

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

Thursday, 9 June 2022

6.30pm to 9.15pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Etheridge (Chairman), Fearn (Vice-Chairman), Browne, Carr, Clarke, Curry, Edwards, Hubbard, Lammas, Tranter, Rupert Turpin and Williams

Substitutes: Councillors:
Osborne (Substitute for Andy Stamp)

In Attendance: Samantha Beck-Farley, Head of HR
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community
Michael Turner, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Nick Mills, Head of Storm Overflows Taskforce, Southern Water
David Murphy, Studies & Investigations Programme Manager, Southern Water

41 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stamp.

42 Record of Meeting

The record of the Meeting held on 22 March 2022 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 18 May 2022 were agreed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to Minute No. 769 of the record of the last meeting of the Committee, a point was made that the reference to the re-positioning of the flood defence wall was in relation to the former Civic Centre site in Strood and the site visit would include both the latter site and the Canal road site.

43 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

44 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.

45 Petitions

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised the Committee of petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of the Committee, including a summary of the response sent to the petition organiser by officers.

One petition had been referred to the Committee for consideration which asked for speed calming measures at Edwin Road, Rainham.

A representative of the lead petitioner was invited to speak to explain why the Council's response to the petition had been referred to the Committee and made the following points:

- the 30mph speed limit was often exceeded.
- This was a busy road and used as a cut through by commuters as well as being on a school run.
- There had been several near misses and there were concerns about potential fatalities.
- Residents wished to see a reduction in the speed of vehicles, a change in driver behaviour, the Speed Indicating Device (SID) reinstated as soon as possible and for the Council to reconsider if speed calming measures could be introduced. How the SID captured data was also queried.
- Local residents had agreed to join a Kent police pilot Speed Watch volunteers group.

The Head of Transport and Parking advised that the road carried around 2,000 vehicles per day and the last survey showed 85% of vehicles travelled at just under 30mph. 2% of vehicles travelling north were at, or in excess of, 40mph and 4% of south bound vehicles.

The Council intervened on the basis of road safety and prioritised interventions based on road casualties. The number of crashes in Edwin Road had been low.

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The SID had been installed but this moved around according to need, although it was possible it could be brought back to Edwin Road in the future. How the SID secured data would need to be looked into. The Council was happy to support the Speed Watch pilot where it could.

In discussing the petition the following responses were made to comments from Members:

- **Police enforcement** – there were no police mobile speed cameras on Edwin Road.
- **Live traffic monitoring and data** – traffic cameras were placed in strategic places and not usually in urban areas. The data from cameras was used to monitor traffic flows and not crashes. The Council would only collect data from cameras in response to concerns from residents or councillors.
- **Police reports** – the official report from the police on accidents could take some time to be sent to the Council but the authority would be aware of such incidents soon after they occurred and would start to consider a response before receiving the police report.
- **Police speed camera** – Members were advised Edwin Road was unlikely to meet the criteria for this.

Some Members felt the Council should use data from other sources when considering whether an intervention was justified and also considered that, in effect, the Council's approach was that a poor accident record was needed before it would intervene.

Members were advised that the Council's road safety action plan was being revised and officers would take on board Members' comments around using existing data.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the petition responses and appropriate officer action set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- b) note the petition referral request set out in paragraph 4 of the report and the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive's response.
- c) request that the data from the Kent Police Speed Watch pilot be sent to Members and that existing data held by the Council be re-visited as part of revising the road safety action plan.

46 Member's Item - Sewage Discharges

Discussion:

Members considered a report which set out a response to an issue, raised by Councillor Osborne, concerning flooding.

Councillor Osborne commented that he had requested this item as he wanted to see public reporting mechanisms introduced of major flood events, greater transparency around data held by Southern Water and a programme to reduce storm overflows.

Southern Water representatives made the following points:

- Storm overflows contained rain and sewage and were an essential part of the sewage system to prevent flooding.
- Their aim was to dramatically reduce storm overflows by 80% by 2030.
- One option would be to increase the size of size of sewers but this would be expensive and disruptive. The preferred option was to tackle the problems at source and remove rainwater elsewhere. Southern Water wanted a sustainable and affordable solution and would be working with its partners on this.
- Work was underway to produce a Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan.
- Southern Water were testing how inland bathing waters could be shown on the Beachbouy website to provide near real-time information about releases of stormwater or wastewater along the South East coast, with a view to rolling out in 2023 and into 2024.
- Data was currently hard to digest and a summary would be provided to Members.
- Members were invited to visit a wastewater treatment works.

Members discussed the following issues:

- **Internal Drainage Boards** – Southern Water confirmed they were working with the Boards.
- **Beachbouy Website** – following a request to accelerate the roll out of the website as referred to above, Southern Water commented the delay was about improving the user interface and it was possible the new website could be piloted in Medway.
- **Current sewer sizes** – in terms of whether capacity standards in new developments were sufficient, Southern Water advised they had provided planners with the standards they expected to see.
- **Expansion of hard standing areas expansion** – Southern Water noted this had doubled in recent years but enforcement was a challenge. However, they were keen to co-operate with partners on education and enforcement.
- **Wastewater discharges into the River Medway** – the extent of this and how this compared to similar areas was queried. Southern Water advised that in 2021, for the whole river, there had been 121 storm

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overflows activated on 1663 occasions. Gillingham had been the second worst affected. Data on this would be shared with Members. The proportion of these overflows by rainwater and wastewater would be looked at.

- **Flood risk in Medway** – in terms of the risks to the public, Southern Water stated this was a complicated picture. Responsibility for dealing with flooding depended on where it occurred. There was a need to find a way to make flood risks clearer to the public. The Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan would increase transparency by showing which areas were at risk of sewage flooding. Southern Water advised there was an emerging risk relating to the Medway and Swale estuary with a concern about nutrients being discharged due to development in Medway and Kent.
- **Storm overflow Task Force and the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan** – surprise was expressed that the Task Force was relatively new and the Plan had not yet been produced. Southern Water assured Members work had already been underway. Overflows were permitted activities and if Southern Water had gone beyond their permit conditions the regulator would have seen this as inefficient. The Environment Act was being changed to bring in new standards to tackle storm overflows but funding this would be a challenge. Consultation on the plan was about to start and the Council's views would be welcomed.
- **Charging for rain water to discharge into the river** – in response to a case of a developer in Medway charging for rain water from a development to be discharged into the river, Southern Water commented they were keen to work with the Government and the Environment Agency to find a better solution.
- **Data** – a request for more data on outflows was made and an assurance was given on this, including providing maps of the outflow stations and Southern Water contact points.
- **Investment in Medway** – how much investment Medway would see and whether costs would be passed onto customers was queried. Members were advised the impact on customers was not yet known but large businesses would probably have to pay more.
- **Information on pollutants from urban streets into river** – this would be provided.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Note the response to the Member's item provided by Southern Water.
- b) Welcome the offer of a site visit to a wastewater treatment works.
- c) Ask Southern Water to provide feedback on the possibility of the Beachbouy website upgrade to provide near real-time information about releases of stormwater or wastewater along the South East coast being piloted in Medway.

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- d) Request that Southern Water inform the Council when consultation on the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan would begin.
- e) Request Southern Water to release to the Committee data showing all releases of wastewater into the River Medway between 2017 and 2020, the locations of outflow stations, details of the type of spill and duration as well as information about nutrients and pollutants and the risk of this to aquatic life, and also Southern Water contact points.
- f) Request Southern Water to contact the Council's Head of Planning about the emerging risk to the Medway and Swale estuary due to developments.

47 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Risk Register Quarter 4 2021/22

Discussion:

Members considered a report on performance in Quarter 4 2021/22 on the delivery of the two priorities in the Council Plan relevant for this Committee: Place and Growth.

The following issues were discussed:

- **Measure W6CP, Satisfaction with refuse collection – Citizen Panel result** – concern was expressed that this was at amber, particularly as the recycling rate was now under 50%. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that performance stood at 84.8% against a target of 85%. Although recycling rates were not as high as he would like, the Council was committed to increasing them.
- **Climate change and the Local Plan** – in response to whether the lack of a new local plan would affect progress on climate change, the Deputy Chief Executive assured Members that this would not be the case.
- **Measure NI 154, net additional homes provided** – how confident the Council was that this target could be met was questioned, and the Deputy Chief Executive commented that the target last year had been 1,000 but this year was around 1,500/1,600, which would be a significant challenge.
- **Cultural Strategy** – the importance of this having tangible benefits was emphasised. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed with this point and noted the strategy had been developed in consultation with the public, with high levels of engagement and support.
- **Measure NI 195a, Improved street and environmental cleanliness: Litter** – given the litter problems caused by some fast food outlets, some surprise was expressed that during Quarter 4, 97% of streets surveyed had been free from litter at the time of the inspections. Members were advised that any concerns about litter hotspots would be responded to. The Council carried out regular surveys to arrive at the 97% figure. A

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briefing note on the surveys, including how regular they were and where they took place was agreed.

A point was made that the level of service received differed according to where a person lived and priority areas should be tackled first.

- **St John Church improvements** – details of this were requested.
- **Citizens Panel** – whether this represented a cross section of Medway's population and whether sample sizes could be increased were queried. It was agreed that a briefing note on the Citizens Panel would be produced.
- **Parks and open spaces** – a point was made that the reasons for the drop in user satisfaction should be examined and Member requests for repairs or interventions should be included in the statistics. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that satisfaction rates were over 80%, but he would reflect on this and acknowledged the important links to public health. While not complacent, there were eight green flag accredited sites in Medway.
- **Street parties** – a suggestion was made that the Council should encourage residents to hold street parties in a specific week of the year.
- **City Status** – a point was made that the Council should talk to residents before making another bid as there were mixed feelings about achieving city status. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that any decision on a new bid would be a Member decision.
- **GVA per job** – in response to a question officers agreed to look at whether inflation could be included in the figures.
- **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)** - in response to a question about confidence in delivering the programme, officers responded work was taking place on detailed designs and work was underway to deliver the programme.
- **Litter picking event** – the Environmental Health team were congratulated on a recent successful litter picking event.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Note the Q4 2021/22 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities.
- b) Note that details of the St John's Church improvements would be shared.
- c) Request briefing notes on litter surveys, including how regular they were and where they took place and also on the Citizen's Panel.
- d) Note that officers would examine whether inflation could be included in the GVA per job figures.

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- e) request that Members' requests for repairs to greenspaces infrastructure be added to the action plan and consideration given how this could be incorporated into the satisfaction figures.

48 Work programme

Discussion:

Members discussed a report regarding the Committee's work programme.

A suggestion was made that the issue of the relationship between grass cutting by MHS Homes and the Council and the possibility of this becoming a sole responsibility of the Council be added to the work programme. It was agreed that a briefing note should be provided on this in the first instance.

It was also suggested that the condition of piers on the Medway and also the impact of storms and flooding on the North Kent marshes be added to the work programme. The connections with the River Strategy were noted.

In relation to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regeneration being held to account, Members were advised that the report for this item would make clear the status of Local Plan documents referred to in October 2021 when the Portfolio Holder was last held to account.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) Agreed the Committee's proposed work programme, attached at Appendix A to the report.
- b) Agreed that the timing of the first report in relation to spend of S106 developer contributions be discussed at the next pre-agenda meeting.
- c) Agreed that whether the impact of storms and flooding on the north Kent marshes and also the condition of the piers on the river Medway should be added to the work programme be discussed at the next pre-agenda meeting.
- d) Agreed that a briefing note be provided on the relationship between grass cutting by MHS Homes and the Council before any decision on whether to add this to the work programme was taken.

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June 2022**

Chairman

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