

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

**Tuesday, 22 March 2022**

**6.30pm to 9.45pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

- Present:** Councillors: Browne, Carr, Curry, Etheridge (Chairman), Fearn (Vice-Chairman), Sylvia Griffin, Hubbard, Mahil, Purdy, Andy Stamp, Thompson and Rupert Turpin
- Substitutes:** Councillor Purdy for Councillor Tranter  
Councillor Griffin for Councillor Clarke
- In Attendance:** Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Investment, Regeneration and Partnerships  
Councillor Gary Hackwell, Portfolio Holder for Business Management  
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Lesley Jones, Corporate Performance Officer  
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community  
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership**
- Adam Bryan
- SQW Consultants**
- James Kinnersly

**764 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tranter with Councillor Purdy substituting and from Councillor Clarke with Councillor Griffin substituting. Apologies were also received from Councillor Williams.

**765 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 13 January 2022 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**766 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were no urgent matters.

The Chairman announced that he would be varying the order of the agenda so that Agenda item No. 6, Scrutiny of South East Local Enterprise Partnership, would be considered ahead of agenda item No.5, Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships. The remainder of the agenda was considered in the order as published.

**767 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**768 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that former Councillor, Alderman Ted Baker, had passed away. He had provided over 40 years of service to the people of Medway and had been one of the longest serving Council Members. He had been appointed as an Honorary Alderman in recognition of this. The Chairman said that Alderman Baker had never been happier than when on the campaign trail and had been particularly welcoming and encouraging to new Council Members.

**769 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships**

**Discussion:**

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Investment, Regeneration and Partnerships which fell within the remit of this Committee.

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

**Measuring value for money and Medway City Estate** – It was asked how value for money was being measured in relation to areas such as flood defences and cycling initiatives and what the timescales were for completion of

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the slip road on Medway City Estate. The Portfolio Holder said that flood defences were specifically to protect Strood waterfront as defences there were at their weakest.

£2.5million of funding had been made available for cycling initiatives through the Growth Fund. Cycling routes had been installed in roads such as Beeching Way, City Way and on Gillingham Business Park, but it had been challenging to persuade cyclists to use the routes. Greater publicity could be considered. There was a need for routes in town centres but this was challenging due to roads being narrow. It was noted that the delivery of the Medway City Estate slip road fell within the Cabinet Portfolio for Front Line Services. The Assistant Director, Regeneration said that there had been minor delays and undertook to provide a more detailed answer to the Committee. The Council had funding for development of an Active Travel Plan which would assist in considering how to increase the effectiveness of cycling routes.

**Strood Pier pathway and flood defence wall** – A Member stated that the pathway from Canal Road to Strood Pier needed to be reinstated and that resources needed to be provided to enable this. In relation to the flood defence wall, comment was requested on the fact that the wall would need to be repositioned. The Portfolio Holder said that he had been trying to get Strood Pier back into use to facilitate greater use of the river and that this would assist people visiting Upnor Castle. In relation to the flood defence wall, it was agreed that a site visit would be arranged and that all Members of the Committee would be invited to attend.

**Inclusion of outcomes in the report and funding for Gillingham** – A Member was disappointed that there was not more information in the report in relation to outcomes as this had been previously requested. She also asked for assurance that the needs of Gillingham would be prioritised when bids for levelling up funding were made. The Portfolio Holder said that when bids were made for Round 2 of Levelling Up funding, Gillingham would have the highest priority but details and timescales were awaited from the Government. A cross party Town Centres Board had been established and a Town Centre Strategy for Gillingham was being prepared.

**Chatham Historic Dockyard** – Concern was expressed that access to the Dockyard was chargeable in view of Government funded projects being delivered there. The Portfolio Holder said that bids for funding had not had to be made by local authorities. The Dockyard had made a bid to bring an historic building into use to create employment, which was the goal of the Growth Fund. This had resulted in five businesses locating at the building employing 200 people.

**Innovation Park Medway** – More detail was sought on what the catalytic section of the Runway Park was and whether businesses locating on the park were still able to benefit from up to £55,000 business rates relief per year for five years due to its status as an Enterprise Zone. Another Committee Member asked if there were any businesses that were currently looking to move to the Park. The Portfolio Holder advised that the local authority had also been able to

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retain business rates paid by new businesses. The Government had declined to extend the five year relief period but the local authority would still retain the whole of the business rates due for a period of 19 years. The Council was currently in dialogue with four businesses who were interested in locating at the park.

**Medway Apprenticeship Advice Service** – In response to a Member who suggested that the figure of 20 apprenticeships supported by the Medway Apprenticeship Advice Service was low, the Portfolio Holder said that support available from the Kent and Medway Skills Commission had not been considered sufficient and that the Council had established its own skills agenda and developed a Skills Strategy within six months. The availability of careers advice in schools had also been a concern. The Council now employed Enterprise Advisors from the business community to work with schools on the provision of careers advice.

**Detail provided in reports** – A Member said that the report provided needed to contain more detail and be more precise and that this had been requested at a previous Committee meeting. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there had not always been sufficient outcome data available previously and said that this could be included in future reports.

**Congestion problems, project governance and Amazon depot** – A Member highlighted ongoing parking and congestion problems, obstructive parking and flooding in Strood, concern relating to the reconfiguration of the Knights Road / Commercial Road junction and the design of the plaza at North Street / the A2. The Member also mentioned governance issues in relation to the Berwick Way works and questioned the benefit of Amazon locating in Strood in view of associated traffic issues. He looked forward to receiving updates on these areas in the future. The Portfolio Holder said that his Portfolio Holder responsibility was around ensuring that funding was spent as allocated. Economic development was the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation and Highways were the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services. The Member looked forward to receiving feedback from the relevant Cabinet Members.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) Noted the report and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.
- b) Requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee in relation to the City Estate / Berwick Way slip road delivery.
- c) Noted that the Portfolio Holder would investigate reinstating access to the pathway linking 41 Canal Road to Strood Pier.

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- d) Requested that it be arranged for Members of the Committee to visit the former Civic Centre site in Strood to look at the flood defence wall.
- e) Requested that more detail, including project outcomes, be provided in future Portfolio Holder reports.

### 770 Scrutiny of South East Local Enterprise Partnership

#### Discussion:

A presentation was given to the Committee by the Chief Executive Officer of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). The key points of the presentation were as follows:

- The area covered by SELEP was geographically the largest of the 38 LEPs across the country.
- The LEP Board was supported in deciding what projects would be supported through LEP funding by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and three other federated boards.
- Projects allocated LEP funding had to go through a rigorous business case development which was independently assessed.
- A number of working groups supported key sectors, such as housing, skills and Enterprise Zones.
- The LEP had been responsible for looking after £589million of growth deal funding and approximately £200million of European funding. In total, the LEP had been responsible for stewarding around £850million of funding.
- The strength of Medway coming together with Kent, Essex and East Sussex was considered to have helped communicate the needs of and opportunities available within the area.
- The development of a strong intelligence base in relation to the local economy had underpinned the work of the LEP and enabled stronger decision making regarding which projects to support.
- Lots of work had been undertaken in relation to skills and broadening digital skills, including working with education providers, such as Mid-Kent College.
- Business Support had been important. Funding for Growth Hubs was delivered through the LEP with £2million provided through a Business Support Fund.
- Support was provided through a number of funds, including the Local Growth Fund, Growing Places Fund, Sector Support Fund and the Getting Building Fund.
- Headline figures for the area covered by the LEP included 106 Local Growth Fund Projects supported, 21 sector support fund projects, 41 Getting Building Fund projects and 29 Growing Place Fund projects. In total, the funding had supported the creation of nearly 25,000 jobs and just over 25,000 new homes. Total Local Growth Fund funding across the region had been £578.9 million.

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- The biggest SELEP investment in Medway had been Strood Town Centre which had received over £8 million. 15 projects in Medway had received funding totalling just over £43million.
- The Levelling Up White Paper had been published at the start of February 2022. This set out that local authorities would have a growing role in the reshaping of the UK economy and that LEPs would continue to play a vital role in supporting local businesses and the local economy until local devolution arrangements were put in place. Going forward, LEPs would need to work with local authorities to add value although they would not have the same role as previously in stewarding capital funds. LEPs would continue to have a role around convening business and developing regional strategy.

Following the presentation, Committee Members asked questions. The following issues were discussed:

- **Job creation, results monitoring and staffing** – A Member expressed concern that the figure of 25,000 jobs created in 10 years was low and asked how the effectiveness of results was measured. It was also asked whether limited staff numbers would affect delivery going forward. In response, the Chief Executive Officer of the LEP said that the number of jobs created directly linked to the project business cases and acknowledged that the figure could be higher, although it was anticipated that more jobs would be created in the future as a result of projects already supported. The LEP would be undertaking audits of projects supported to demonstrate the impact of investments to the Government. This had previously not been possible due to the small size of the LEP team. Staff resources were a challenge and there was concern that there might be less investment in the South East than there had been in the past. The LEP was a small organisation and it would be important to work with partners effectively in order to best utilise the resources available.
- **Public Feedback and business networks** – In response to a question that asked how the public could provide input on proposals and how successful the creation of business networks had been, the Assistant Director, Regeneration, said that input on projects would take place at Medway Council level. This included undertaking public consultations and exhibitions. Any suggestions in relation to building and strengthening business networks would be welcome. The Chief Executive Officer added that the Covid-19 Fund and Sector Fund were considered to have had the most significant impact. The impact of these would be highlighted to make the case for future funding.
- **Business engagement and support and Evaluation Phases** – It was suggested that business engagement and securing support for projects had not always been as strong as it could have been. In relation to Innovation Park Medway, it was asked whether the removal of the Evaluation Phase meant that this work was now being undertaken in

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another way. The Chief Executive Officer said that the impact of Covid could not be overstated. Initiatives took time to generate significant interest. A range of project extensions had been agreed as projects were taking longer than anticipated for a number of reasons but there was still confidence of strong delivery being achieved across the full range of projects. The Assistant Director said that Medway was still emerging from Covid. With there now being more homeworking there was an opportunity as more businesses could be located within a particular area. The Council was going out to the market to look at how the opportunities relating to Innovation Park Medway could be developed. The aim would be to attract high density, high Gross Value Added (GVA) jobs such as research and development and advanced manufacturing.

- **Achievement of objectives and funding arrangements** – It was asked whether SELEP's objectives had been achieved and what the delivery risks were. It was also asked what the impact of changes to funding arrangements would be on local authorities. The Chief Executive of SELEP said that the audit that would be undertaken would need to be as comprehensive as possible and that a robust system of governance was in place. It was expected that the Prosperity Fund would be allocated directly to local authorities and that the LEP would provide support.
- **Strood Town Centre journey times** – In response to a question about traffic congestion in Strood and how this was being addressed, the Assistant Director said that there was now a greater sense of place in Strood and that in relation to journey times, changes had been delivered over a long period. There had been significant growth. Information would be provided to the Committee in relation to journey times.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and commented on the presentation at the meeting delivered by the Chief Executive Officer of SELEP.

## **771 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Business Management**

### **Discussion:**

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

The Portfolio Holder thanked teams that had helped compile the report, particularly the bereavement, emergency planning and registration teams, in view of the challenges they had faced due to Covid. Other Members of the Committee added their thanks. The work of the Engagement Wardens and Dog Wardens was also highlighted.

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

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**Targeted street cleaning inspections** – Noting that the amount of litter varied street to street due to factors such as housing density and the number of parked cars, a Committee Member said that he would like to see inspections target the areas that attracted the most litter. The Portfolio Holder advised that the inspection teams inspected streets in every Medway ward and that they undertook targeted inspections but he acknowledged that the figures could be better. The Portfolio Holder would shortly be going on a round with an inspection team.

**Emergency Planning Team capacity** – A Member was concerned that the staff capacity of the Emergency Planning Team had been reduced and highlighted the importance of it being well resourced and effective. The Portfolio Holder said that he had recently approved recruitment of a post to make a temporary position permanent. He believed that there were currently three people within the Team but undertook to confirm this following the meeting.

**Inspections of recycling bin sites and thanks to staff** – In relation to the weekly inspections of recycling 'bring sites', it was requested that future Portfolio Holder reports include details of which sites had been visited and when. The Member also requested that the Portfolio Holder pass on thanks to those involved in the response to recent flooding in Canal Road, Strood.

**Requests for further information** – A Member requested that information on inspection visits to recycling street bin sites, Waste Wardens and the areas they cover, details of how dog fouling had been tackled across Medway and details of whose responsibility it was to refer injuries caused by dogs to the Police, be included in the next Portfolio Holder report to be presented to the Committee.

**Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) Noted the report and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.
- b) Expressed its thanks to various Council teams, particularly the bereavement team for their work in response to the challenges they had faced due to Covid and to those involved in the response to recent flooding in Canal Road, Strood.
- c) Requested that the following information be included in the next Portfolio Holder report to the Committee:
  - i) Details of inspection visits to recycling street bin sites.
  - ii) Details of the role of Waste Wardens and the areas they cover.
  - iii) Details of how dog fouling had been tackled across Medway.
  - iv) Details of whose responsibility it is to refer injuries caused by dogs to the Police.



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- d) Requested that the Dog Warden service emphasise to dog owners the requirement for dogs to have an ID tag in addition to a harness.

## **772 Medway 2037 Strategy Refresh**

### **Discussion:**

A presentation was given to the Committee by a representative from SQW Consultants in relation to the Medway 2037 Strategy refresh. The key points of the presentation were as follows:

- Drafting of the Strategy was nearly complete. The development of the Strategy was about refreshing the existing core Medway 2035 Strategy rather than starting again.
- The Strategy would aim to provide space for projects to evolve whilst providing a framework for the Council to work with partner organisations.
- Some of the key themes included Climate Change, Levelling Up and Covid.
- The six key priorities from Medway 2035 had been retained. Innovation had been removed as a key priority and replaced with town centres. The removal of innovation was due to this cross cutting all the other priorities. It had instead been included as part of an Innovation and Creativity cross cutting theme along with Climate Change and Net Zero and Growth for All.
- There would be a fully aligned Action and Delivery plan to underpin the Strategy.
- There should be more emphasis on achievements to promote Medway as an inward investment proposition.
- Unlocking the waterfront regeneration in Strood would be a key priority. An increased spotlight on Gillingham and Rainham was proposed.
- An increased focus on the river Medway was proposed with a real focus on what the river meant to the local economy.
- The opportunities around emerging sectors would be key and what this would mean for existing sectors.
- A standalone town centre strategy had been developed which defined overarching priorities. A Place based approach to delivery was proposed. There was recognition that each town centre was different with different strengths and opportunities. It was recognised that town centres had changed over the last few years with there being a focus on a range of uses rather than exclusively on retail. The creation of a Town Centre Innovation Fund was proposed.
- There needed to be a balance between short term and long term delivery.
- The development of partnership structures would be important to ensure that this potential and the capacity of each organisation was fully utilised.
- The Innovation Strategy would aim to support businesses to innovate and provide space for innovation and to support emerging opportunities.

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- The Employment and Skills Approach would focus on five key priorities – raising and responding to employer demand, developing progression routes for young people, building an adaptable and resilient workforce, ensuring opportunities for everyone and leading by example.
- The River Strategy was currently being prepared with the target being to adopt it by Summer 2022. This would balance commercial/industrial use, leisure, tourism, recreation, ecological/environmental uses and considerations.

Following the presentation, Committee Members asked questions. The following issues were discussed:

**Implementation of Strategy and River Strategy** - It was asked how the Strategy would be implemented and who would take ownership of this. In relation to the development of the River Strategy, it was asked why there had not been such a Strategy previously. It was stated that the river was commercially important and should be treated as such.

**Importance of Strood Waterfront site, transport and the river** – A Member said that Strood Waterfront needed to be addressed as it currently presented a poor image of Medway and that innovative thinking was needed about how the site was used. The Member also considered that the emerging Strategy needed to consider the issues of congestion and pollution. In relation to the River, the natural value of the river in terms of flood defences and its ecological value were important considerations. Another Member said that it was important that Strood Riverside was developed for a range of uses rather than just being for housing and agreed with other comments that better use needed to be made of the river.

**Importance of joined up thinking and the River Strategy** – A Member said that the development of a river Strategy was important but that this needed to be joined up. The Member was concerned by the lack of development at Strood Waterfront and considered that the Strood Town Centre Forum needed to start meeting regularly. The Assistant Director, Regeneration said that there would be iterative plans developed to facilitate delivery of the Strategy. These would require flexibility to be able to respond to the change, particularly in relation to availability of central Government funding. Net Zero and the development of hydrogen schemes would be important but these needed to work for Medway. Preparations were currently being made for the development of an Investment Plan, which the Government was guiding councils to deliver. These would set out three years of Shared Prosperity Funding. These funds would be allocated to councils on a non-competitive basis. Medway's allocation was not yet known. Going forward the Investment Plan would be a key element of delivery and resourcing would then need to be considered.

**The Future of High Streets** – A Member expressed disappointment that there did not seem to be a vision for High Streets. She said that the development of artisan shops should be given consideration and asked whether this was within the Strategy. The SQW Consultant said that the strategy recognised that

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traditional high streets were struggling. It would consider diversification, working with partners and looking at how spaces could be better used. There was potential in working with the universities and looking at how students could be enabled to develop and sell products. Ideas from within the community and working with stakeholders, forums and partners would be important to enable these ideas to come forward.

**Resource allocation** – It was suggested that the resources required to deliver the Strategy should be further considered by the Committee and it was suggested that this should take place at a Committee meeting later in the year.

**Cluster opportunities** – In relation to a question about how to respond to the opportunities around clusters and the importance of access to finance, the SQW Consultant said that his firm did a lot of work on opportunities relating to clusters across the UK. It was very difficult to start a cluster so it was important to acknowledge strengths and work with existing clusters. Particular strengths in Medway were creative industries, advanced manufacturing, engineering and construction and the digital design side of this. The development of Innovation Park Medway would help to tap into these sectors. There was potential in the development of hydrogen around project Cavendish and the Hoo Peninsular. Opportunities around the universities and how academia could support growth would also be important. Access to finance was key and this would be considered within delivery plans.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration suggested that the Investment Plan be brought to the Committee to get views on resourcing and delivery. This would be added to Work Programme.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and accompanying summaries of the strategy documents and commented on the proposed suite of Strategies and presentation delivered by SQW.

## **773 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Risk Register Review Quarter 3 2021/22**

### **Discussion:**

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 3 against the Council's two priorities Place and Growth insofar as they fell within the remit of this Committee, along with a review of the Council's Risk Register.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Achievement of housing delivery targets and Local Plan dates** – It was questioned whether the status of the housing completions target should be green as the report stated that there had been 1,082 completions in 2020/21 while the report mentioned a target of 1,586. It was also asked whether a reference in the report to the Local Plan 2021

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to 2037 should now be 2022 to 2038. In response, the Corporate Performance Lead said that the housing target figures would be checked and that date references to the Local Plan would be changed as appropriate.

- **Strategic risks** – In relation to delivering regeneration, climate change and the Housing Infrastructure Fund having a red status in the Strategic Risk Register, a Member said that there needed to be a clearer focus on the reasons and that this information needed to be provided in a more prominent way.
- **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)** – A progress update on the HIF was requested including a breakdown of the risks. The Assistant Director, Regeneration said that the Council had been granted an extension for the HIF work until March 2025 to give extra time to redesign and undertake further public engagement. This was seen as positive as it would help ensure that what was delivered would be sustainable.
- **Overspending on HIF** – Noting that the Council would be required to fund 1% of any overspend on the HIF and that other funding sources may be sought after this, a Member asked whether that meant that the Council would be responsible for identifying funding or whether the Government would provide support and whether there were any precedents. The Assistant Director said that funding could come from a number of areas, such as Government funding, or S106 developer contributions, but that the aim was to stay within the existing £170million budget.
- **Potential Development on greenspaces** – A Member strongly expressed her concern that the report stated that the Housing Revenue Account was looking at a green space as having the potential for the development of nine housing units.

### Decision:

The Committee considered the Q3 2021/22 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities and:

- a) Requested that the green status of the net additional homes provided target (N1154) be checked as the report stated that there had been 1,082 completions in 2020/21 while the report mentioned a target of 1,586.
- b) Requested that strategic risks be given greater prominence in future performance monitoring reports.
- c) Requested that an update on the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) be provided to the Committee.

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- d) Requested that the Assistant Director, Regeneration provide an update to Councillors Etheridge, Browne and Curry in relation to concerns raised about the potential development of greenfield sites.

**774 Petitions**

**Discussion:**

It was noted that a petition in relation to traffic calming in Edwin Road, Gillingham had been referred to the Committee for consideration and would therefore be considered at the June 2022 Committee meeting.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.

**775 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

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

**Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) Noted the current work programme.
- b) Agreed that the report on the Four Elms Hill Air Quality Management Area, currently listed on the Work Programme for the June 2022 meeting, instead be considered at the August 2022 meeting, subject to a briefing note on progress being provided to the Committee in the interim.
- c) Agreed that the Medway Investment Plan be added to the Committee Work Programme for consideration at a meeting later in the year.
- d) Agreed that Councillor Osborne's Member's item on sewage discharges be included on the Committee agenda for June.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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