

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Wednesday, 15 November 2023**  
**6.30pm to 8.12pm**

**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, Etheridge, Fearn, Filmer, Hubbard, Nestorov, Peake and Sands
- Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Jones
- In Attendance:** Councillor Harinder Mahil, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure  
Adam Bryan, Director of Place  
Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture and Community  
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Deputy Director of Place  
Ian Gilmore, Head of Regulatory and Environmental Services  
Andrew Mann, Managing Director, Medway Norse

**363 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doe, Hamilton and Hyne.

**364 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

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

There were none.

**366 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.

**367 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure**

**Discussion:**

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Mahil, which fell within the remit of this Committee.

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

**Christmas lights** – In a response to a question about whether the Christmas lights fell within his remit, the Portfolio Holder said that they did not fall within his remit however the decision had been reached in a narrow timeframe.

**Archaeological finds at new Maritime Academy School site** - Members queried when and where it would be possible for residents to view the archaeological finds that were discovered during the excavation of the new Maritime Academy School site in Strood. The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that he would explore this further and provide feedback to the Committee and would also confirm if there was a specific officer role that included the remit of archaeological finds.

**Upgrade Sports Centres** – In response to a question about when Hoo Sports Centre would be upgraded the Portfolio Holder explained that there was approximately £500k of Section 106 funding that had been allocated to Hoo Sports Centre and Deangate Ridge and that the works were currently being planned. The Portfolio Holder also agreed to meet with Members and Parish Councillors to discuss Deangate Ridge and Section 106 funding.

**Strood Community Hub** – Members queried when the lease at Strood Community Hub would expire, and the Portfolio Holder agreed to check this outside of the meeting and provide a response to Members.

**Festivals and Events** – Members sought reassurance from the Portfolio Holder regarding the current offer of cultural festivals and events and whether these would remain going forward. The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that due to the current budgetary constraints all services were currently under review. However the importance that the programme of events played in the cultural regeneration of Medway was also acknowledged as well the need to provide sustainable and cost-effective events.

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Members also discussed opportunities to enhance community facilities to ensure they were inclusive and accessible and enhance community trails which could now be developed to link in with new housing development in Medway. The importance of protecting important assets such as community hubs and libraries was also acknowledged.

### Decision:

The Committee:

- a) Noted the report.
- b) Requested that the Committee be provided with an update on when the lease for Strood Community Hub expires.

### 368 Annual Review of Waste Contracts

#### Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out a summary of performance on the following Medway waste contracts for the contract year October 2022 to September 2023:

Veolia Environmental Services – providing waste disposal services for residual and recycling waste.

Medway Norse – providing waste collection, street cleaning services and management of Medway's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC).

Members praised the waste services in Medway and asked for their thanks to be passed on to operatives and officers for their professionalism and dedication to the service.

The following was discussed:

**Bulky Waste Collections** – In response to a question about the waiting times for bulky waste collections the Committee were informed that this was due to the resources available and the popularity of the service. The complexity of the booking service was also raised as a concern and officers explained that the booking service does need to be detailed to maximise the process and manage different waste streams effectively.

**Recycling contamination levels** – Members queried whether there were any communications that they could share with residents to help reduce contamination levels. Officers explained the supportive and engaging approach adopted to encourage recycling and possible ways to improve this were discussed.

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**Street Cleansing** – The impact of inclement weather on street cleansing was discussed. The Committee were informed that new machinery specifically for leaf clearing on footpaths was now available to the service as well as a specific supervisor in place to direct the waste clearing teams as appropriate. Some areas of Strood were also identified as a cause for concern with regards to street cleansing and officers responded to acknowledge that the service delivered may not always be able to match residents' expectations however any particular issues identified would be responded to.

**Medway Norse Contract** – A Member asked about the continuation of the contract with Medway Norse. A query was also raised regarding the variation between the target and actual figure for the annual tonnage throughput in the table on page 54 of Appendix 3 to the report. Officers agreed to produce a briefing note for Members in response to both queries.

**Vehicles** – In response to questions about safety and air quality when procuring vehicles officers confirmed that new vehicles procured comply with Euro 6 standards for emissions and included the latest safety systems including 360-degree vision. Officers also informed the Committee that all drivers undertook an active training programme, monitoring, and annual assessments.

**Black bins** – The possible use of black bins as opposed to black sacks was discussed and officers explained that they deliver the service within the parameters established by the administration. The current vehicles could accommodate the use of black bins, but the collection of containerised waste was more time consuming for operatives and storage of bins can be an issue for different types of households.

**Recruitment and Retention** – Members queried data regarding the use of agency staff and temporary staff to permanent positions and asked what was being done to secure permanent staff without incurring agency costs. Officers informed the Committee that the normal route for recruitment was via the temp to permanent route with an agency as this allowed for a 12-week period in which training can take place and suitability for both parties can be established. At the end of the 12-week period agency staff were then converted to permanent staff without incurring additional costs.

### **Decision:**

The Committee:

- a) Noted the report including the Annual Service Reports and other briefings set out in Appendices 1 through 5 to the report.
- b) Requested that the Committee be provided with a briefing note confirming the position regarding Medway Norse contract renewal and explaining the variation between the target and actual figure for 2022/23 for the annual tonnage throughput (page 54, Appendix 3 to the report).

**369 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.

**Decision:**

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

**370 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding the Committee's work programme and requested that the Medway Local Plan be considered by the Committee as soon as possible.

**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 the format of the action log as set out at Appendix B to the report.

**Chairperson**

**Date:**

**Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer**

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