

**LONGLIST OF INDEPTH TOPICS SUGGESTED BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 2023/24**  
**PROPOSED TOPICS FOR TASK GROUP IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

<p><b>Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p><b>&amp;</b></p> <p><b>Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p><b>&amp;</b></p> <p><b>Regeneration Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested topic:</b> Air Quality and Public Transport / Active Travel</p> <p><b>Reason for Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air Quality is of significant Public Health importance. It is the greatest environmental impactor on health for individuals residing in the UK and is a contributor to approximately 5% of global deaths annually. In the United Kingdom the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) attribute between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths per year because of poor air quality<sup>1</sup>.</li> <li>• Air Quality can cause and negatively impact the physical and mental health of individuals<sup>1</sup>. Long-term exposure to air pollution can cause chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as cancer, increasing morbidity and reducing life expectancy<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>• Short-term increases in levels of air pollution can also cause a range of health impacts, including effects on lung function, exacerbation of asthma, increases in respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality.</li> <li>• The effects of air quality are felt across the life course with studies showing exposure to poor air quality can reduce fertility and reduce birthweight<sup>3</sup>. However, whilst everyone can be affected by poor air quality, those most vulnerable are those with pre-existing health conditions, the young and elderly. The former because their lungs and respiratory systems are still developing, the latter because of the fact they are likely to have other long term health conditions which are made worse by poor air<sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>• Locally, the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution has been steadily declining<sup>5</sup>. In 2018 it was 1.8% above the national average standing at 8.9% compared to the national average of 7.1%. This</li> </ul>
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difference has gradually reduced to just 0.1% in 2021, indicating a significant narrowing of the gap towards the national average of 5.5%.

- Medway currently has four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), declared for exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide annual mean air quality objective. Road transport is the most significant contributor towards air quality exceedances in the AQMAs. Nitrogen dioxide is a known respiratory irritant which can irritate the linings of the nose, airways and lungs<sup>1</sup>.
- As part of its statutory duty to manage local air quality, Medway has developed two air quality action plans (AQAPs) which set out the measures and actions that will be taken to achieve the air quality objectives. The AQAPs cover a broad range of themes, including development planning, traffic management, encouraging walking and cycling, increasing the use of public transport and awareness raising.
- Sitting alongside the Council's AQAPs is the Air Quality Communication Strategy (AQCS), originally published in 2018. This strategy identifies three main areas of focus: increasing awareness and individual safeguards, empowering individuals to protect themselves and reduce harm to the environment. They also set out how the council should incorporate air quality considerations into all future policy development. Five years since its publication, there is a need to refresh the AQCS. This review will enable the council to determine progress made in achieving its objectives. It will also help to identify new opportunities for collaboration given the national and local policy changes related to sustainability and carbon reduction over the past 5 years. Notably, various strategic partners have intensified their involvement, actively promoting behaviours that support environmental enhancements and protective actions, ultimately contributing to enhanced air quality and preventative actions to reduce population exposure.
- Bus passenger numbers in Medway have declined from 9.2 million in 2012, to 5.9 million in 2021/2. Passenger journeys per head of population has also fallen over the same period, although less markedly in Medway, which lost 14.19% of passengers, compared to 16.68% nationally. Residual patronage during the Covid-19 Pandemic was much higher in Medway than other comparative areas and, overall, bus use in Medway's rural area is higher than the average for rural South-East England.

- The National Highways and Transportation (NHT) survey indicates that public satisfaction with public transport in Medway fell between 2021 and 2022 and is below the average satisfaction level across all other participants in the survey (49% in Medway compared with 51% nationally). The satisfaction with public transport information was amongst the lowest ten scores, and bus punctuality has seen a downward trend in satisfaction, with a 7% fall between 2021 and 2022. The biggest decline in public satisfaction across the survey concerned traffic congestion, and the Medway public placed least importance on the provision of good cycle routes/lanes. Public satisfaction with walking and cycling in Medway has remained stable since 2018, at around 50%.
- The frequency of commercially operated bus services in Medway has reduced, from 10-20 minutes to 12-30 minutes (as in November 2022).
- The cost to the Council for providing subsidising local bus services has increased and exceeds the budget available. Stability has been maintained following the receipt of Government grants; this funding is short-term, however, and the Council will be required to review the subsidised bus network over the next two years.
- Medway has developed strategies to drive forward its public transport and active travel agendas, including a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Sustainable School Travel Strategy and a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). These strategies, which can be developed and refined over time, support and inform the umbrella Local Transport Plan, which is due for renewal by 2026.
- Public transport and Active Travel are key themes of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. Medway Council's Air Quality Strategy recognises the contribution Active Travel and Public Transport can make towards achieving our air quality goals, through modal shift and the reduction of congestion. Both also link to our Public Health agenda.

**Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?**

Active Travel and Public transport, and associated links with climate change, congestion, and air quality, impacts on all sections of the population. The distribution of harm from poor air quality is not even. Air Quality is evidenced to impact those who reside in areas of deprivation to a greater extent and contributes to widening health inequalities<sup>6</sup>.

**Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners? ‘**

Air quality is a paramount corporate concern for Medway and a critical issue for partners for several reasons. First and foremost, it directly impacts the Public Health and widens health inequalities. Air pollution contributes to a significant number of premature deaths and increases morbidity various causes of morbidity. Additionally, improving air quality aligns with broader environmental goals and sustainability initiatives, promoting cleaner, healthier, and more liveable communities. Furthermore, addressing air quality is a matter of legal compliance. There are specific regulations that, require the local authority meets its statutory responsibilities. Finally, it requires multi-agency cooperation as it spans beyond local boundaries, making it a shared responsibility among various stakeholders to mitigate the sources and effects of air pollution effectively.

Getting around Medway’, ‘Healthy and active communities’ and ‘Supporting a clean and green environment’ link to priorities within the Council Plan.

**Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?**

Yes, this review will help to identify future opportunities for the refreshed AQCS and foster closer collaborations with internal and external stakeholders for this important agenda. A Scrutiny review that leads to SMART recommendations and areas of focus will lead to effective, measurable, and demonstrable outcomes. Please refer to the next question, however, as this will be the focus of the Active Travel Group.

**Will the review duplicate other work?**

Yes. There is already a Medway Active Travel Group in place, which meets quarterly and includes Public Transport. The Terms of Reference outlines that the purpose of this group is to review, analyse and scrutinise progress of Active Travel (and Public Transport) schemes and initiatives in Medway. The group comprises of cross-party member representation and Council officers from multiple departments, including Transport & Parking, Climate Response, Public Health and Greenspaces.

**Is it timely/ do we have the resources?**

As stated above, careful consideration is needed to ensure that duplication of similar work strands and existing focus groups is avoided, including the associated officer time and resource.

**Will the review provide scope for service improvement?**

Yes. AQAP are set but supporting strategies such as the AQCS are due to be refreshed. A review of public transport and active travel workstreams could potentially identify gaps and/or opportunities going forward.

**Glossary**

AQAP – Air Quality Action Plan or Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) is the statutory process by which local authorities monitor, assess and action to improve Air Quality.

AQCS – Air Quality Communication Strategy includes recommended communications activities to increase the awareness of the health impacts of air pollution.

AQMA – Air Quality Management Area is declared for an area where the local air quality is unlikely to meet the Government’s national air quality objectives.

Population Attributable Fraction - Population attributable fractions quantify the unobservable proportion of disease instance or mortality at a population level. It is dependent on both the relative risk of the outcome associated with the risk factor and the prevalence of the risk factor in the population. To reduce the attributable fraction, one can either reduce the relative risk (exposure to poor AQ) or the prevalence of the risk factor (improve overall AQ), or both<sup>7</sup>.

**References**

[1] Office Health Improvement and Disparities (2023) – Air pollution applying all our health. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-applying-all-our-health/air-pollution-applying-all-our-health#:~:text=The%20annual%20mortality%20of%20human,and%2036%2C000%20deaths%20every%20year>

[2] Shah, ASV *et al.* (2013) Global association of air pollution and heart failure: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet*, 382 (9897): 1039 - 1048.

[3] Pedersen, M *et al.* (2013). Ambient air pollution and low birthweight: a European cohort study (ESCAPE). *The lancet Respiratory medicine*, 1(9), 695-704

[4] Marmot, M. (2013) Fair society, healthy lives. Fair society, healthy lives, pp.1-74.

[5] Office Health Improvement and Disparities (2023) – Public health profiles - Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution (new method) at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/air%20pollution#page/4/gid/1/pat/15/par/E92000001/ati/502/are/E06000035/iid/93861/age/230/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0>

[6] WHO (2013) Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution-REVIHAAP Project Technical Report. Available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/pubrequest>

[7] Maja von Cube, M., Schumacher, M., Timsit, J.F., Decruyenaere, J. and Steen, J., (2023) The population-attributable fraction for time-to-event data. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 52(3), pp.837-845.

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**PROPOSED TOPICS FOR TASK GROUP IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

<p><b>Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested topic: Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Reason for Review:</b>  Nationally there has been an increasing awareness of the impact of COVID pandemic on emotional wellbeing. British Science Association and other have demonstrated that this impact was even more significant for children and young people who through lockdowns missed key opportunities for social and emotional interaction.</p> <p>Even among young people there are inequalities. According to NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) for example, in 2021, 45% of children and young people who were looked after in England had emotional and mental health problems. This compares to a rate of 10% among 5- to 15-year-old children in the general population.</p> <p>The NHS Long Term Plan sets out the priorities for expanding children and young people’s mental health services. It aims to widen access to services closer to home, reduce unnecessary delays and deliver specialist mental healthcare, which is based on a clearer understanding of young people’s needs and provided in ways that work better for them. This ambition is delivered through the Integrated Care Boards Local Transformation Plan (LTP)</p> <p>The LTP identifies the priority of using an iThrive framework. Medway has introduced the iThrive approach which is a framework for developing a graduated response to a child’s needs, so that needs can be met earlier and reduce the burden on specialist services. The review could look at the range of services available through an iThrive lens and make recommendations on potential gaps.</p> <p>This review could focus on wider emotional wellbeing rather than more specialist mental health diagnosis. We know that emotional wellbeing changes over time, improving resilience and promoting self-care could help young people to maintain good mental health and reduce pressures on schools and specialist health and social care services.</p> <p><b>Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?</b></p> <p>Improving CYP Emotional wellbeing can increase educational attainment, reduce pressure on specialist services (Health and Social Care), improve relationships and family outcomes and reduce the numbers of young people not</p>
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in education, training or employment.

**Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?**

This is an issue for corporate concern especially in relation to pressures on Education and Social Care but is also an issue for partners in particular the ICB.

**Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?**

A full scrutiny that leads to SMART actions could help shape how services support CYP and how support gets communicated effectively.

**Will the review duplicate other work?**

Possibly – the ICB is currently reviewing CAMHS services as the contract ends next August. As part of this they will be looking at the wider support available across the system in relation to CYP emotional wellbeing and mental health.

**Is it timely/ do we have the resources?**

There could be a pressure on commissioning officers engaged in the CAMHS recommissioning but there are a range of stakeholders to inform the review.

**Will the review provide scope for service improvement?**

Yes – learning could be used to inform ICB Commissioning intentions and help shape the Local Transformation Plan.

References

British Science Association (2020) [https://www.britishecienceassociation.org/news/the-forgotten-generation-the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-young-people?qclid=CjwKCAjw6p-oBhAYEiwAgg2PgkmeG5a3ZSIMm8qy8GYSNLrdc3v7sg3p-6vR9V6cam1lswWJIPHlxoCUHAQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.britishecienceassociation.org/news/the-forgotten-generation-the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-young-people?qclid=CjwKCAjw6p-oBhAYEiwAgg2PgkmeG5a3ZSIMm8qy8GYSNLrdc3v7sg3p-6vR9V6cam1lswWJIPHlxoCUHAQAvD_BwE)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2021). Looked-After Children and Young People (update) [F] Evidence review for interventions to promote physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of looked-after children, young people and care leavers. [online] . Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng205/evidence/f-interventions-to-promote-physical-mental-and-emotional-health-and-wellbeing-of-lookedafter-children-young-people-and-care-leavers-pdf-333471052728>

NHS Long Term Plan: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/areas-of-work/mental-health/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/>

ICB Local Transformation Plan: <https://www.kentandmedway.icb.nhs.uk/about-us/ccg-archive/Local-transformation-plan-for-CYP-emotional-wellbeing-and-mental-health>

iThrive: <http://implementingthrive.org/>



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<p><b>Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested topic:</b> Education Inequality</p> <p><b>Reason for Review:</b>  There has been a substantial amount of research on educational inequality in the UK, including access to high-quality teaching, expectations and attainment. Factors associated with inequality and attainment gaps include economic disadvantage, ethnicity, disability, gender, and whether a child has been in care or has special educational needs and disability. Educational inequalities emerge in very early childhood and the effects continue throughout a person's life, affecting entry into higher education, future employment and lifetime earnings.</p> <p>In Medway educational outcomes for disadvantaged, children with SEND and children in care are significantly below similar children nationally. This is consistent across all Key stages, with the gap widening as they get older.</p> <p>Medway is a wholly selective authority; it has a proportionally large number of multi academy trust. The responsibility of the provision of high quality education sits with schools and academies. The review would seek to understand the potential structural system issues that may be underpinning or exacerbating this inequality and highlight possible actions to alleviate them.</p> <p><b>Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?</b>  Our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people are supported to achieve better outcomes, having a positive impact on their life chances and disrupt the cycle of poverty and disadvantage caused by low educational outcomes.</p> <p><b>Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?</b>  It is both a corporate concern and a concern of the wider Education System Leadership. Recognising the benefits of a good education on all aspects of a young persons life and future success.</p> <p><b>Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?</b>  It will aim to identify the causes of this inequality and make proposals for actions that can be taken to remove the cause or reduce the effect of the cause.</p>
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**Will the review duplicate other work?**

Schools and Academies are responsible for the outcomes of children and young people, however this will focus on potential systemic issues impacting on their ability to do this.

The Education and SEND service review academic performance within their current work

**Is it timely/ do we have the resources?**

Additional analyst resource may be needed.

**Will the review provide scope for service improvement?**

The review will inform the strategic education system leadership and the Education Service delivery in ensuring all children and young people achieve their full potential.

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<p><b>Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested topic:</b> Medway 2.0</p> <p><b>Reason for Review:</b>          If we took a blank sheet of paper with the word “resident” in the middle and designed a brand-new Medway Council, based on the latest and greatest technology innovations, would it look the same as it does now?</p> <p>We currently have over 44 core systems that don’t all talk to each other, so it is very difficult to create a “single view of the resident”, or for the resident to form a “single view of the Council”.</p> <p>If we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• built a corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and case management system</li> <li>• redesigned resident processes to make them consistent and easy to use</li> <li>• joined up services from the resident’s point of view (and not because of the Council silo structures)</li> </ul> <p>Medway could not only better serve residents but also achieve efficiencies.</p> <p><b>Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?</b>          Making the Council simple and easy to interact with would help <i>all</i> sections of the population, whether they want to report a pothole or access vital benefits.</p> <p><b>Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?</b>          Medway 2.0 is mainly a corporate concern, especially in the early stages. There is potential to extend the project to cover partners, but it is felt that it is important to commence the redesign of Council services as a priority, which will make it easier to absorb demand from partners.</p> <p><b>Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?</b>          Yes - Designing a process, or whole service, around the resident with a new system and fresh approach would ensure that we consistently capture the information we need from customers in a structured way, which would feed into a central Customer Relationship Management system. This would allow us to have visibility of all of the customers interactions with the Council, unlocking innovative ways of sharing this data, such as creating a Ward dashboard for Councillors to see all reported issues within their Ward in one place.</p> <p>There are currently a few very large suppliers that councils use. We can use new technologies to untangle the various service elements, allowing us to change and improve them without affecting the other elements as we</p>
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break away from these single, large, expensive applications. The common elements across services can then be identified and combined to make processes better, cheaper, and faster.

**Will the review duplicate other work?**

No – the review would supplement and support the work already underway redesigning services and implementing the Medway 2.0 concept.

**Is it timely/ do we have the resources?**

The review is timely as we are about to embark on a 3-year Transformation Programme. Resources of circa £60k have been allocated to an initial pilot with a Microsoft Gold Partner (Tisski). The pilot will test the technology and the service redesign approach prior to a wider programme that would encompass all areas of the Council.

**Will the review provide scope for service improvement?**

Yes – the review is targeted to achieve savings and drastically improve services.

This untangling of services will allow us to focus on developing a consistent “front end” and sharpen the resident contact channels to ensure that structured data is collected and ingested into the Council’s CRM system from any source, such as online forms, telephony, face-to-face, FixMyStreet.com, and social media channels. This alone would provide a much-improved, simple, service to residents. We can then reduce the service back-office functions by combining common activities and utilising technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence.

Although the Council delivers around 140 services, most processes can be distilled down to 10 common functions:

- View it – (website / case management)
- Report it and Sort it
- Apply for it
- Book it
- Pay for it
- Receive it
- Check it
- Appeal it
- Change/Amend it
- Tell us about it (compliments and complaints)

Developing and implanting these improved core elements would improve services, develop consistency, and achieve savings.

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<p><b>Regeneration Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b></p>	<p><b>Suggested topic:</b> Medway Council’s readiness for inspection in respect of the new consumer standards for social housing (Medway Council stock only).</p> <p><b>Reason for Review:</b> Social housing should provide good, quality affordable homes to those that need them. Over recent years, there have been multiple examples of the sector failing their tenants leading to the Grenfell Tragedy and the death of 3-year-old Iwaab Ishak where the independent coroner specifically linked Iwabb’s death to damp and mould.</p> <p>In response to these failings, the Government published the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020, drafted the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill which got royal assent in July 2023. The regulator of social housing also published a revised set of consumer standards and a new code of guidance that will provide a framework for the way that providers of social housing are assessed. The consumer standards and code of guidance are currently out for consultation until October 2023 with an expected effective date 01 April 2024.</p> <p>The proposed consumer standards consist of four key areas. These are Safety and Quality Standard, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the Tenancy Standard. Within these four key areas there are 54 specific expectations which social landlords will be expected to meet. (<a href="#">Consumer Standards Consultation</a>)</p> <p>The Social Housing (Regulation) Act has introduced a new inspection regime with inspections commencing April 2024.</p> <p><b>Potential for impact on one or more sections of the population?</b> The council owns approximately 25% of social homes in Medway, equating to 3,024 properties. Failure to comply with this regulation will impact upon all of these residents living in these properties.</p> <p><b>Is this an issue of corporate concern and/or an issue for partners?</b> Whilst not strictly a concern, the Council and officers will want assurance that its housing stock and approach to working with residents is compliant with regulation. The HRA needs to ensure that residents feel safe, have a genuine say in the way that their landlord service is run, and that performance information and decision making is transparent.</p>
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**Will it add value/lead to effective outcomes?** The review will add a further additional viewpoint to the council's readiness for this new regime. Compliance with the regulatory standards will ensure that residents living in social homes provided by the council will be living in well maintained homes, supported to maintain those homes, and that the Council is appropriately responding to domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. This should result in an increase of positive outcomes for Medway's residents.

**Will the review duplicate other work?** This review is likely to compliment ongoing work in Medway's readiness for an inspection under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act.

**Is it timely/ do we have the resources?** Consultation regarding the Standards is underway, however it is anticipated that little will change and that the new Standards will start from April 2024. It would be timely that this review commences after January 2024 and ideally no later than October 2024 to reduce the risk of the Council being inspected before it is concluded.

**Will the review provide scope for service improvement?** Yes – it is anticipated that this review will identify areas for the Council to address but will also assist in demonstrating to Council tenants that the council is responding to the issues and seeking a broad range of views in the way that our landlord services are run.