

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

**Tuesday, 23 January 2024**

**6.33pm to 10.07pm**

**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, Etheridge, Filmer, Hamilton, Hubbard, Hyne, Nestorov and Sands
- Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Campbell  
Gulvin
- In Attendance:** Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration  
Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture and Community  
Adam Bryan, Director of Place  
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Deputy Director of Place  
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration  
David England, Head of Valuation and Asset Management  
David Fitzgerald, Veolia  
Ian Gilmore, Head of Regulatory and Environmental Services  
Lee Love, Veolia  
Natasha Spencer-Jones, Waste Disposal Manager

**543 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fearn and Peake.

**544 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

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

There were none.

**546 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.

**547 Members Item**

**Discussion:**

Councillor Gulvin and a resident spokesperson were invited to speak to explain the Members Item. The Committee were informed that the properties affected were 24 and 26 Aintree Road and not 26 and 28 as stated in section 3.1 of the report.

The following points were made:

- At the rear of Aintree Road there was a band of trees which separated the rear of the properties from Northdane Way, provided tree cover and acted as a sound barrier.
- In recent years a sycamore tree in the band of trees had become infested by aphids and had excreted a honey-like substance over the gardens of 24 and 26 Aintree Road.
- The sticky substance had covered the whole of the residents' gardens including roofs, patios, furniture and garden toys even though the tree was 40ft away and it had not been possible to sweep it away as it was too sticky. Photographs of the gardens affected were shared with the Committee.
- The residents and their children had not been able to use their gardens for three months each year and this had an impact on the resident's mental health and welfare.
- If the sycamore tree were to be removed there would be an opportunity for the other trees to fill the space but officers had advised that it would be against the Tree Policy to remove the tree. It was reported that officers had offered to prune the tree, but residents believed that this would not solve the problem.
- Councillor Gulvin and the residents were prepared to fund the cost of a replacement tree if it was agreed to fell the sycamore tree.

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Members acknowledged the difficulties the tree was causing for residents and the implications if the tree were to be removed or retained.

Officers informed the Committee that under the current policy there was not a viable reason to fell the tree and that the response provided by the Director of Place in the report was technically correct. However, officers reported they would be happy to attend a site inspection with the Tree Officer to explore the feasibility of options and report back to the Committee.

### **Decision:**

1. The Committee noted the comments from the Director of Place in response to the Member's item.
2. The Committee requested that Officers look at this again, undertake a site visit and full assessment of all options and report back to the Committee with recommendations.

### **548 Attendance of Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration**

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, which fell within the remit of this Committee.

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

**EV Charging Points** - In response to a question about the availability of EV charging points the Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that there was a strategy for EV charging and action was being taken to install EV charging points where it can be done quickly but installation can be complex and costly.

**Recycling** – Members queried the communications strategy and how food waste disposal in residual waste could be addressed. The Committee were informed that recycling rates were low and that a waste recycling strategy is currently being produced to improve recycling rates and that weekly collections would continue.

**Bus routes and Active Travel** – The Committee queried the key routes and were informed that all routes were being looked at in partnership with the Bus Companies, a Bus workshop was being held and a map of key routes would be produced. The portfolio holder reported that active travel and sustainable transport options were also being explored and the Medway Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Consultation Report had been launched. All Members were encouraged to submit their views as part of the consultation process.

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**Deangate Ridge former golf course** – In response to a question about how the remaining hectares of the former golf course would be used the portfolio holder offered to provide a response outside the meeting after checking this.

**Roadworks** – Members queried whether roadworks could be better co-ordinated to minimise disruption and costs. The portfolio holder explained that roadworks were complex due to the size of the road network in Medway, the inherited road infrastructure management plan, pot holes and the lack of investment in previous years but that new technologies were being explored.

**Temple Marsh and Temple Manor** – In response to a query about how these sites could be better utilised the Committee were informed that there was a park project for Temple Marsh and both sites would be included in walking routes linked to the River Strategy.

**Communications between Friends Groups for Greenspaces and Medway Norse** – The portfolio holder recognised the important work of the Friends Groups and acknowledged that there was room for improvement with regards to communications. It was explained that this had been addressed with Norse and reassured Members he would continue to support the Lordswood and Walderslade Community Group that had experienced some difficulties and wished to form a new group.

**Flooding** – Concerns were raised about flooding in Walderslade as the highest point in Medway. The Committee were informed that the portfolio holder recognised the importance of this issue as Chairperson of the North Kent Marshes Inland Drainage Board. It was reported that there was a Flood Officer in the planning team and that the prevention of flooding needed to be built into policies and strategies including the Local Plan.

**20mph Zones** – Members queried whether there should be a more progressive approach towards the use of 20mph zones. It was explained that there were complex issues regarding the introduction of 20mph zones however it could be considered as part of the strategic approach alongside active travel and school streets.

**Allotments** – In response to concerns raised about the lengthy waiting list the portfolio holder said we could look to developers to provide new allotments and look at whether underused green spaces can be utilised. The Committee were informed that this issue required creative solutions, plots were now being split when vacated and some small-scale community sites had been created.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report.

**549 Review of Christmas 2023 Waste Disposal Services**

**Discussion:**

The Committee were informed that the need to pause waste collections on 4 and 5 January 2024 was an unprecedented decision taken in partnership with Veolia. Officers explained that whilst this was triggered by a lack of collection hauliers and access to disposal capacity it should be recognised that the issues were exacerbated by the Christmas collection methodology that had been adopted.

Veolia informed the Committee that the waste transfer station would always be under pressure at Christmas when it experienced double the volume of waste, but the collection methodology had added to the pressures this year.

Officers reported that there were lessons to be learned and the Council, Veolia and Medway Norse would take any learning on board.

In response to questions about how it could be ensured that this did not happen again officers explained that the process and methodology for Christmas collections were being reviewed to explore viable and feasible solutions within the allocated resources.

Members raised concerns about the 15 day accumulation of waste for properties that did not have waste collected on 25 and 26 December 2023 and officers assured the Committee that these concerns would be taken into consideration when reviewing the methodology.

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the content of the report.

**550 Housing Revenue Account - Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024/25**

**Discussion:**

The report was presented to the Committee and the proposed rent increases for social rent, affordable rent, garages, and service charges were summarised.

In response to a query regarding support provided to residents on low incomes the Committee were informed that there was a designated support officer in post to assist residents with maximising their income, to work in partnership with the Job Centre Plus and to signpost to appropriate services.

The Committee queried the high level of management costs and how the service was managed. In response they were informed that the Housing Revenue Account operated as a business within a business with its own operating costs and that the service was partly delivered in house and partly outsourced. The meaning of RRT which was referred to in the report (page 67)

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as included in the management costs was also queried and this would be followed up outside the meeting.

The satisfaction measures were discussed, and the Committee were informed that there were action plans in place for some of the initiatives, a programme of door knocking to seek feedback from residents and more to do to tell residents how their complaint would be handled.

### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.1a through to 1.1i as set out on pages 43 to 44 of the agenda papers.

### **551 Call-in: Union Place Car Park, Chatham and Temple Car Park and Yard, Strood**

#### **Discussion:**

At the request of the Opposition Spokesperson, Councillor Brake presented the reasons for the call-in and raised the following issues:

- It was not made clear to local residents and businesses that it was proposed to sell the Union Place Car Park and they were not consulted on this decision.
- At a public meeting held by the developers for the Gala Bingo site it became clear that the disposal of the Union Street Car Park was not a popular decision and impacted on local businesses.
- Temple Car Park was an overflow Car Park when Commercial Road Car Park was full and was essential to provide adequate parking.

In response to the issues raised the Committee were informed that the Union Street Car Park can no longer be accessed as the Council only have permissive rights and the only other access route would have cost and safety implications. Officers explained that Rhode Street Car Park and James Street Car Park offer alternative parking and were within 0.2 mile of the High Street.

The Committee were informed that Temple Car Park provides redevelopment opportunities, but the site had not yet been marketed.

Members discussed the potential value of the sites, the community benefit and whether it would be more appropriate to retain them. Officers explained that for the Union Street Car Park the original costs of providing access were in the hundreds of thousands, there was no budget for this and there were highways safety issues so the advice was to dispose of the site as was the case for Temple Car Park due to the lack of demand and potential regeneration opportunities.

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### **Decision:**

The Committee considered the called-in Cabinet decisions (decision nos. 187-189/2023) and agreed to accept the Cabinet decisions and therefore take no further action.

### **552 Work programme**

#### **Discussion:**

Members considered a report regarding the Committee's work programme and queried the timing for the Local Plan. The Committee were informed by Members that the timetable had now been amended and an update would be provided at Full Council.

#### **Decision:**

1. The Committee noted the report and agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix A to the report.
2. The Committee noted the action log as set out at Appendix B to the report.

### **Chairperson**

#### **Date:**

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