

Members' Questions

Question A – Councillor Sands will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Since the creation of the unitary authority in 1998, Medway Council has spent considerable time, investment, and effort on aspirations for the urban area of the district - being awarded city status and the creation of a city centre in Chatham.

Little attention has been paid to the aspirations for the rural areas of the district, particularly the Hoo Peninsula. This area is a unique part of the scenic Kent landscape, covered with designations protecting its national and international wildness - critical for wildlife and important species such as the Nightingale with its strong cultural symbolism. This natural heritage is distinctive, worthy, and more than qualifies for wider designation in the form of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - as per Natural England's requirements for consideration.

The Hoo Peninsula would join the Kent Downs AONB - bridged by Higham, Shorne and Thong into Cobham. We share the topography of the Downs, with a number of distinctive ridges and vales extending out onto the Peninsula - the ancient Saxon word "Hoo" means the 'distinct heel-shape of the ridge of hills'.

I believe it is now the perfect time for the Hoo Peninsula to become an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - especially at a time with a more environmentally conscious public, the serious threat of climate change, habitat and biodiversity deterioration and a government that is looking at expanding or creating new designated areas. With its rich diversity of wildlife, the Peninsula has very significant potential for the expansion and creation of new habitats, including large scale rewilding.

Reputable environmental organisations such as Natural England, the RSPB and the Kent Wildlife Trust recognise the importance and significance of the Hoo Peninsula and its further environmental potential.

Will this Council and this administration support the designation of the Hoo Peninsula as an AONB and join other organisations and residents in making this ambition a reality?

Question B - Councillor Johnson will ask the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:

Following Kent Police's decision to remove the Police Schools' Team from Medway schools, which has resulted in the loss of the valuable work that the team undertook, what action has the Portfolio Holder taken to ensure the return of the team at the earliest opportunity?

Question C – Councillor Maple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell, the following:

James Jamieson, the Conservative Local Government Association Chair, has called for the introduction of compulsory identification to be delayed until after May 2023. With the planned introduction of the compulsory requirement to produce identification to be able to play their part in Medway democratic processes, could you confirm the number of Medway residents who have been prosecuted for voting fraud in the last 10 years?

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

The recent wet and cold weather has had a severe impact on the already poorly maintained Medway roads. City Way, which currently spans three Council wards, is in a very poor state where inadequate repairs to potholes are now large craters making driving and cycling hazardous for road users. Instead of wasting Council taxpayers' money on short-term repairs, can the Portfolio Holder tell me why he has not developed a more proactive road improvement policy instead of simply waiting for dangerous potholes to appear?

Question E – Councillor Hubbard will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

The Strood Town Centre Forum, a body set up by Medway Council, has not met for more than seven years (not since the passing of the last independent Chairman) due to the political interference and lack of leadership from the Council's Portfolio Holder. The Forum is a partnership of Strood businesses and stakeholders working with Kent Police and Medway Council, officers and councillors. It is a platform to share information and explore opportunities to increase footfall, keeping Strood town centre relevant. During the Covid pandemic and again now in the cost-of-living crises, businesses are focused on their survival. Some long-term businesses and services have gone from the town centre. We need to reverse this trend.

When can we expect the Strood Town Centre Forum to reconvene?

Question F – Councillor Paterson will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

It is reported that the Post Office in Rochester is planned to leave its current site. Will the Portfolio Holder commit to working with the Post Office and with all members in Rochester (West and East) whose constituents rely on it, to find a suitable alternative on Rochester High Street?

Question G – Councillor Prenter will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adults’ Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

The recent GP Task Group heard from health professionals that 85% of patients’ issues brought to GP appointments are socially, derived showing that poverty, poor housing, low pay and the resulting impact on mental wellbeing are having a serious impact on Medway residents. The Task Group also heard that where other services, such as those provided by the Council or commissioned from the voluntary sector are able to work in partnership with GP practices to focus support on identified patients, those impacted can start to turn their lives around. Can the Portfolio Holder assure me of his support for this innovative type of work and will he work to make the necessary resources available?

Question H - Councillor Curry will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Medway’s planning service team work tirelessly in areas such as development control, planning enforcement, and on the emerging local plan. Can the Portfolio Holder tell us what is being done to address the serious under resourcing and recruitment issues that this team faces at the moment?

Question I – Councillor Howcroft-Scott will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Can the Leader of the Council give an annual breakdown of the level of Revenue Support Grant received by Medway Council since 2010?

Question J – Councillor Khan will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Hackwell, the following:

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that every polling station will have at least one female member of staff available from 7am to 10pm on May 4th for checking voter identification, recognising sensitivities that may require a female member of staff to carry out the check?

Question K - Councillor Mahil will ask the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:

In the proposal for the redevelopment of the open space at The Paddock in Chatham, does the Portfolio Holder have any idea what the annual maintenance costs will be, especially for the proposed water feature?

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

When does the Council expect to have a fully operational, affordable Ultra Low Emission / electric bus service operating in Medway?

Question M – Councillor Van Dyke will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

In its response to the Hoo development Framework consultation, the Medway Labour and Cooperative Group proposed that priority should be given to the establishment of an electric bus service from the new developments at Hoo into Strood Station. Does the Portfolio Holder agree with this new sustainable approach for the developments in Hoo, in the interests of Medway's businesses, community and environment?

Question N – Councillor Price will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:

It is important that properties on our High Street are kept in good condition in order not to damage the appearance of our shared town centre space.

Could the Council please write to the owners of properties on Gillingham High Street who are failing to maintain their properties to a sufficient standard (such as 122-124 High Street, Gillingham) to remind them of the importance of a clean town centre?

Question O – Councillor McDonald will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

Will Chatham Town Centre ever get a healthy living centre?