

Members' Questions

Question A - Councillor Murray will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Following Russia's declaration of war against Ukraine there has been a commendable and sincere outpouring of support from our community in Medway, with many generous donations for victims displaced by the war and volunteer groups working hard to coordinate collections, packing and transport.

Now that the government has put local councils at the centre of the scheme to offer sanctuary to Ukrainian refugees, can the Leader of the Council tell me what steps he has taken to ensure that any refugees who may come to Medway will get the services and support they need?

Question B - Councillor Maple will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Like many people I was shocked and appalled at the totally unacceptable treatment of 800 hard working women and men dismissed by a pre-recorded Microsoft Teams message. With our long-standing nautical history Medway stands in solidarity with the workers of P&O, who have been treated in such a manner.

The parent company, DP World, who have been happy to receive millions of pounds of government contracts, have treated those workers, who come from across Kent and Medway with utter contempt, whilst being happy to spend millions of pounds on sponsorship for golf and Formula One.

Will the Leader agree that until those workers are reinstated, that Medway Council will not deal with DP World in any way and in doing so will he and his Cabinet Member who represents Medway make representations through the SELEP to ensure that DP World are not given a penny more of public money, through schemes like Thames Port, until those workers are reinstated?

It is the right thing to do and absolutely what the Medway residents would expect their elected representatives to do.

Question C - Councillor Van Dyke will ask the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

The most recent Kent PCC crime survey saw issues around women's safety selected as the most important problem to the public (see pages 8-9 of the report). At a recent Full Council meeting, when the subject of women's safety was brought up by myself, when I seconded our motion to try and secure new police offers for Medway, Councillor Gulvin tried to argue that the public's perception of what the most pressing crime issues were in Medway was not in line with what Labour Group Councillors had said in the Council chamber.

In light of the new evidence from this survey, would Councillor Gulvin like to change his conclusions regarding how strong the feelings of the local public are on this subject?

Question D - Councillor Khan will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

What action has the Portfolio Holder taken to ensure that term-time-only school staff in Medway have a fair and just solution to their dispute by receiving a settlement that is as good as settlements by other local authorities?

Question E - Councillor Howcroft-Scott will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

The number of households experiencing fuel poverty in Medway is rising. The cost of energy keeps increasing, which means our constituents need to spend more of their income on paying these bills. Many, especially people living in private rented accommodation, live in draughty homes, from which lots of heat escapes, and rely on heating systems that are old and inefficient. And because there is not much money to spare, it is difficult to make our homes more energy efficient, which would reduce our bills.

The general, cost of living is rising and this is also putting pressure on our communities finances so we have less money to go around. What is the Cabinet currently doing to support our communities struggling to make ends meet?

Question F - Councillor Mahil will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

When it comes to pay negotiations for Medway Council workers, it is vital to have the contributions of HR staff, trade unions, the workers themselves and the Employment Matters Committee taken into account. Many from the above groups will have felt that the past years' pay negotiations were not constructive, and that serious discussion was forsaken for the sake of a political stunt to ensure a last minute announcement. Will the Council be adjusting its approach in the future rather than rely on last minute grace and favour?

Question G - Councillor Johnson will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

In view of the Council's plan to tackle catastrophic climate change by implementing its Climate Change Action Plan, how has the Council reviewed its investments and those of the Local Government Pension Scheme to ensure that they are not contributing to fossil fuel companies or industrial agriculture?

Question H - Councillor Curry will ask the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Chambers OBE, the following:

The Council Plan Performance Report makes it very clear that we have problems achieving key targets such as the delivery of the HIF, our regeneration programme and our climate change action plan. The consequences of this will have major impacts on our community, our economy and our environment.

Can the Portfolio Holder explain what action is being taken to address these issues?

Question I - Councillor Hubbard will ask the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following:

The Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships attended the 22 March 2022 Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In his report, Councillor Chambers in Section 5.2 said, "The Rochester Bridge Trust (RBT) has confirmed that the flood defence wall should be moved back, so that the footings sit entirely on Medway Council land. A formal agreement with RBT has been requested."

This is in relation to the River Wall that has been constructed, at great expense, around Strood Waterfront's former Civic Centre site. Rochester Bridge Trust own the Rochester road bridges and the Rochester and Strood Esplanades. It seems that the new river wall has been built on part of the Strood Esplanade. I understand that the footings of the former Civic Centre building mark the land ownership boundary.

What is the expected cost to the Council to settle the requested formal agreement, which may include the rebuilding and relocation of the river wall?

Question J - Councillor Sands will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

Whilst many people I'm sure welcome the new look gym, with over 40 new pieces of top of the range fitness equipment and happy to have a spring cleaned Athletics track at Medway Park, this coupled with the multimillion pound new leisure centre at Rainham described by yourself as "having a focus on fun". However, at the same time Deangate Sports Centre has been and continues to be systematically run down, Weeds growing within the athletics track, neglected pavilion with leaking roof, no public conveniences, fallen trees on the borders of the football pitches, football teams have to use sticky tape to hold football nets up. Fences around the tennis courts with large holes in and again these courts with weeds growing within.

Can the people of the Hoo Peninsula, who are rate payers of Medway Council, ever expect to be treated in the same way as the rest of Medway when it comes to leisure and health facilities or does this Cabinet just see the unique Hoo Peninsula, which is of national and international importance, an area with rich heritage and historical significance, as a place to be destroyed by unsustainable development?

Question K – Councillor Paterson will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

Forty years ago, many families in Medway – including the families of some serving councillors – were awaiting the safe return of loved ones serving more than 8,000 miles away in the Falklands.

The war to liberate the islands was won and the Argentine fascist junta led by General Galtieri was defeated. But 255 servicemen did not return. Hundreds more came home wounded physically and scarred mentally.

Will the Deputy Leader join me and my Labour and Co-operative Group colleagues in paying tribute to those who worked in Chatham Dockyard at the time and whose war efforts were rewarded with the yard's closure by Margaret Thatcher less than two years later, to the bravery of our armed forces who served four decades ago, to those who never returned, to those who did return but whose physical or mental burden proved too great to bear and to those veterans who to this day will never forget what they saw?

Question L – Councillor Adeoye will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

In the latest example of levelling-up, how much will Medway receive from the new £1.2 billion national fund for improving bus services?

Question M – Councillor Cooper will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:

Given the disastrous record of this Government in planning the country's workforce over the past decade, what action has the Portfolio Holder taken to ensure that our three Medway MPs put pressure on the Government to ensure a rapid improvement in this area to ensure a future supply of children's social workers for the country as a whole and for Medway in particular?

Question N - Councillor Price will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

Around 80 councils have banned the release of balloons and sky lanterns due to the danger they represent to wildlife as well as fire and other environmental hazards. These bans have been supported by the Marine Conservation Council. What action has the Portfolio Holder taken to consider a ban in Medway?

Question O – Councillor McDonald will ask the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

The derelict building at the bottom of Marlborough Road at the junction of Marlborough Road and Brompton Road has been an eyesore for a number of years and creates a poor impression. What action has the Portfolio Holder taken to ensure that this site is swiftly improved?

Question P – Councillor Browne will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell, the following:

Given the number of premises that have closed down in Gillingham, the market is an asset to the High Street. Not only does it provide variety for shoppers and increases footfall in the town centre but brings social benefits too.

How much income does Medway Council derive directly from the market and what percentage of this is being reverted in Gillingham Market and the High Street for the coming year?

Question Q – Councillor Prenter will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

After the shocking and illegal behaviour of P&O against the seafarers' work force who operate their ferries in UK, can the Portfolio Holder assure me that the Council will make it clear that Medway will not contract with any organisations who use the discredited Fire and Rehire tactics against their work force?

Question R – Councillor Edwards will ask the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following:

What is the cost of providing free business litter kits to Medway businesses using Welcome Back Funding?

Question S – Councillor Osborne will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell, the following:

In 2013, the administration previously rejected the introduction of equal marriage in a Council motion. Can the administration confirm the number of civil ceremonies conducted between same-sex couples in Medway; and whether this should now be celebrated as a sign of social progress?

Question T – Councillor Andy Stamp will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

At the Full Council meeting on 20th January 2022, Councillor Filmer revealed that Medway Council has collected more than £244,000 in parking income since parking charges were introduced at the Strand on 9th July 2018. This represents at least £70,000 per year on average, yet the annual budget

provided to the Sport, Leisure and Tourism team for improvements at the Strand is just £5,000 per year.

Will the Portfolio Holder agree to 'ringfence' the parking income from the Strand to fund much-needed improvements at the Strand?

Question U – Councillor Chrissy Stamp will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Numerous councils across the country have raised the Ukrainian flag outside their building in a visual demonstration of solidarity with the people of Ukraine. How many days has the Ukrainian flag been on display outside Gun Wharf?

Councillor V – Councillor Lloyd will ask the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following:

The Council is working on a River Strategy, supported by all Members. Within that strategy there will be policies to promote leisure river traffic, linking up existing piers, some of which will need investment to be brought back into use. Strood Pier, ideally located next to the railway station, is one of those piers that needs to be recommissioned. The Council, when it recently constructed the Canal Road river wall, blocked access to Strood Pier.

The Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships attended the 22 March 2022 Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In his report, Councillor Chambers in Section 5.3 said, "Discussions are underway to re-instate the Strood Community Trail, along with the installation of recovered historical Dragon's teeth and an interpretive panel to detail their historical purpose."

Reinstating the trail is accurately in the main the re-instatement of the lost pathway that links Canal Road to Strood Pier.

I understand that there are resource issues within the Council's Regeneration Team and Greenspaces Team that may result in the proposed re-instatement works not being delivered in this financial year. Can assurance be given that works will be carried out in 2022/3 financial year?