

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

Thursday, 8 December 2022

6.30pm to 10.05pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Etheridge (Chairman), Browne, Carr, Clarke, Curry, Edwards, Sylvia Griffin, Hubbard, Lammas, Osborne, Tranter and Williams

Substitutes: Councillors:
Griffin (substitute for Fearn)
Osborne (substitute for Andy Stamp)

In Attendance: Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources
Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Katey Durkin, Chief Finance Officer
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Peter Garrett, Greenspace and Access Programme Manager
Dave Harris, Head of Planning
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community

Representatives of the Community Safety Partnership

Councillor Adrian Gulvin – Chairman
Sharon Adley – Kent Police
Sergeant Sasha Blomfield – Kent Police
Aeilish Geldenhuys – Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health
Ian Gilmore – Head of Regulatory & Environmental Services
Superintendent Robert Marsh – Kent Police
Leeanne McMahon – Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Graham Porter – Kent Fire and Rescue Service

447 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fearn, Andy Stamp and Rupert Turpin.

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448 Record of Meeting

A Member asked for clarification of whether the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation had received the letters referred to in the minutes of the 13 October 2022 Committee meeting and therefore whether she would be providing a response.

The Member asked whether there was an error within the minutes as the minutes stated that the Portfolio Holder had said that it was considered likely that the designation of the land at Chatham Docks would be determined by the courts. It was questioned whether this was accurate as the designation was not a matter to be determined by the courts.

The Member also asked for an update in relation to the request made during the October Committee meeting that the Committee be provided with written updates to set out the process for gathering Local Plan evidence and the timetable for this.

The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the minutes of the 13 October meeting were accurate. He advised that there had been communication in relation to Local Plan timelines and more formal documentation would be issued. The Local Development Scheme set out broad headlines for the work.

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

449 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

450 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that he had agreed a request for Agenda Item No.6 (Annual Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership, Including an Update on the Community Safety Plan 2020 – 2024) to be considered before Agenda Item No.5 (Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Resources). The other reports were considered in the order set out in the agenda.

451 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

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Other interests

Councillor Tranter declared an interest in any reference to Kent Fire and Rescue as he is the Vice Chairman.

452 Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Resources

Discussion:

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

The Portfolio Holder introduced a short video produced by Medway Development Company (MDC) to be used as a marketing tool to promote development at Chatham Waterfront.

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

Unauthorised traveller encampments – A Member asked the Portfolio Holder for his view on new powers to tackle unauthorised traveller encampments. The Portfolio Holder considered that they would help. It needed to be considered that travellers had a significant level of rights. The process for dealing with encampments started with welfare checks. This would be followed by the issuing of a Section 75 notice which usually gave three days for the site to be vacated. Where this was not complied with, the Council needed to return to court to obtain a section 76 notice. Where this was not complied with, the Council could then instruct bailiffs. In the most recent year there had been 18 incidents but only one had required bailiff involvement. The Portfolio Holder said that Medway's response had improved significantly. He thanked officers for their work and local MP, Tracey Crouch, who had moved a parliamentary amendment to enable costs to be charged back. The Portfolio Holder said that the powers would only be used where necessary. The issue was primarily a Council responsibility but the Police could take action in specific circumstances.

Chatham Waterfront video, the former Debenhams building and Chatham infrastructure – A Member asked how much the promotional video the Committee had just been shown on Chatham Waterfront had cost. They also asked the Portfolio Holder for his view on using the former Debenhams building as a community facility, including relocating Chatham Library to it. He also asked how the infrastructure in the centre of Chatham would cope with the expected population increase of 2,000 due to the development taking place there. The Member also asked for clarification of what the table at 22.4.6 of the report in the agenda was showing. This related to the Pentagon Centre.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the video had cost £9,000. This had been produced in lieu of an architect's model which would have cost £150,000. A marketing exercise was taking place to consider the future use of the Debenhams building and a number of interested parties had come forward. The

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vast majority of people moving into new developments were existing Medway residents who were therefore already using local infrastructure. Additional infrastructure would be provided, including a substantial Healthy Living Centre on the first floor of the Pentagon Shopping Centre. The Pentagon was now trading well and there were few empty shops on the ground floor. There had been significant interest from potential new occupiers. The Pentagon was making money and while this was not as much as expected, it was making a positive contribution to the Council's budget. It had, like all shopping centres, been affected by the Covid pandemic.

The Council had purchased nine residential properties to be used for temporary accommodation and this was due to be increased imminently. Some long-term leases had been bought from Peel Ports to enable the Waterfront development and development in Strood to go ahead. A chain of warehouses used by a distribution company had also been bought, which had been very profitable. As part of the First Homes project, the majority of homes sold at Garrison Point would be affordable housing. This would provide a 30% discount on purchase price. Affordable housing had also been provided at White Road, which had been occupied for two years and affordable housing was under construction at Britton Farm, Gillingham. The Portfolio Holder was proud of the record of regeneration in Chatham and considered that the infrastructure would be able to cope.

Cost of architect and apartments – A Member questioned why the cost of the architect model had increased from £90,000 in March 2022 to £150,000 currently. It was also asked how much the apartments at Garrison Point cost.

The Portfolio Holder said that the £90,000 cost was for an architect model for the Waterfront and that the additional amount was for Garrison Point and other developments. Architect models were expensive as they were labour intensive with computer generated images being far more cost effective. The price of the apartments ranged from around £200,000 to just over £300,000.

Fly tipping, Rochester Pier and Chatham Library – A Member, referencing a link between large scale flytipping and organised crime, asked how enforcement officers were working to address this. It was also questioned when the damage to Rochester Pier would be fixed. The Member added their support to the suggestion that consideration should be given to relocating Chatham Library to the former Debenhams building.

The Portfolio Holder said that the existing Chatham Library and Hub was of good quality and was well used and positioned. Relocation was not considered to be a viable option and there were plans to further enhance the existing facility. In relation to flytipping, there had been some large tonnages involving building materials that had cost a lot to clear up. He felt that the fines the courts were able to give were not an adequate deterrent. He considered that officers had worked effectively with the police and there had been some successful prosecutions.

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Rochester Pier needed extensive work and consideration was being given as to how to take this forward as the cost of the work required was considerable. Options could include creating a Trust but this was not an option while the Council owned the pier. £130,000 was available to fund refurbishment of the Pier. The Council did not own the river bank that the pier sat on, which made the situation more complex.

Rapid deployment cameras – In response to a question that asked whether rapid deployment cameras could be used at flytipping hotspots, the Portfolio Holder said that this was not possible as these cameras were specifically used at crime hotspots to establish whether the level of anti-social or criminal behaviour in an area warranted having a permanent camera. This would then be considered by the Community Safety Partnership. Cameras had been deployed nine times during the previous 12 months.

Pentagon Centre, Splashes Leisure Pool and CIPFA best practice – A Member asked what percentage of the top floor of the Pentagon Centre Shopping Centre was currently occupied and for confirmation that the costing of the Splashes Leisure Centre presented to the last Full Council meetings was final. The Member also suggested that the Council should follow best practice that stated that members of executive bodies should not sit on boards.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the first floor of the Pentagon Centre had been largely vacated to enable the provision of the Healthy Living Centre. Wilko would be moving from this floor and had approached the Council to request that they extend their premises on the ground floor. In relation to Splashes, the Portfolio Holder understood that the figure presented to Council had included a contingency to ensure that no further funding would need to be requested.

The Portfolio Holder said he saw no reason for him to not sit on the Board of Medway Development Company and that it was normal practice within public companies for major shareholders to be represented on the board. MDC had delivered regeneration that the private sector could not as no interest had been expressed in the redevelopment of Chatham town centre. It had been viable for a Council owned company to become involved as it was able to accept lower profit margins than the private sector. The Portfolio Holder said the fact that he and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services sat on the Board enabled the Council's interests to be best represented and to ensure that good quality, affordable developments were brought forward. 70.43% of properties at Garrison Point had been sold and it was expected that 80% would have been sold by January 2023 when the first residents moved in. This was considered to have been a strong performance. 72 properties had been sold so far at Garrison Point.

Heating at the meeting venue – In response to a Member who questioned whether the meeting should have been held at the St George's Centre in view of how cold the venue was and asked whether the Portfolio Holder would apologise, the Portfolio Holder apologised and said proposals were being considered to rearrange meeting rooms at the Gun Wharf Council offices to

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enable it to accommodate all Council meetings. He acknowledged that the St George's Centre was not fit for purpose for some of its current uses.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Programme and discounted homes – A Member asked for clarification of the work included in the HRA programme. They also asked about the discount offered on some of the homes sold as first homes at Garrison Point. The Portfolio Holder said that £10million funding had been secured from Homes England for each of Garrison Point and Chatham Waterfront and that further funding was expected. In relation to HRA, significant work had been undertaken around school extension projects and in other areas such as replacement heating systems.

Community Payback Scheme – A Member expressed concern that while the Scheme was due to be developed in Chatham and Luton, that other parts of Medway might not benefit. The Member also said that no contact point had yet been provided to Councillors and highlighted concern about transport for those involved in the scheme and the range of projects that could be undertaken.

The Portfolio Holder said that Chatham and Luton had been identified as areas for the Community Payback Scheme to be developed in first because of the particular challenges faced in those areas. Any Members who had projects that they would like to be considered for inclusion in the Scheme were encouraged to highlight these. It was acknowledged that there was a transport issue where those involved were young people. For Under 18's, every task had to be individually risk assessed.

Unauthorised encampments and Splashes Leisure Centre – A Member commented that the report stated that Medway Norse were exploring prevention measures for unauthorised traveller encampments when this was something that Councillors had been requesting for 12 years. In relation to the redevelopment of Splashes Leisure Centre, it was questioned whether the amount of additional funding agreed by Full Council had included a contingency. The Portfolio said he understood that it had and offered his apologies if this was not the case.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and answering questions.

453 Annual Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership, Including an Update on the Community Safety Plan 2020 - 2024

Discussion:

The Chairman welcomed the partners of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to the meeting.

The Committee discussed the following topics:

Probation Service representation, crime rates and policing reductions -

A Member asked why no Probation Service representative was present at the meeting. They also asked whether Medway was considered to be a safer or less safe place since 2015/16, in the context of incidents of violence having increased by 12.5%, sexual offences 22.5% and burglary 7.5%. It was also asked what consultation had been undertaken in relation to reductions to town centre and school policing teams and what the expected level of reductions to the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Medway was.

Superintendent Marsh considered that Medway was a safer place than it had been ten years ago. Kent Police was committed to crime data integrity and accurate recording of incidents. There had been significant work in relation to safety initiatives such as work to reduce violence against women and girls and preventative work in relation to sexual offending and the night time economy. Kent Police had faced staffing issues in answering calls and officers had needed to be reassigned from other areas. This included 35 Police Officers, 26 of which had been working in schools. There had not been time for consultation with schools and this had been addressed subsequently. It was considered that the eight or nine officers who had been working in Medway Schools had made a significant impact. As part of remodelling work being undertaken a child centred policing team would be established. Schools would be allocated named officers to maintain and build on the strong relationships previously established.

In relation to town centres, it was considered that the PCSOs based there had done a fantastic job. In future, each ward in Kent and Medway would have a named police officer and the remodelling work would see a significant increase in neighbourhood officers, the exact numbers were not currently known but there were due to be a total of 4,145 police officers across Kent and Medway by March 2023, which would be the highest ever level. It was acknowledged that call responses for the 111 non-emergency number had been unacceptable. Work was taking place to address this, including encourage callers to use a live chat function, but it was acknowledged that this was not suitable for everyone.

Publication dates and Strep A – A Member asked when a report looking at serious youth crime would be published and when the Combatting Drugs Partnership would publish its Needs Assessment and Strategic Action Plan. The Member also asked how Public Health was responding in relation to the current outbreak of the Strep A bacterial infection. The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that information had been provided to schools in Medway, including signs and symptoms, what to do and how to get support. Close working was taking place with the Health Protection Authority to track numbers and information being shared with partner organisations. The Combatting Drugs Partnership was due to meet in early January to agree the priorities that would form the initial Action Plan. This would be a live document, both the Needs Assessment and Action Plan would be continually updated. There was also a regular item at Community Safety Partnership meetings to share information from the Combatting Drugs Partnership.

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The Portfolio Holder for resources added that the Combating Drugs Partnership, which had met twice so far, was Medway focused. The Serious Youth Crime report was ongoing work that would be published in due course.

A Member requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee to provide an update on the work of the Combating Drugs Partnership.

Vulnerable people and communities – A Member highlighted cost of living issues and their impact during the winter. He also highlighted the good work of the Medway Task Force and how this could be rolled up, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups and communities.

Superintendent Marsh said the Task Force worked with vulnerable communities across Medway and that a challenge was to ensure that vulnerability continued to be addressed when the Task Force work moved to another area. The new Neighbourhood Policing Model moving forward would support that through use of named ward officers. Tackling vulnerability was a team effort through the Community Safety Partnership. In relation to 16 – 18 year olds there was a focus on wider engagement with there being plans to involve more young people from groups across Medway. The Child Centred Policing Board also engaged with various groups.

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service Area Manager said that the Service worked through the Community Safety Partnership and through its own education programme in schools. An Early Intervention Framework had been introduced which shaped interventions with youths and young adults. It targeted those who would benefit the most. The referral routes had been commended and fire crews had received a high level of training to enable them to identify young people who could benefit from intervention.

The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that the Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership were working hard to ensure that the voices of victims and survivors were heard. Council officers from Housing and Public Health had been meeting these groups to understand the challenges that they faced. Themes had included the cost of living and ability to flee domestic abuse. A multi-agency conference had recently been held to understand how to facilitate access to support. Communication tools were being developed to signpost survivors to available support. An example of such support was people fleeing DA being able to access free train travel. The Portfolio Holder added that he considered that the threshold for young people being able to access mental help support from Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was too high and that the Community Safety Partnership had funded mental health mentors for the last two years through the Council's Youth Service. In response to a further question that asked how the availability of free train travel was publicised, the Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that this was promoted through Women's Aid. Public Health were producing an information leaflet which would also include details.

Regular updates on progress – A Member proposed that the Committee be provided with a six monthly briefing note to update the Committee on the work

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of the Community Safety Partnership. The Director of Place and Deputy Executive agreed that this should come forward to the Committee. This would be provided to the Committee between the Partnership's annual attendances.

Town centres and police responses – A Member asked how responses to town centre incidents would be managed in the future when there were fewer PCSOs and more Police Constables. The Member also asked what could be done to help people to feel safe in town centres and considered that Police surgeries had been ineffective. He highlighted that on three occasions he had been advised that feedback would be provided but none had been. The Member also highlighted the poor level of service that he considered had been provided by the 111 non-emergency number.

Superintendent Marsh said that PCSOs had done fantastic work while deployed in town centres. It was anticipated that the new model would include PCSOs and that there would be increased numbers of police officers undertaking neighbourhood policing duties. He said that budgetary constraints necessitated the changes and reiterated that there would be the highest ever number of police officers in Kent by March 2023. There was no intention for resources to be removed from town centres. The Superintendent undertook to establish why follow up contact had not been made with the Member following police surgeries and encouraged the Member to continue attending the surgeries.

In relation to feeling of safety, the Superintendent said that work had been undertaken in the last year around promoting safety and making Medway a safer place. Officers were deployed in town centres on Friday and Saturday night and there had been feedback that people felt safer as a result of the work undertaken. There were numerous examples of officers having helped vulnerable people to travel home safely. The Member was advised that an opportunity was available for him to join a town centre night time patrol, which could include attending a Walk and Talk event taking place in Rochester on the evening after the Committee meeting. Superintendent Marsh highlighted that the Crimestoppers service enabled anonymous reporting of crime and that further messaging of the options available could be considered. A community engagement Tool, My Community Voice was currently being promoted and further work on this, particularly in Rochester, could be considered. In relation to the 101 services, extra resources had been made available and it was considered that there had been a significant improvement in ability to answer calls. It was disappointing to hear concerns that the Police did not care about issues raised and Superintendent Marsh offered to speak to the Member about this following the meeting.

The Medway Task Force Manager (Kent Police) highlighted work undertaken as part of the Safer Streets initiative. Around £500,000 of funding had been provided for this work. This included lighting projects, the Medway Safe Spaces Scheme, which involved businesses across Medway being able to provide safe spaces for people. HollieGuard vouchers had been provided to victims of stalking and Active Bystander Training had been provided to local businesses and people working in public spaces. There had been street scene work around graffiti and rubbish removal. Extra radios had been provided to businesses.

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This work was helping to make Medway safer than it already was. Engagement was a significant part of the work, including with the Fire Service, the Department for Work and Pensions, Medway Council and Victim Support.

Domestic Abuse Support – It was asked what could be done to support people who had concerns and did not necessarily want to involve the Police and whether more could be done around prevention. The Portfolio Holder said that there had been a presentation at the last meeting of the Community Safety Partnership about remote interviews that the police were offering these to victims of domestic abuse. These took place via mobile phone. These enabled the victim to maintain privacy and avoid Police attendance at their home.

The Public Health Principal and Head of Public Health said that victims of Domestic Abuse were not always aware that they were victims as the coercive and controlling behaviour could build gradually. A range of support was available, including a one stop shop, held at the Sunlight Centre, Gillingham on Tuesday mornings. A range of organisations were represented by this service. The Domestic Abuse Service, Oasis, provided a helpline and there were a range of national helplines available. Leaflets and information were also available and in November, '16 Days of Action' had seen a range of conferences and training sessions take place. A number of people had come forward for support as a result. Work was also taking place to embed Domestic Abuse Champions in organisations across Medway who could then signpost to support available.

Superintendent Marsh said that the police often identified coercive and controlling behaviour during engagement with victims and that this could be investigated without there being any evidence of physical abuse. The use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders were powerful tools that could help break cycles of abuse and enable access to support services. The use of evidence led prosecutions were important as this could enable a prosecution to go forward under appropriate circumstances, even where a victim did not consent to this.

Concern about response provided to public disorder – A Member expressed significant concern that there had not been an effective response to an incident of serious disorder in Strood that had involved a large number of people. He expressed concern that the Police had not been willing to attend a public meeting and in relation to the attitude of an officer at a surgery he had attended. The Member advised that a formal complaint had been submitted to Kent Police. It was stated that a meeting would be held between the Police and the Member to discuss the issues raised.

Feeling of safety – in the context of increasing rates of offences, such as sexual offences, hate crime and theft and handling, a Member asked what action was being taken in Medway to make people feel safer. She highlighted residents being isolated because they did not feel safe to go to Gillingham or Chatham town centres. The Member also asked whether the funding for the Task Force was in place in the long term and whether there was confidence that Medway would be allocated sufficient resources by Kent Police.

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Superintendent Marsh said that existing town centre officers would remain in post until the remodel had been finalised. From June 2023, there would be an increase in the number of police involved in neighbourhood policing of town centres and from this point there would be a named officer in each ward who would be able to work on addressing why people did not feel safe. Close working would take place through the Community Safety Partnership and Medway Task Force. Superintendent Marsh believed that the new model would provide reassurance and safety in communities. He was confident that there would be sufficient resources for Medway and for the Task Force.

Community policing – A Member expressed concern that the police would only have capacity to focus on serious and violent crime and that the reduction in the number of PCSOs would amount to a weakening of neighbourhood policing as PCSOs played a valuable role in engaging with the public and dealing with low level issues before they could escalate. The Member asked who would be undertaking this valuable community work under the new model. They also expressed concern that some of the older PCSOs would chose not to apply to become s police officer and that valuable local knowledge and experience would lost.

Superintendent Marsh considered that the public generally had no issues raising issues directly with Police Officers. He said that the work of the Medway Taskforce demonstrated that police officers could undertake effective community policing and that the new model would see increased resources allocated to neighbourhood policing in Kent and Medway. He considered that it amounted to a strengthening of this provision. A meeting was due to take place shortly with PCSOs to encourage as many of them to become police officer as possible. There would be a fast track system to enable those who applied to not have the go through a full police recruitment process.

Police surgeries and information from local Councillors – A Member said that they had also had a poor experience of attending a police surgery and suggested that consideration be given to a more senior officer attending future events. It was also suggested that following the local elections in May 2023, the Police should contact local Councillors to obtain their feedback on local issues they had become aware of while campaigning.

County Lines – A Member requested information about County Lines. Superintendent Marsh said that there had been excellent results with drugs having been taken off the street. There was evidence of a reduction in harm due to this work to reduce drugs coming into Medway. It was suggested that a presentation could be given to the Committee in relation to County Lines. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the importance of also reducing the demand for illegal drugs in Medway.

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Decision:

The Committee thanked the partners of the Community Safety Partnership for attending the meeting and:

- a) Noted the findings of the strategic assessment.
- b) Supported the refreshed CSP priorities in light of the strategic assessment findings.
- c) Scrutinised the activity of the Community Safety Partnership, over the past year, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.
- d) Requested that reasons be provided as to why the Probation Service had not been represented at the Committee meeting.
- e) Requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee in January 2023 on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership,
- f) Requested that a briefing note be provided to the Committee six months after the Community Safety Partnership's attendance at Committee and annually thereafter.
- g) Requested that Councillors feedback their views on priorities to the Community Safety Partnership.

454 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary Quarter 2 2022/23

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance for Quarter 2 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:

Inclusion of climate change indicator – In relation to the programme, 'getting around Medway – tackle congestion hotspots by transport and public realm improvements', a Member commented that there was no reference to climate change associated with the measure and that it would be helpful to link it to Air Quality Management Areas. This would be taken forward by officers.

Cycling and walking measures and timeliness of information – It was suggested that there needed to be measures to monitor the effectiveness of people being encouraged to cycle or walk. It was also asked why there was such a significant time lag in relation to the strategic risk information included in the report and why some of the performance commentary provided was also out of date.

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The Assistant Director, Frontline Services said that the Member Advisory Group on Climate change had agreed that a sub-group would be created that would focus on active travel.

The Chief Finance Officer said that the strategic risk information was reported at the same time as the Council Plan measures and that it could be made more timely by providing the risk information separately to the Council Plan measure but this would require separate reports to the Committee. The information included in the report went through a significant internal review process ahead of consideration by the Committee and it therefore represented a snapshot in time. The scheduling of meetings also meant that there was a slightly longer time lag before Quarter 2 performance information was considered by the Committee when compared to Quarter 1 or Quarter 3.

Street litter indicator and street lighting – in relation to the green status of the indicator, 'Improved street and environmental cleanliness: Litter' a Member said this was not representative of the picture across the whole of Medway as one street might have no litter while a neighbouring street could have significant litter. The Member also considered that the replacement of Medway street lights had left some gaps in lighting columns and that streets that looked darker.

Decision:

- a) The Committee considered the Q2 2022/23 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities and considered the amended Strategic Risk Summary, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
- b) The Committee noted the classification of risks as live or managed, as set out in sections 2.6 and 2.7 of the report.
- c) The Committee determined that it would like sight of the RCE Directorate Risk Summary, as set out in section 2.8 of the report.
- d) The Committee requested that officers look at better ways of incorporating climate objectives and air quality information into future performance monitoring reports.

455 Draft Capital and Revenue Budget 2023/24

Background:

The Committee received a report providing an update on progress towards setting the Council's draft capital and revenue budgets for 2023/24.

The report set out the process by which the budget would progress through to Cabinet and Council in February 2023.

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Decision:

The Committee noted that Cabinet had instructed officers to continue to work with Portfolio Holders in formulating robust proposals to balance the budget for 2023/24.

456 River Strategy Progress Update

Discussion:

This report provided an update on the production of a River Strategy and progress to date. The following issues were discussed:

General progress on Strategy – A Member said that they were encouraged by the progress being made in the development of the Strategy and anticipated that it would cover all required areas. It would have a role in strategically informing other aspects of Council work such as planning, tourism and the environment. The Member hoped that the Strategy would enable all activities benefiting from or contributing to the River Medway to be considered and looked forward to the AECOM activity data being available.

The Greenspace and Access Programme Manager said that the work being undertaken had asked the question of what was making the river tick and what was dependent on the river. A list of partners and stakeholders had been identified and assurance was given that the Strategy would link all Council service delivery relevant to the river and explore related opportunities.

Engagement activity – A Member agreed that the work being undertaken was promising. They highlighted that the work should not be looked at in isolation and the importance of engagement with Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council and Southern Water. It was suggested that the Strategy work should also include Chatham Docks. Another Member requested that local Ward Members should be involved in Strategy development. They highlighted the need for both rediscovery and the discovery of new things in relation to the River. A Member requested that engagement work include the Freemen of the River, houseboat owners and Peel Ports.

Strategy development – It was asked what the timescales were for developing the Strategy further and when it would be brought back to the Committee.

The Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive said that engagement work would include the Freemen of the River / Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery as well as Southern Water and Peel Ports with a view to engagement around roles and responsibility.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration said that work would be undertaken to identify further stakeholders. The Strategy would be developed steadily and it was proposed that further detail would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting. It was anticipated this would be in late spring or early Summer 2023.

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Decision:

The Committee:

- a) Noted progress on the River Strategy.
- b) Requested that the AECOM report be circulated to the Committee once available.
- c) Requested that Members provide officers suggested consultees in relation to development of the Strategy.
- d) Noted that the River Strategy would next be presented to the Committee in Summer 2023.

457 S106 Developer Contributions

Discussion:

This report provided information on Section 106 (S106) legal agreements and proposed to circulate a quarterly briefing note for Members on S106 activities in line with regular reporting to Planning Committee. It also proposed that wider information, including annual spend, would be provided through the Medway Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Payment of S106 Contributions – A Member expressed concern that some developers tried to avoid making S106 contributions and suggested that the Council needed to take a robust approach to ensure that the contributions owed were collected.

Ward Member engagement – It was requested that steps be taken to ensure engagement with relevant ward Councillors in relation to spend of S106 contributions.

The Head of Planning highlighted that S106 contributions would not fund all infrastructure requirements. The Government had recently reaffirmed a brownfield first development approach, the development of which did not generate the same level of S106 contributions as greenfield sites. The need to ensure sufficient engagement with ward Councillors was acknowledged.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the contents of this report and its appendices.
- b) The Committee agreed that a quarterly S106 briefing note for all Members be introduced in line with information reported to Planning Committee on:
 - S106 agreements completed in each quarter and the obligations/contributions included in these agreements

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- S106 contributions received in each quarter and which services the funding would support.
- c) The Committee agreed that following the approval of the annual Medway Infrastructure Funding Statement by the Cabinet, that the document be reported to the next meeting of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

458 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the responses sent to petition organisers by officers.

Decision:

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

459 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out the current work programme. It was requested that a briefing note be provided in January 2023 on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership and that a briefing note be provided in six months time on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) Agreed the proposed work programme, set out at Appendix A to the report, which includes the recommendations of the pre-agenda meeting outlined in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 of the report and the other changes proposed at paragraphs 3.6 and 4.6 to 4.7 of the report.
- b) Agreed to recommend to Full Council to change to the Overview and Scrutiny Rules set out in the Council's Constitution (Chapter 4, Part 5) as set out in Appendix F to the report.
- c) Requested that a briefing note be provided in January 2023 on the work of the Combatting Drugs Partnership and that a briefing note be provided in six months time on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview And Scrutiny Committee, 8
December 2022**

Chairman

Date:

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