

**Full Council 20 July 2023 – Schedule of written responses to
Members’ questions not answered at the meeting**

| Agenda Reference | Question | Response |
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| 10H | <p>Councillor Spalding submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:</p> <p>“At the end of your first Cabinet meeting you stated categorically, on behalf of the Labour Group “We want ultimate transparency”. During that meeting, Councillor Curry when telling the cabinet about the HIF situation reminded the Cabinet that as part of your election promises you made a “Commitment to deliver a more transparent and inclusive Medway Authority”.</p> <p>During a subsequent meeting with Councillor Curry I asked for copies of the letter from Homes England with the recommendation to withdraw HIF monies and a copy of the detailed plan which allegedly would achieve the HIF objectives.</p> <p>Nothing has been provided and despite further requests these documents are still being kept secret.</p> <p>Barely two months into this administration and you have already broken an election promise. Can you please explain why?”</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, the Labour and Cooperative administration are committed to operating in an open and transparent manner. We believe this is key to delivering on our ambitious mandate for sustainable growth in Medway.</p> <p>A meeting had been put in diaries on 3rd July 2023 to brief Peninsula Ward Members on the Future Hoo HIF programme. However, after some key attendees gave their apologies, this was cancelled. It is now proposed that this briefing is held on 4th August 2023 and has been extended to all members of the Council.</p> <p>I personally ensured all members, including yourself, were briefed ahead of my announcement at Cabinet on an embargoed basis which I’m grateful for 57 councillors for respecting.</p> |

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| <p>101</p> | <p>Councillor Mrs Turpin submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:</p> <p>“At Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 March 2023, Councillor Curry, in regard to the Housing Infrastructure Fund asked, “Conversations were being had with Homes England, why weren’t we aware of these conversation, why haven’t we been told?”</p> <p>Later in the same meeting Councillor Murray said, “I’m uncomfortable about all these discussions going on and nobody knowing about it. This Committee needs to send a message to Cabinet to ask them to pause the discussions that everyone is having with Homes England and decide what scheme exactly we are committed to.”</p> <p>On 13 June at the Cabinet meeting it was announced that the Council had received a letter on 9 June from Homes England advising that they were no longer recommending the funding for Medway’s HIF project, with a final decision being made by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It was made clear at this meeting that all efforts would be made to persuade Homes</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. The Labour and Cooperative Party are committed to operating in an open and transparent manner. We believe this is key to delivering on our ambitious mandate for sustainable growth in Medway.</p> <p>A meeting had been put in diaries on 3rd July 2023 to brief Peninsula Ward Members on the Future Hoo HIF programme. However, after some key attendees gave their apologies, this was cancelled. It is now proposed that this briefing is held on 4th August 2023.</p> <p>You will have seen the recent press statement which announced that the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, alongside Homes England have withdrawn the £170 million HIF grant. This is deeply disappointing for the Council. As a result of the decision, Medway Council will now need to stop work on the original proposed investment in six road schemes which were designed to improve the Peninsula’s links to the rest of Medway, reduce congestion, and improve air quality, and investment in public access to open spaces.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the parish councils, community groups and members of the Hoo Consortium of landowners and housebuilders to come forward with alternative solutions for Hoo, focusing on improving the wellbeing of all residents by providing sustainable transport, access to open spaces, employment opportunities and new homes.</p> |
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| | <p>England and the Department not to withdraw the funding and that the Leader would be requesting an urgent meeting.</p> <p>However, except one cancelled meeting, there has been no discussion or updates to Members representing the communities on the Peninsula.</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the current position of discussions with Homes England, including any proposals and plans to communicate this to local members.”</p> | |
| 10J | <p>Councillor Joy submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (including statutory responsibility), Councillor Price:</p> <p>“Schools across Medway are facing extreme delays from Medway Council in; Firstly, getting an agreement to additional funding needs for children with Special Educational Needs, with schools in some instances waiting for over 6 months incurring additional costs (that they can ill afford) to ensure that they meet their requirements under statutory duties from current legislation.</p> <p>Secondly, when funding levels are agreed, actually</p> | <p>Thank you for your question regarding top-up funding provided to education providers to support pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who do not have an EHCP.</p> <p>From 1 April 2023, Medway Council began to implement a new Banded Funding system for EHCP funding. This followed extensive consultation with all schools.</p> <p>The new funding system will ensure clarity for schools going forwards and reduce delays that are currently occurring within the service. In line with the consultation, top up funding will cease from 1 September 2023, with there being one route to additional funding via the EHCP application process. It is important to note that schools already receive a notional amount of £6,000 for every child with SEND. This funding should be used by</p> |

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| | <p>getting the money paid, with schools being owed thousands by Medway Council, with the majority from the last few months.</p> <p>Please can the Portfolio Holder explain what is being done to speed up the process, including confirmation when all funding currently agreed is paid and the procedures being put in place to ensure that all monies are paid promptly?”</p> | <p>schools to meet the SEND needs of students who do not have an EHCP.</p> <p>The conversion to the banded funding system will be completed over a two-year cycle. Schools will be able to share their views during the review process, which is also outlined in the conversion timeline.</p> <p>We do recognise that there are currently delays in the system and this has indeed placed additional pressures onto school financial planning. However, the new processes being introduced will enable us to better streamline funding decisions into the EHCP processes and reduce the need for repeat requests/reviews where the funding is more accurately aligned to the long-term needs of the child.</p> <p>The SEND Finance Team has had long term staff absences which has impacted on timely service delivery. In April 2023, additional staffing was allocated to the Finance Team to enable the processing of some of this backlog. Schools have seen invoices cleared and requests for top up funding addressed. Where funding has been agreed, this has also been backdated to the point of application, ensuring that school receives the correct level of funding over time.</p> <p>We are continuing to build on our positive relationships with schools and we are confident that these new processes will significantly reduce the timeframes for funding to be released to schools.</p> |
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| <p>10K</p> | <p>Councillor Crozer submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:</p> <p>“I note that the Cabinet Local Plan Advisory Group is allocated 7 Members using the ration of 4:3 Labour: Conservative, as such it excludes our Independent Group.</p> <p>You will, I'm sure, be acutely aware of the implications of the Hoo Peninsula being excluded from this advisory capacity.</p> <p>The Local Plan has been the subject of some difficulty since 2007 when the previous administration began to bring forward its update to include 5000 houses at Lodge Hill on the Peninsula and of course the various failures of Medway to bring forward a successful Local Plan of late, predicated on the back of the Hoo Development Framework and the Housing Infrastructure Fund Project.</p> <p>After almost 3 years of development of the HIF project, following the grant determination agreement and some circa £18m spent, Homes England recommended its withdrawal citing some 42 points of failure. Deloitte, one of the experts, concluded there are a "considerable number of</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. I have no plan to review the numbers currently allocated to Local Plan Advisory Group. I would encourage all members and indeed all residents to participate in the upcoming consultation on Reg 18. As you will be aware, I've scheduled regular meetings with both Leaders of opposition groups where I fully expect the Local Plan to be one of the many issues which can be discussed.</p> |
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planning risks that remain outstanding since the original HIF submission. A key risk which underpins the entire planning strategy is the delay to the adoption of the Local Plan and risk of legal challenge".

Given that the HIF project has been cancelled it is essential that we, Medway, quickly adopt a sound evidence based Local Plan that we might, once and for all, move forward together.

You have remarked recently that the residents have given Independents a clear mandate that over developing the Peninsula is not acceptable.

We have asked time and time again for transparency and to be part of the process to develop a fair and evidenced based Local Plan. We want to be part of that transparent process. Representation on a Cabinet 'Advisory' Group of the Hoo Peninsula would a step in the right direction together.

I therefore respectfully ask you to carefully consider changing the allocation for the Local Plan Cabinet Advisory Group to that similar to the Climate Change advisory group of 9 in the ratio of 5:3:1."

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| <p>10L</p> | <p>Councillor Field submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:</p> <p>“Residents in Cliffe Road in Strood have raised the issue of high vehicular speeds presenting a danger to property and residents. They would like the Council to review speed limits, with a preference for a 20 miles per hour restriction. What measures is the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration taking to ensure that our streets are safe for all?”</p> | <p>Thank you for your question, Councillor Field. The Council is committed to improving road safety and reducing road casualties, helping our residents and visitors to travel around Medway safely. We have statutory obligations to investigate crashes and promote road safety through the provision of information and advice, particularly to our young people. We also make physical changes to the highway, in the interests of reducing road casualties. We do this in a targeted way, at locations where road safety problems are identified, and priority is given to investigating measures that reduce casualties on our roads.</p> <p>We understand residents’ concerns over speeding vehicles, and our Transport Team will consider proposals for lower speed limits where it is appropriate to do so and where the evidence suggests it would produce real safety benefits for all road users. I have asked officers to undertake an initial investigation into the safety record of Cliffe Road, so we can establish if there have been any road casualties recorded at this location, and if vehicle speeds were a contributory factor. We will also seek to determine if vehicle speeds are having an impact on residents’ perceptions of safety, including those walking and cycling along the road.</p> |
| <p>10M</p> | <p>Question 10M – Councillor Williams submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:</p> <p>“Despite the recommendation of the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 30 March being a “Refreshed governance structure for</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. As per my response to question H, I’ve already shown clearly, we will ensure Members are given briefings and information. This will continue throughout our time as an administration. We have also ensured a member of the main opposition group has the Chair of Business Support O & S, giving the ability to form the agenda for that critical committee.</p> <p>I’ve also scheduled a regular meeting with the Leaders of both opposition political groups, something I can tell you</p> |

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| | <p>the (HIF) project going forward to include relevant community groups such as councillors, parish councillors and other community groups”, the Cabinet Report of 11 July advises that the Future Hoo Delivery Board will not be re-established and that where this is the case Cabinet Members will continue to have the necessary dialogue with relevant Members, officers and partners, as applicable, to inform the work of the Cabinet.”</p> <p>Assuming that over the past 4 weeks, discussions have been held with Homes England and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, there has been no such dialogue between Cabinet Members and local ward Councillors.</p> <p>Despite criticism of the previous administration’s governance of this project, it would appear from the withdrawal of the Future Hoo Board and many other Cabinet Advisory Groups, that Governance is going to get increasingly worse with this administration. How can the Leader give us reassurance that this is not going to be the case?”</p> | <p>wasn’t offered, certainly for the previous 11 years.</p> |
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| <p>10N</p> | <p>Councillor Pearce submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:</p> <p>“Will the Council, as a matter of policy, condition all new houses built to include beneficial wildlife measures, such as bat boxes, bee hotels, swift boxes and other wildlife items, to ensure that ecological benefits are realised quickly for local wildlife?”</p> | <p>Thank you for your question and you will know that ecology, nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change are of immense importance to me.</p> <p>In terms of Policy, that will be a matter for the Local Plan that we are working on as a matter of absolute priority with the aim to deliver in the tight timescale of 2 years.</p> <p>Notwithstanding that, biodiversity, ecology and climate change are key matters in the consideration of planning applications. These matters are regularly raised at meetings with major developers and SME’s and we already see quite a number of schemes that are including all that you have referred to. We will continue to raise these important requirements with developers and secure them in developments.</p> |
| <p>10O</p> | <p>Councillor Jones submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (including statutory responsibility), Councillor Price:</p> <p>“Please can the Portfolio Holder outline what steps are being taken by Medway Council, to ensure that all Children in Care are treated as if they have a protected characteristic, under the Equalities Act 2010?”</p> | <p>Thank you for your question. Children in care and care experienced young people have been identified as a key priority for the new administration. As such, making care experience a protected characteristic is a proposal that the new administration has asked officers to scope for consideration by Medway Council. Work is currently underway by officers regarding this issue and proposals will be put forward on how this can be progressed in the best interests of Medway’s 656 children in care and care experienced young people.</p> |