

Public Questions

Question A – James Chespy, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

For the last 20 years we have seen an erasure of hope in the Medway towns and one saw it etched on the faces of some of our local population. Now that the people have entrusted the Labour and Co-operative Group with the governance of the local Council, I would ask the new Leader of the Council to commit to restoring hope to our towns and to our people.

Question B – Carl Dunks, of Rainham, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:

Can there be a medical unit in Rainham (ME8) to help people with challenging behaviours such as Tourette's, autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

Question C – Vivienne Parker, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

I have had complaints that some roads on Davis Estate have not been cleaned and that local people are having to do their own cleaning. Can the Council confirm that street cleaning is still taking place on the estate?

Question D – Alan Wells, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Flash floods and flooding are projected to rise considerably by 2050 because of increased intensity of rainfall during winter and summer. Sea levels are also predicted to rise by 10-30cm, which will compound coastal flooding and negatively impact coastal infrastructure.

In relation to the recently published Isle of Grain Policy Unit: Thames Estuary (TE2100) by the Environmental Agency to manage flood risk and adapt to rising sea levels, land on some parts of the Peninsula is within flood zone 3 which has a high probability of flooding. Flood defences have been built to protect and reduce flooding, but do not completely stop the chance of flooding because they can be overtopped or fail.

TE2100 calls on the Council to produce Riverside strategies either as a standalone document or part of a Local Plan, created with local communities, and in place by 2030. Visions for the riverside show how flood defence upgrades can deliver social value and multiple benefits.

In some places in the outer estuary, they will need to be in place earlier. This is because planning for defence raising will need to start before 2030. Riverside strategies enable opportunities to upgrade flood defences through planned

developments. Decisions taken in the 2020s will determine the quality of public space along the river for generations.

Environment Agency Director of Flood Risk Strategy and National Adaptation, Julie Foley said “What we already know in the Thames Estuary is that climate change is happening: sea level is rising faster than we were expecting, assets are deteriorating faster than we were expecting and some of the key dates that we originally thought we needed for bringing forward investments and raising flood defences are coming forward.”

Ensuring the Peninsula’s communities, growth, and infrastructure is resilient to climate change, and to future sea level rise, the Council needs to ensure that TE2100 requirements will be embedded into the Local Plan.

The Environment Agency published TE2100 recently. Setting out flood risk along the Thames Estuary, including between the Isle of Grain and Cliffe. To protect the Isle of Grain and this part of the Peninsula against future sea level rise.

The report calls upon Medway Council to set out plans to manage the flood risk and adapt to rising sea levels, by 2030. This covers flood risk, waste water management and infrastructure investment.

Given the need to address much of that call to action in this Council term, in developing plans for future riversides, will the Council commit to engaging Peninsula communities affected by flood risk and rising sea levels in Medway?

Question E - Ben Rist, of Rainham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Considering the cost-of-living crisis, banning Uber in Medway will put residents at risk of losing jobs and also be detrimental to people’s welfare when it is impossible at times to book a local taxi. Given these issues that we are facing, are you still committed to taking choice away from residents who rely on Uber by continuing to try to ban the service?

Question F - Alan Collins-Rosell, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Building homes is rarely popular, particularly for those who live close to proposed developments, such as in Rainham and on the Hoo peninsula. Opposing individual developments is a campaign tactic used by all parties to win votes, but often it comes with little or no alternatives to where housing should be built.

Like many local authorities across the country, Medway is in the grip of a housing crisis. People in my generation are often unable to afford to buy without generous handouts or inheritance from family members, while those in private rented accommodation are expected to pay unbelievably high rents, leaving renters, particularly those living on their own or with young families with little spare cash to save for the future or spend on leisure activities in the local economy. Meanwhile,

social housing is in very short supply, leaving unacceptably long waiting lists for people who are unable to buy or rent privately.

Given the urgency, what will the new administration be doing to ensure enough housing, particularly genuinely affordable and social housing, is built in Medway to ensure there is a sufficient supply of housing for the future?

Question G - Jon Castle, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

In specific areas of Medway building at large volume is not currently sustainable.

The Hoo Peninsula currently has insufficient GPs to service the population sustainably. There is also insufficient sewage capacity to support large housing development.

There are councils that have committed themselves not to build houses in conditions that are unsustainable, such as those stated above. Does the Council agree with me that large scale development on the Hoo Peninsula is not sustainable without significant investment in infrastructure and services?

Question H - Andrew Millsom, of Rochester, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

The Council withdrew their objection to the appeal by Trenport for a development in Cliffe, shortly after the May local elections. Medway Council said the following in a statement: "The Council has carefully considered its position following the evidence heard in the first week of the inquiry and has decided that it is necessary to withdraw its reasons for refusal."

An interpretation is that the Council has undermined its own case and subsequently withdrawn its objections. This indicates weak preparation and a failure to back the Medway Council's Planning Committee and the residents' group who are also objecting.

A second interpretation is that the passing of a neighbourhood plan by Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council via the referendum in May has changed the circumstances fundamentally.

A third option is that the new incoming Labour Medway Council administration instructed the Council officers to withdraw.

In the context of the Council having failed over two decades to implement a Local Plan, thus creating conditions for applications to be challenged robustly, can the Council place on record which interpretation, or combination of the above, led to the decision to withdraw its objections, or was there some other overriding factor?

Question I - Stuart Bourne, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

I am pleased that the Council is continuing its programme to plant more trees around Medway. I was also impressed that council officers managed to secure funding for 300 extra trees, especially as the funding included money to water the trees for the first couple of years.

However, we have seen another record breaking period of heat and very little rain in June, and I have seen many trees suffering from lack of water. In fact, if it wasn't for myself and other teams of volunteers in Rainham and Gillingham, many of these trees would have died.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that Medway Norse has used this extra funding and increased its capacity to water trees around Medway so that no tree is missed?

Question J - Bryan Fowler, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Our historic Paddock in Chatham has been much changed using legislation which enables Permitted Development Rights for work to go ahead without the need for Planning Application protocols.

Will you please update us on the future annual maintenance charges of the water feature, including budgetary allowances for water and electricity costs?

Question K - Alan Stockey, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Earlier this year, the Council committed to complete a piece of work by the end of May 2023, which would clarify its assessed (Scope 1, 2 and 3) carbon emission footprint from its original, highly tentative, 1.4% of the Medway total emissions.

This piece of critical assessment work is needed to better target its emission reduction priorities and determine where best to apply the Council's considerable influence. The commitment was made in this chamber and again by Councillor Doe at the final Member's Advisory Group on Climate Change but has not yet been completed. What does this administration plan to do now to confirm its footprint and priorities?

Question L - Melanie Stockey, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Over the past month, the Council has launched three consultations / surveys concerning traffic and highways, school streets, and most recently, Red Routes. There is an evident lack of coordination across the relevant departments responsible for: Active Travel; Transport; Public Health, Environmental Protection and linkage back to Climate Change objectives.

This lack of collaboration is concerning and costly at a time when budgets are highly constrained and the Adult Social Care budget continues to be influenced by health conditions clearly associated with Medway's air pollution. The lack of reference in these surveys to ongoing initiatives e.g. Rainham Anti-idling Project, and reducing the number of highly polluting Euro 3 buses from our streets and school transit corridors, further illustrate the lack of coordination.

What is the Council doing to ensure that the respective teams are working together to achieve maximum benefit and impact?

Question M - Kate Belmonte, on behalf of Medway Green Party, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Medway Green Party would like to congratulate the Labour team for their recent successes in May's Local Elections. The Green Party received a total of 7741 votes, making us the third largest political party in Medway, but because of the First Past the Post voting system operated by Medway Council we were unable to secure a seat. On the Hoo Peninsula just 7192 votes secured 4 councillors.

We support the motion passed at the 2022 Labour Party Conference, specifically the terminology which described First Past the Post does "long-term damage to the health of our democracy", and which committed the Labour Party to introducing Proportional Representation. The Green Party also notes that alternative electoral systems have been adopted in other electoral bodies nationally, from London to the devolved bodies. Medway Greens also note that the Labour Portfolio Holder for Housing, Naushabah Khan, sits on the National Policy Forum for the Labour Party.

Will Medway Labour Group commit to exploring, with the aim of introducing, alternative electoral systems for our Unitary Authority, so that every vote cast in Medway matters?