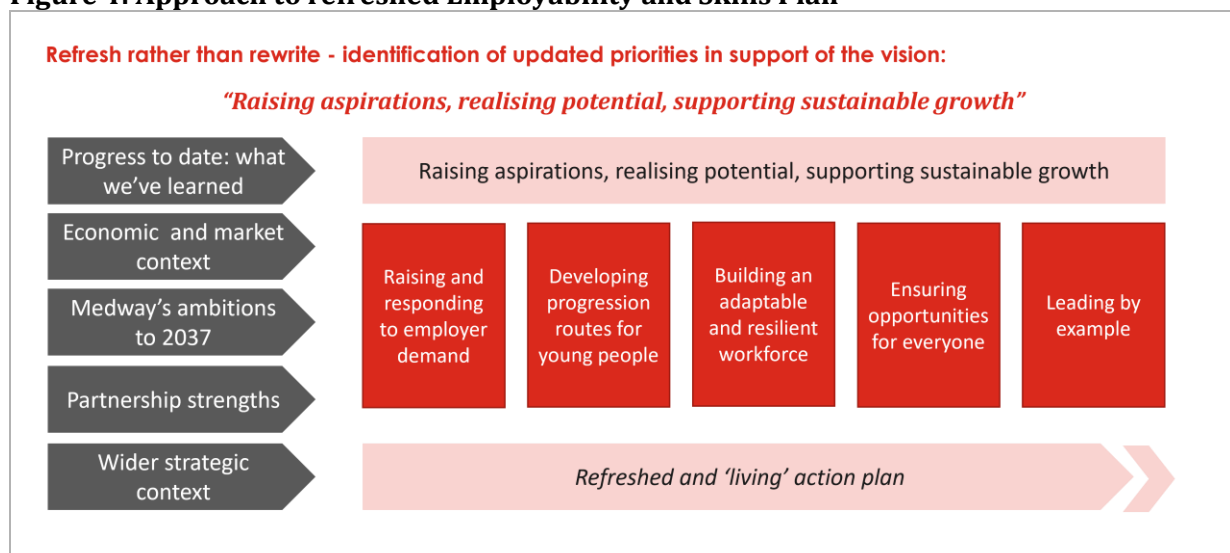
- **New priority: “Town Centres – renew, diversify and activate our town centres”** – as demonstrated in Figure 1 (above) and introduced to Members in January 2022. The accompanying summary paper details the proposed Town Centres Strategy which is explicitly linked to, and referred to, in *Medway 2037*.
- **Priority 1 – Destination and Placemaking** - This existing priority has been retained with the following principal changes proposed:
 - Key focus on the importance of Medway Council delivering / unlocking the delivery of the key waterfront regeneration sites in Strood – the next phase of Medway’s waterfront regeneration following significant progress delivering in Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham
 - Less of a focus on town centres due to introduction of **Priority 3**
 - Increased emphasis and focus of the role of the River Medway (explicit link to the proposed River Strategy – see below)
 - Increased emphasis on the Smart Cities agenda including focus on projects underway and proposed to reflect the significant progress made by the Council to date and the clear opportunity here for Medway to position itself as a genuine ‘Smart City
 - A more holistic approach to what constitutes a high-quality placemaking, acknowledging the multi-dimensional approach embedded in the Government’s Levelling Up White Paper (i.e. importance placed on civic pride, health, education alongside more conventional economic metrics)
 - Increased focus on the Hoo Peninsula strategic development and potential role in unlocking significant housing *and* employment growth following receipt of the HIF funding
- **Priority 2 – Inward investment** - This existing priority has been retained with the following principal changes proposed:
 - An increased focus on supporting the growth of the existing business base alongside attracting new businesses and investment
 - An emphasis on the role of the Council (and partners) in supporting the growth and promotion of Medway’s innovation ecosystem – connecting new businesses with opportunities, advice, existing businesses, funding and institutions
 - Link to celebrating Medway’s successes – see earlier emphasis on Medway as ‘a place which delivers’
- **Priority 3 – Town Centres** - This is a new priority which includes the following key points (only summarised at a high-level – see accompanying Town Centres Strategy Summary Paper for details):
 - Explicit prioritising of town centres as the heart of Medway’s communities and a stated link to the more detailed Town Centres Strategy
 - Celebration of what has been achieved so far in securing funding and delivering transformational change

- Recognition of the challenges impacting on Medway's town centres but also the opportunities for change, adaptation and renewal
- An emphasis on the distinctive identities, heritage and roles of the specific individual town centres, organised around a collective vision for Medway (thinking like a city)
- Outline of approach which acknowledges that investment and interventions will be delivered in Gillingham and Rainham to complement what has already been delivered and is underway in Strood, Rochester and Chatham
- A focus on the Council as enabler and working in partnership with, and building capacity of, stakeholders to deliver change together
- **Priority 4 – Business accommodation and connectivity** - This existing priority has been retained with the following principal changes proposed:
 - A strong focus on moving from aspiration to delivery: Medway Council has a strong pipeline of business accommodation schemes and the key focus for the short-medium term should be on delivering these:
 - **Funded schemes** – the Council has been successful in securing funding from the Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up Fund to deliver a number of innovation and creative industries focused workspace projects both directly and in partnership with key stakeholders. The Council needs to prioritise the successful delivery of these projects – see the Innovation Strategy Summary Paper for details regarding how these propositions will need to interlink and complement each other to deliver economic and innovation outcomes and to mitigate any commercial risk for the Council
 - **Innovation Park Medway** – this remains the Council's flagship economic development project and its delivery is a key priority. Significant progress has been made in securing funding for and delivering enabling and infrastructure works; emphasis is now shifting to attracting occupiers, potential funding and delivery partners aligned with the innovation-focused vision.
 - A link back to the Smart Cities agenda – recognition of the ongoing success of Gigabit broadband across Medway in partnership with City Fibre; a positive example of partnership working and external private investment which is highlighted as an exemplar
- **Priority 5 – Sector growth** - This existing priority has been retained with the following principal changes proposed:
 - Much stronger emphasis on the role of culture and the creative industries
 - Highlights emerging sectors – i.e. foodtech (i.e. Growing Kent and Medway consortium) and hydrogen (see Project Cavendish)
 - Highlights opportunities associated with opportunity areas which cut across sectors including the transition to net zero, digitalisation, automation and technological change
 - Emphasis on the Council's role in supporting sectors AND in taking a pioneer role in driving demand and economic outcomes through its position as a procuring and delivering body

(particularly in the context of significant existing asset base and significant funding awards to deliver large-scale capital investment projects)

- **Priority 6 – Improving employability** - This existing priority has been retained with explicit linkages and updates made to reflect the refreshed Employability and Skills Plan (see separate Summary Paper).
 - Explicit recognition of emerging challenges and opportunity areas cutting across sectors:
 - Technological change and digitalisation (data; automation; AI)
 - Decarbonisation – reskilling / upskilling differing impacts depending on sector (i.e. transport, construction, energy there will be significant impact)
 - Demographic change – living and working longer; adaptation and resilience; health and social care demand
 - Changes in working practices – post-Covid flexibility
- The key changes embodied in the Employability and Skills Plan which are captured in *Medway 2037* and this updated priority are summarised in the diagram below:

Figure 4: Approach to refreshed Employability and Skills Plan



Source: SQW