

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

**Thursday, 17 August 2023**

**6.32pm to 8.11pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Paterson (Chairperson), Field (Vice-Chairperson), Bowen, Cook, Doe, Fearn, Filmer, Hamilton, Hubbard, Hyne, Peake and Myton

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Gulvin (Substitute for Etheridge)  
Pearce (Substitute for Sands)

**In Attendance:** Richard Hicks, Chief Executive  
Adam Bryan, Director of Place  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Deputy Director of Place  
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Andy McNally-Johnson, Head of Corporate Accounts  
Dee O'Rourke, Assistant Director, Culture & Community  
David Reynolds, Head of Revenue Accounts  
Michael Turner, Principal Democratic Services Officer

**178 Chairperson's Announcement**

The Chairperson welcomed Adam Bryan, the new Director of Place, to his first meeting of this Committee. Adam had previously served as the Chief Executive Officer of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Chairperson also announced that Dee O'Rourke was leaving the Council to take up a new position at Eastleigh Borough Council. On behalf of the Committee, he thanked Dee for her support to Members over the last few years and wished her well in her new role.

**179 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Etheridge, Sands and Nesterov. Councillor Myton had been due to substitute for Councillor Nesterov but was now unable to attend.

**180 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

**181 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**182 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.

**183 Future Hoo: Housing Infrastructure Fund**

**Discussion:**

Following the decision by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, alongside Homes England, to withdraw the £170 million Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant, Members considered an update report.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration advised there was no risk of clawback of the £1.7m spent on the HIF but there was a small risk that SELEP may reclaim the £1.8m of their funds spent on designing improvements to Four Elms Roundabout. The Council had been asked to present a case to the SELEP Board in November on why this money should not be reclaimed and Members would be updated on the outcome. A decision was expected in January.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration clarified that the £1.8m SELEP funds did not relate to the slip road works at the Medway City Estate. In response to a query whether the £1.8m spent on designing improvements to the Four Elms Roundabout could be reclaimed from the HIF funds being reclaimed, the Assistant Director undertook to look into this on the basis that improvements to the roundabout would be needed regardless.

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### Decision:

The Committee agreed to note the report and to also note the Cabinet decision set out at section 6 of the report

### 184 Capital Budget Monitoring - Round 1 2023/24

#### Discussion:

Members considered a report which presented the results of the first round of the Council's capital budget monitoring process for 2023/24.

Members were advised that future reports would include a summary of the capital budget position across all Directorates.

Regarding the negotiations around disputed claims from the contractor at the Operational Depot site, a Member queried whether this was likely to mean the budget was overspent. Members were advised that negotiations were ongoing with the contractor and it seemed likely there would be an overspend.

Reference was made to the removal of the unallocated balance of £49.751m from the Medway Development Company (MDC) programme and a Member queried whether this would affect the payments to contractors at the end of the month. Members were advised that the existing schemes were outside the capital programme and the drawdowns for these would continue.

A reassurance was sought that there would be sufficient funds for MDC to draw on to complete the Chatham waterfront project. The Head of Corporate Accounts advised that the draw down of capital loans was separate and loans would be provided to MDC on the same basis as before and the money would be available.

#### Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the results of the first round of capital budget monitoring for 2023/24.
- b) note the changes made to the capital programme as set out in 9.1 and 9.2 to the report.
- c) note that Cabinet had recommended to Council the removal of the completed Platters Farm Panels and Rainham Signage schemes from the Members Priorities capital programme.
- d) note that Cabinet had recommended to Council the removal of the unallocated balance of £49.751million from the Medway Development Company programme.

## 185 Revenue Budget Monitoring - Round 1 2023/24

### Discussion:

Members considered a report which presented the results of the first round of the Council's revenue budget monitoring process for 2023/24.

The following issues were discussed:

**Planning Service pressure of £1.491m**– Members were advised this was due to a combination of a reduction in income from planning fees as the market had slowed and expenditure on consultants on the Local Plan. A Member commented that the Government was looking at announcing significant increases in planning fees.

**Children and Adult Services forecast £12.5m overspend** – concern was expressed at the scale of the projected overspend given this was Round 1. The Chief Executive responded that Q1 forecasts tended to be high and in previous years the pattern was that overspends tended to reduce. He had instructed Directors to take stringent management action to ensure an improved position in Quarter 2. The overspend in children's services was due to demographics, the costs of placements and staffing costs and also the ILACS inspection.

**Deangate golf budget** – Members were advised this heading would be removed from future monitoring reports.

**Multi Storey Car Parks** – caution was urged in terms of reducing budgets given the potential for this to affect tourism and increase anti-social behaviour. In response to a query about how car parks were monitored, the Deputy Director of Place advised there were over 25 CCTV cameras at the Council's Rochester car park. The cameras were linked to the police and the latter would respond positively to requests to increase monitoring.

### Decision:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the results of the first round of revenue budget monitoring for 2023/24.
- b) note that Cabinet had approved the virement of £500,000 from the Independent Fostering Agency budget to the internal fostering budget to reflect the increased internal fostering rates.
- c) note that Cabinet instructed the Corporate Management Team to implement urgent actions to bring expenditure back within the budget agreed by Full Council.

**186 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary  
- Quarter 1 2023/24**

**Discussion:**

Members considered a report on the priorities in the Council Plan 2023/24 and the measures used to monitor performance. The report also presented the Quarter 1 2023/24 review of strategic risks.

The following issues were discussed:

**Number of households living in temporary accommodation** – in response to a query regarding the 400 households residing in temporary accommodation and whether these numbers were being held at a lower figure, an undertaking was given to check this with the Head of Housing.

**Delivering new homes to meet the needs of Medway's residents** – noting that this was significantly below target, a Member emphasised the need for this to be closely monitored. The Chief Executive responded that over the last three years record numbers of new homes had been delivered. He assured Members a close eye would be kept on this as the new local plan was delivered. A Member queried the position regarding the supply of affordable and social housing, given the importance of this in preventing homelessness. Members were advised this was linked to the local plan process and the ability to build more houses. If the latter could be increased, then this would increase the amount of social and affordable housing. More information on this could be included in future reports.

**Citizens panel** – a request was made for a breakdown of membership of the Panel per ward with a view to Members encouraging people to join, if needed. Members were advised that a briefing paper on the Citizen's Panel had been sent to the Committee earlier in the year.

**A clean and green environment** – a comment was made that there were still streets in urban areas where litter was widespread. Another comment was made that the green status of this outcome did not reflect the reality. The Deputy Director of Place advised that the Council tried hard to make high streets a better experience and had worked with Medway Norse on the scheduling of litter collection. In response a Member referred to the scheduling of litter collections and bin collections. As refuse was collected in black bags this could cause littering as they were often put out the night before collection and became torn. Whether wheelie bins could be introduced, where this was possible, was suggested. The Deputy Director of Place replied that the uses of black bags and open bags for recycling was an issue in Medway. In areas where waste was contained, littering was not as prevalent. The Council was looking at what could be done but clearly there were costs involved in moving to a model where waste was contained.

A Member suggested the Government should be lobbied to make the penalties for littering more severe.

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**Residents with skills and jobs** – reference was made to the fact that 58% of all withdrawal reasons were still not known in relation to Medway Adult Education courses and it was suggested that this needed to be addressed and the data captured in order to reduce future withdrawals. The Assistant Director, Regeneration undertook to look into this.

**Care leavers and children in care** – whether the not in education, employment or training (NEET) rate differed between care leavers and non-care leavers was queried. The Assistant Director, Regeneration undertook to look into whether care leavers were included in the NEET figures.

**Child Friendly City** – in terms of whether this was accessible to all children in Medway and whether there were any children not able to fully access provision, Members were assured that this was open to all children and young people and engagement with children had been very successful, reaching around 100,000 last year.

**Getting around Medway** – in terms of the 5 key routes across Medway, whether Four Elms Hill was one of these routes was questioned and Members were advised it was not. The Getting around Medway measure was being reviewed with a view to it being broadened and an update on this would be reported to the Committee. The impact of the proposed red routes would be part of this review. The point was made that the average minutes per mile across the five key routes was not very meaningful. The Deputy Director of Place advised that the data was collected through a system that looked at mobile phone signals. Officers commented that they acknowledged the average time was not very meaningful and there was a desire for the data to be richer and focused on reducing congestion.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

- a) note the Q1 2023/24 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities also the strategic risks that fell under the remit of the Committee.
- b) request a briefing paper explaining the location of the 5 key routes across Medway and also how the data was captured and used.

## **187 Petitions**

### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee, including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organisers by officers.

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In relation to the petition to resurface the road on Elm Avenue and Broadwood Road, Chattenden, an undertaking was given that officers would check the condition of the road after Southern Water had repaired the water leak.

Members were advised that e-petitions from platforms other than the Council's e-petitions platform were accepted provided they complied with the requirements that applied to paper petition in terms of information required.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

## **188 Work Programme**

### **Discussion:**

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

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) noted the report and agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix A to the report, subject to accepting the proposed changes, outlined in italic text on Appendix A.
- b) agreed that Public Transport/Active Travel and the new Social Housing Regime as the Committee's potential Task Group topics for consideration at a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and Opposition Spokespersons.
- c) agreed to trial the inclusion in the agenda papers of action logs providing updates on previous decisions and actions.

## **Chairperson**

**Date:**

**Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer**

Telephone: 01634 332106

Email: [democratic.services@medway.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@medway.gov.uk)

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