

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 18 April 2024
7.00pm to 11.14pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next Full Council meeting

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Nestorov) Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Barrett, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Edwards, Etheridge, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Gilbourne, Hackwell, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Kemp, Khan, Lammas, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Osborne, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Spalding, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke, Wildey and Williams

In Attendance: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

752 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doe, Gulvin, Gurung, Hubbard, Joy, Sands and Shokar.

753 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

Other Significant Interests (OSIs)

Councillor Mahil declared an interest in agenda item No.11 (Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation - Request to Extend the Conservation Area) as he lived within the Conservation Area. Councillor Mahil left the room during discussion and determination of the item.

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Other Interests

Councillor Cook declared an interest in agenda item No.9 (Leader's Report) as she had been interviewed, in her employment capacity, as part of the area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) inspection of the Medway Local Area Partnership. Councillor Cook remained in the room during discussion and determination of the item.

754 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 was approved and signed by Worshipful the Mayor as correct.

755 Mayor's announcements

The Deputy Mayor announced that he was deputising for the Mayor as the Mayor was recuperating from an operation. Best wishes were sent to the Mayor as she continued her recovery.

The Deputy Mayor addressed the Council with words that had been provided by the Mayor:

The Mayor gave thanks to everyone who had sent messages of support, which had given her strength and hope and had been much appreciated.

The Mayor of Medway's Charity Fundraising Gala, held on 22 March 2024, had showcased the best of Medway to visiting dignitaries from across London and the South East. The event had and also celebrated Medway heroes past and present.

Thanks were given to Members and all the organisations that had helped to make the event a success.

Significant funds had been raised for the Mayor's three chosen charities; SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, Medway Help for Ukrainians and Young Medway.

The Deputy Mayor offered condolences to some Council Members who had recently lost family members.

The Mayor, supported by Members of the Council, moved a suspension of Council Rules. This was to facilitate continuation of the changes set out below to how the meeting would be run. These changes had initially been trialled at the January Council meeting.

Decision:

The Council agreed to suspend Council rules to facilitate the following changes:

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- a) Public questions would be extended from 30 minutes to 40 minutes with a reduction in the time allocations for the Leader's Report from 35 minutes to 30 minutes and the Overview and Scrutiny activity report from 25 to 20 minutes.
- b) Public questioners unable to attend this evening had been allowed to send a representative to read out their question or the Mayor would put the question on their behalf. Only public questioners attending in person would be able to ask supplementary questions.
- c) The order of business had been changed as indicated on the Agenda. In summary, the agenda item on motions would be taken after public questions. Any information reports or reports for noting would be the last agenda items.
- d) Limit the number of speakers per motion to the proposer and seconder, plus up to 10% of each group (rounded up) as follows:

Labour and Co-operative Group – 4
Conservative Group – 3
Independent Group – 1
Independent Members – 4

The same number of speakers would be allowed for each amendment to a motion.

756 Leader's announcements

The Leader gave thanks to Medway Council receptionist, Sue Lovick, who would shortly be retiring, for her excellent service. Sue had been the most recent winner of the Customer Service category at the Council's Make a Difference awards.

Best wishes were sent to the Mayor and to other Members who were recuperating following operations.

The Leader had recently written to the Minister for Roads and Local Transport, Guy Opperman MP, in relation to the issue of potholes. The letter had made clear that the level of Government funding available to Medway Council was not adequate. A response had been received from the Minister, which the Leader had responded to.

The Leader highlighted that in 2022, a report had been considered at Overview and Scrutiny, which showed that due to investment shortfalls, there was a backlog of work that would cost approximately £35million. Due to inflation, it was estimated that the backlog now stood at £50m. The additional £400,000 that Medway had received had not been enough to make a significant impact and Medway had not been allocated any new additional funding. It was disappointing that the Minister had not accepted the Leader's offer of a meeting

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to explore options around the lack of resources to address the condition of roads in Medway.

757 Petitions

Public:

A petition was submitted that called on the Council to install a pedestrian crossing near the Bridgewood Asda in Chatham, so that the supermarket could be accessed on foot or by bus, rather than by car.

Member:

There were none.

758 Public questions

Question A – Judith Northwood-Boorman, of Rochester, submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan:

“Medway Labour has been a leading voice for some time in various campaigns to protect the Medway Towns from over-development, including “Save Capstone Valley” and “Save Chatham Docks”. These campaigns were often against proposals that would result in a change of use for areas, whether that be farmland to housing, or business use to housing.

I note that a worrying trend has emerged of Medway Labour now supporting developments that they historically opposed publicly. In the interests of openness and honesty, will the Portfolio Holder confirm what campaigns, that Labour has supported historically, they have u-turned on now that they hold the keys to the Council?”

Councillor Curry answered the question as it was within his Cabinet Portfolio. He said that the administration was firmly committed to doing what was right for Medway, the people, the environment, businesses and visitors. A key objective was to deliver a sound Local Plan to meet the growth needs of Medway and needs set out by the Government. This included planning to deliver the homes needed for Medway’s growing population and the specific needs of those residents, providing the employment opportunities and protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment of the area.

The Local Plan would be essential in meeting these growth needs to ensure growth would be achieved in a sustainable way, with the necessary infrastructure. This would avoid constant speculative applications, which were often determined on appeal and could result in development that did not meet the needs of Medway, could be in the wrong location and that lacked the necessary infrastructure.

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Meeting growth needs through the Local Plan would mean that difficult decisions may need to be made in the interests of everyone in Medway, but such decisions would be informed by substantive evidence and work undertaken as part of the Plan making process.

Councillor Curry noted that a large part of the Capstone Valley, East Hill and Gibraltar Farm had already been subject to speculative development. There would be further applications of a similar nature without a Local Plan in place. In relation to Chatham Docks, the Council did not own the land and the landowner would be able to submit any application that they chose, which could then end up in a Public Inquiry.

Putting a Local Plan into place was fundamentally important to provide proper control of development in Medway.

No supplementary question was asked as Judith Northwood-Boorman was not present.

Question B – Emma Wade, of Rochester, submitted the following to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray:

“As I was a single mum, I have often contacted Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for advice on matters to do with housing, benefits, and advice on domestic abuse related issues.

I recently called for support and was told that they are no longer funded. I believe this is a vital service.

I work for the NHS and regularly advise my patients to contact CAB for help with the cost of living, relationship support and work-related matters.

My patients are vulnerable and I’m unsure where I can direct them for help in the future. At a time when we are all facing a difficult future, it is a much-needed service.

What steps are Medway Council putting in place to ensure that the interruptions to service provision are minimised and clearly communicated to the community at large, because clearly it has been insufficient up to now.”

Councillor Murray was pleased to hear that the questioner had been able to access help and support from the Citizens Advice Bureau in the past and gave reassurance that the Bureau had a number of funding streams. The Council would support it where appropriate to continue to seek new sources.

Councillor Murray also gave thanks to the Emma Wade and her NHS colleagues for the service they gave to people in Medway and hoped they would continue to signpost patients to the Citizens Advice Bureau and Medway Council as appropriate.

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Centralising the Welfare Benefit functions within the Council strengthened resilience and the offer to Medway residents. The service covered five separate functions within the Council with each team having general financial welfare knowledge alongside their specific areas of work. The teams were Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Assessment; Appeals and Discretionary Payments; Housing Related Support Team; Macmillan Welfare Benefits Team; and Financial Welfare team.

These teams worked together and collaborated with other parts of the Council, such as Social Care and Housing to provide a holistic service.

Medway Council was able to discuss cases with and access information from the Department for Work and Pensions. This was permitted through a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Department.

The financial welfare pages of the Council website, email address and telephone service allowed residents to contact the Team. This contact was triaged for an officer to be allocated that would suit the needs of that resident. Appointments could be undertaken within most Council buildings, via the telephone or in residents' homes.

In relation to domestic abuse, Medway provided the Medway Domestic Abuse Service through its partner, Oasis. This was a specialist support service for victims of domestic abuse and their families. Councillor Murray was pleased to have recently visited an open advice session that the provider and other organisations offered each Tuesday at the Sunlight Centre, Gillingham.

No supplementary question was asked as Emma Wade was not present.

Question C – Doug Bray of Chatham, submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration Councillor Curry:

“Unless I am mistaken, the public register of planned resurfacing works is published online at the following address:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200249/roadworks_in_medway/526/roadwork_schemes/3

It is proving to be hazardous to drive around the Medway Towns. A glance at any of our community social media groups shows that public infrastructure is crumbling around us.

I recognise that this is not an issue that suddenly materialised since May 2023 and it is something that Medway Labour frequently attacked the Medway Tories about.

Further, Labour nationally have failed to commit to providing the necessary funding for the Potholes Fund and are being noncommittal about increasing funding to local councils.

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Given Medway Labour have proposed the introduction of 20mph zones across areas of Medway, is it your intention to avoid the cost of enforcement by simply allowing the roads to deteriorate to such an extent that residents are unable to travel above 20 mph without causing significant damage to their vehicle?"

Councillor Curry advised that Medway had over 3,000 publicly maintained roads and that the annual carriageway condition surveys showed that the roads reference via the link in the question were deteriorating quicker than others and required resurfacing works. The Council's ongoing participation in the Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) Survey, which benchmarked performance against other local authorities, showed that Medway's A, B and C Class roads were performing slightly above the national average, while the unclassified road network was not. Nationally, local highway authorities were struggling to maintain their carriageway infrastructure because of many years of underfunding. This included Medway.

Prior to budget cuts for the new financial year, the money available to improve the highway network had enabled resurfacing and improvement to several roads year-on-year. This was a very small percentage when compared to the highway network as a whole and equated to resurfacing less than 4% of the highway network each year. With more vehicles on the road network, the average lifespan of a newly surfaced road was now 15 years. This equated to the chances of having a particular road resurfaced at national level at once every 80 years.

Medway's highway asset had a replacement value around £2 billion and bringing the network back to a steady state to suppress deterioration would cost £50 million. Over the last ten years, the number of two and three car households had increased significantly leading to there being more cars on the road and there was less funding available to maintain these roads.

The Council's Highways Service adopted a robust inspection regime to identify defects on the highway which posed a risk to the travelling public and carried out annual condition surveys to assess the roads in most need of repair. This enabled officers to collate a proposed resurfacing programme, which was then published on the Council's website for transparency.

Work on Active Travel and the Medway Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was underway with a consultation designed to encourage discussion and debate. It had not yet been determined what action would be taken in relation to priority walking and cycling routes, including 20MPH zones.

No supplementary question was asked as Doug Bray was not present.

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Question D – Fouzieh Ahmed, of Gillingham, submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Mahil:

“The Muslim community has seen a huge increase in Islamophobia over the last six months.

It is disappointing then to hear that the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Harinder Mahil, has not attended any of the Iftars during the holy month of Ramadan. Nor have Vince Maple (in his capacity as the Leader of the Council) or Nina Gurung (in her capacity as the Mayor of Medway).

There have been countless opportunities, from the Taste of Ramadan events, to any of the Iftars that are held every night.

Can the Member confirm if there is a reason why they have chosen not to join the Muslim community during this most holy of months?”

Councillor Mahil said that he had not attended Ramadan because his brother had terminal cancer and at the time only had a few weeks to live. His funeral had just taken place and Councillor Mahil would be back to normal duties shortly. Councillor Maple had kindly stepped in to cover many of Councillor Mahil’s duties during this time.

Councillor Mahil noted that the Mayor of Medway, Councillor Gurung had also recently been unwell.

Despite these setbacks, multiple Cabinet Members had attended Iftars in demonstration of the community focus of the administration.

During this very tough time, many family friends had come to visit Councillor Mahil and his brother during Ramadan and had broken fast with them. He said that interface between the Islamic faith and his own had made him the person he was but that neither this, nor participating in fasting, was something he would use for public or political gain.

No supplementary question was asked as Fouzieh Ahmed was not present.

Question E – Alan Stockey, of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration Councillor Curry, the following:

“As we approach the anniversary of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs funded Anti-idling Project in Rainham, led by the University of Kent's psychology department, I would like to know what is being done by the Council to move forward the promising early results of the awareness raising signage to improve driver behaviour (and reduce air pollution) not just in Rainham, but also more widely across Medway's Air Quality Management Areas and at locations of temporary traffic lights.”

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Councillor Curry reported that practical steps had been implemented from the project by the Street Works team. They had asked utility companies to use extra signage of “turn off engine” on all work sites with temporary lights. This was put forward at a quarterly meeting in 2023, which was attended by all local authorities and utility companies last year and had been agreed.

The signage could be legally enforced by making it a condition on any permit with temporary lights. If the signs were not found on site then a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) could be issued.

Alan Stockey asked the following supplementary question:

“Given the massive additional signage proposed around our Red Routes to indicate those Red Routes, whether any can be indicating that AQMAs exist and that caution should be taken?”

Councillor Curry considered this to be a good point and said that he would take it back to the Streetworks and Highway Team for further consideration.

Question F – Trish Marchant, of Gillingham, asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“A Citizens’ Assembly is a representative group of citizens who are selected at random from the population to learn about, deliberate upon, and make recommendations in relation to a particular issue or set of issues.

Will Medway Council consider convening Citizens’ Assemblies to address issues of major interest to the community, particularly with items which may cause controversy, such as the Red Route scheme, where the consultation identified a majority of respondents were against the scheme?”

Councillor Maple said that that he was proud of the approach taken by his administration in making Members and officers accessible to the public and providing opportunities for engagement.

Medway Matters Live was highlighted, which was an event held in Rainham with a second to follow in Hoo. These events provided people the opportunity to put questions to the Council Leader and Chief Executive. A number of non-statutory consultations had been undertaken, including on the One Medway Council Plan.

The ability for members of the public asking questions at Full Council meetings to ask supplementary questions had been introduced and this could lead to specific actions being taken as a result.

Opposition Leader meetings helped ensure that the administration could hear the views of residents who lived in wards not represented by a Labour and Co-Operative Councillor. Councillor Maple had made himself available, for example, for the Hoo Parish Council and he looked forward to attending meeting at other parish councils.

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These examples all provided opportunities for the public to raise questions or concerns and they could also make contact through channels such as e-mail, WhatsApp and direct messages on X.

Although Councillor Maple could not guarantee that people would get the answers they wanted every time, he could ensure that they would always have the opportunity to put their point across, for example by making Local Plan representations. The introduction of Citizens' Assemblies was not ruled out, but he considered that the administration already had a good record of being open for the public to interact with.

Trish Marchant asked the following supplementary question:

“Citizens' Assemblies differ from consultations because they involve informed citizens who are able to take part and contribute to decision making. In Wandsworth Council, a Citizens' Assembly was used to assess the issues of air pollution which links into the previous question and it gained over a hundred suggestions on how problems could be addressed.

Does the Council not feel that this shows the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Citizens' Assemblies, as opposed to consultations, which as I said earlier aren't always taken into account?”

Councillor Maple recognised that councils of different political persuasions used Citizens' Assemblies. In relation to climate change, he considered that the administration had a good track record of bringing relevant people together to share their views and ensure that a wider conversation could take place than would be possible through the use of a specific set of questions in isolation.

Citizens' Assemblies were not ruled out, but Councillor Maple considered that at this stage, the tools being used were good and were an improvement compared to the previous administration.

Question G – Jeremy Spyby-Steanson, of Chatham, submitted the following to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray:

“Medway Greens remain appalled at the decision to cut core funding to Medway Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), an independent, impartial voice that the residents of Medway rely on.

Whilst Medway Greens accept that budgetary cuts are required, we believe that services provided by Medway CAB are essential for vulnerable members of the public, and must remain independent and impartial, to retain the trust of the community.

As a lay resident, I have concerns about the impartiality of Medway CAB now that Medway Labour control the council, given that the Director of Medway CAB, Dan McDonald, is a Labour Councillor.

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These concerns were exacerbated in the last few weeks. In the original statement published, Medway CAB identified that the cause of their plight was the removal of their core funding by Medway Council. After the Medway Greens made an intervention, this statement was amended and the blame was put at the feet of the national Tory government, raising alarm bells over the influence that Medway Labour Party has over the leadership and communications of this respected and essential local service.

Can the Portfolio Holder please identify how she intends to reassure the residents of Medway that the independence of the council advisory service will be maintained if the subject of the grievance is with the Council? This is a significant and troubling conflict of interest that has alarmed residents across Medway.”

Councillor Murray welcomed the Green Party support of the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Alongside the in-house advice service, the Council had arrangements in place to give residents access to independent accredited debt advisors and had joined with the Money and Pensions Service to access their Money Advisor Network. The Network was run by the MoneyHelper, a UK arm's-length Government body that helped people access free, confidential and independent debt advice. This service was provided to the resident and the Council free of charge.

There were provisions within legislation which provided independent adjudication for example, disputes in relation to housing benefit could be appealed through HM Courts and Tribunals Service and decisions in relation to council tax could be appealed to the Valuation Tribunal Service.

The Council had a robust complaints procedure, which could be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman, which was independent to the Council.

No supplementary question was asked as Jeremy Spyby-Stearns was not present.

Question H – Matthew Broadley, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Medway Labour, and yourself directly, have been actively campaigning against the closure of Chatham Docks for a few years. This campaign contributed to the previous Council Leader, Alan Jarrett, ultimately deciding to step down and not seek re-election in the local elections of 2023.

Further, the campaign was supported nationally by Labour leader, Keir Starmer. Yet when reviewing the map of “Urban Regeneration Sites” we see the whole of the Chatham Docks included in plans for urban regeneration and a change of use. The area south of St Mary's Island (around the new Asda) has already been re-purposed for residential use, specifically high-rise residential apartments.

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On September 4th 2023, the BBC published an article titled “Council will not rule out dock housing development”, where Deputy Leader, Teresa Murray seems to have announced that Medway Labour had abandoned the “Protect Chatham Docks” campaign.

It seems clear that Medway Labour, and Keir Starmer’s, support for the campaign to “Protect Chatham Docks” has been abandoned now that it is no longer a campaign tool to undermine the previous administration, something supporters of the campaign have now woken up to.

To further insult the campaign, Medway Labour have recently been parading around the Towns celebrating the 400th anniversary of Chatham Docks, Docks that were closed by Margaret Thatcher. The national leadership of Labour now celebrate the achievements of Margaret Thatcher and how she changed society, she certainly changed Medway, by tearing the heart out of our employment and cultural heritage. Something that Medway Labour seem eager to continue.

The Medway Green Party notes that the Basin3 proposal does not appear to address the loss of jobs for people already employed in the area and refers to attracting “high-value jobs in target growth sectors” and is vague when it makes a claim of “potentially tripling current job numbers on the site”.

The collapse of Innovation Park Medway illustrates the risk of such projects, which aimed to bring in employment in similar “target growth sectors”.

What guarantees have Medway Labour sought about protecting the docks and the 1,440 people employed directly or through local supply chains, particularly given the risks if Basin3 goes the way of Innovation Park Medway?”

In response, Councillor Curry said that sites were not currently being allocated as part of the Local Plan process as it was currently at the consultation phase where all land owners and members of the public could see what sites had been put forward by the land owners and developers. These were being discussed and debated with the Regulation 18 process due to commence in just over a month.

The Council was working to deliver a much overdue Local Plan to guide Medway’s growth over the next fifteen to twenty years. As part of this work, Chatham Docks Industrial Estate had been put forward for inclusion in the Plan by both some of the occupiers and the landowners.

Delivering a sound Local Plan was one of the prime objectives of the Council’s administration. The existing Plan was over 20 years old, out of date, large parts were no longer compliant with national planning policy and all the allocated sites had already been built out. This left the Council particularly vulnerable to speculative development all over Medway. Pressure from speculative applications, which often came with inadequate infrastructure provision, could only be addressed through the delivery of a sound Local Plan as soon as

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possible. A new Local Development Scheme, the programme for delivering the Plan had been agreed and this was working to a very tight timescale.

Councillor Curry stated that to comment currently on Chatham Docks, a site that had been put forward by two different parties for two different proposals, as to do so would be prejudicial to the whole Local Plan process.

The failure to have a Local Plan had been the responsibility of the previous administration and there was now determination to deliver one.

Matthew Broadley asked the following supplementary question:

“Chatham Docks. Save Capstone Valley. Disabled access to swimming. Children’s access to sports and other costs. What mandate do Medway Labour have to be impacting the residents of Medway in the way they are, including these workers that they gave promises to and their leader gave promises to in the lead up to local elections last year? Because all I see is broken promises, nationally, locally everywhere from the Labour party.”

Councillor Curry questioned whether the supplementary question was linked to the original question. He said that there had been a mandate when the Council had been elected and that was what was being worked towards.

Question I – Kate Belmonte, of Gillingham, submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“In August 2023 at the height of last summer’s heatwave, concerns were raised with the Planning Department over the lack of maintenance of trees and hedging planted in the Linden Homes estate in Rainham. Further investigation and a site audit by Vistry Group determined that a lack of maintenance was evident and that the site had been underplanted against original plans. Frustratingly, promises to rectify noted issues by the end of the 2023/24 planting season have not been delivered upon and many dead trees and hedges still remain.

What is the Council doing to enforce Vistry Group’s obligations?”

Councillor Curry said he understood the concerns raised. The Council shared the frustration expressed with this site and with other similar sites where important landscaping and tree planting had either not been implemented in accordance with approved plans or had not been properly maintained in accordance with a maintenance schedule agreed via planning condition.

In accordance with national guidance on planning enforcement, the Council would initially look to resolve planning breaches without the need for formal notices and provide developers with the opportunity to resolve the issues and concerns, avoiding a costly legal process.

In this instance the developer had advised it had passed the management of the public open space areas to a management company in 2023. They had

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also advised that replanting had been undertaken in March 2024, albeit that some of the species needed to be changed. Officers were currently arranging to meet the management company/developer on site to compare what was there with what had been approved, to agree a way forward. An update would then be provided to those who had raised concerns.

No supplementary question was asked as Kate Belmonte was not present.

759 Motions

Motion A – proposed by Councillor Filmer and supported by Councillor Lawrence:

“This Council notes that since May 2023 the carriageways across Medway have deteriorated far beyond what is acceptable. In many cases repairs completed in early 2023 have again become a hazard to road users.

In presenting its budget for 2024/2025, the Medway Labour and Co-Operative Group have reduced the budget for repairs by £300,000, which will mean that it is likely a further significant deterioration will occur in the next twelve months.

The Council notes that the Conservative Government and Secretary of State for Transport as part of Network North has provided an additional £401,000 for this financial year, followed by further funding in coming years totalling to £12.5 million to Medway Council for repairs.

The Council recommends the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Climate Change to reinstate funding for carriageway patching to address the backlog of repairs.”

Councillor Curry, supported by Councillor Peake, proposed the following amendment:

~~Council notes that since May 2023 2010 the carriageways across Medway have deteriorated far beyond what is acceptable. In many cases repairs completed in early 2023 have again become a hazard to road users.~~

~~In presenting its budget for 2024/2025, the Medway Labour and Co-Operative Group have reduced the budget for repairs by £300,000, which will mean that it is likely a further significant deterioration will occur in the next twelve months.~~

~~The Council notes that the Conservative Government and Secretary of State for Transport as part of Network North has provided an additional £401,000 for this financial year, followed by further funding in coming years totalling to £12.5 million to Medway Council for repairs.~~

~~The Council recommends the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Climate Change to reinstate funding for carriageway patching to address the backlog of repairs.~~

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Council welcomes the letter Cllrs. Maple and Curry sent to the Government calling for more financial support to address the £50m backlog in road repairs and recognises that after years of decline a significant intervention is required in order to restore our traffic network to a satisfactory standard.

Council also recognises and thanks the work of officers who continue to deliver on all parts of our highway network within this limiting and challenging financial envelope.

Amended motion reads:

Council notes that since May 2010 the carriageways across Medway have deteriorated far beyond what is acceptable.

Council welcomes the letter Cllrs. Maple and Curry sent to the Government calling for more financial support to address the £50m backlog in road repairs and recognises that after years of decline a significant intervention is required in order to restore our traffic network to a satisfactory standard.

Council also recognises and thanks the work of officers who continue to deliver on all parts of our highway network within this limiting and challenging financial envelope.

In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the amended motion was taken:

For: Councillors Animashaun, Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Edwards, Field, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Jackson, Jones, Khan, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Osborne, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Spalding, Stamp, Mrs Turpin and Van Dyke (32)

Against: Councillors Anang, Barrett, Brake, Clarke, Etheridge, Fearn, Filmer, Gilbourne, Hackwell, Hyne, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Perfect, Spring, Tejan, Wildey and Williams (18)

Abstain: Councillors Crozer and Pearce. (2)

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the substantive motion was carried:

Council notes that since May 2010 the carriageways across Medway have deteriorated far beyond what is acceptable.

Council welcomes the letter Cllrs. Maple and Curry sent to the Government calling for more financial support to address the £50m backlog in road repairs and recognises that after years of decline a significant intervention is required in order to restore our traffic network to a satisfactory standard.

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Council also recognises and thanks the work of officers who continue to deliver on all parts of our highway network within this limiting and challenging financial envelope.

Motion B – proposed by Councillor Mrs Turpin and supported by Councillor Etheridge:

“The Local Plan is one of the most important responsibilities for the Council to deliver.

An up to date Local Plan is now long overdue and has faced multiple challenges over past years, including the rejection of a draft plan in 2013 by an independent examiner.

The most recent withdrawal of a draft Local Plan in October 2021 was primarily due to its missing evidence base and therefore lack of Member support and engagement.

After the change of administration in May 2023 a new Local Plan Working Party was created, made up of seven elected members.

However, it has recently come to light that this group, despite being created over 10 months ago, has never met, and at least one of its members did not even know that it existed.

This Council resolves to:

1. Publish regular meeting dates of the Local Plan Working Party.
2. Publish the minutes of these meetings within the Council’s existing reporting framework.
3. Include a Member of the Independent Group on the Local Plan Working Party.
4. Formally acknowledge that the Local Plan will address fair and sustainable development across the whole of the Medway authority and not just continue to focus, in a predetermined manner, in one area i.e. The Hoo Peninsula.”

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion C – proposed by Councillor Price and supported by Councillor Howcroft-Scott:

“Recognising Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

People who are care experienced can face additional challenges in their life. To support people facing these challenges Medway Council should treat care experience as a protected characteristic, in any situation where the Equality Act 2010 is relevant.

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Medway Council notes that:

- Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives.
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into consideration.
- Care experienced people often face discrimination across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and the criminal justice system.
- As corporate parents, Councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority.
- As corporate parents, Medway Council will commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of children and young people who have been in the care system, and to consider their needs in any aspect of Council work.

This Council therefore resolves:

- That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
- That it recognises that Medway Council have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.
- That future decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should continue to be assessed through Diversity Impact Assessments and also determine the impact of changes on care experienced people, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.
- For the Council to continue proactively seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.
- To formally call upon all other bodies within Medway to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- To note that reports will be submitted to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council in June/July this year seeking formal approval of these matters.”

Councillor Brake, supported by Councillor Etheridge, proposed the following amendment:

Recognising Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

People who are care experienced can face additional challenges in their life. To support people facing these challenges Medway Council should treat care experience as a protected characteristic, in any situation where the Equality Act 2010 is relevant.

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Medway Council notes that:

- Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives.
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into consideration.
- Care experienced people often face discrimination across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and the criminal justice system.
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Amended motion reads:

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- To note that reports will be submitted to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council in June/July this year seeking formal approval of these matters.

The amendment was carried.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was agreed:

Recognising Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

People who are care experienced can face additional challenges in their life. To support people facing these challenges Medway Council should treat care

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experience as a protected characteristic, in any situation where the Equality Act 2010 is relevant.

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- To formally call upon all other bodies within Medway to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- To note that reports will be submitted to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council in June/July this year seeking formal approval of these matters.

760 Leader's report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader's report. The following issues were discussed:

- The SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) inspection of the Medway Local Area Partnership including the significant improvements made and recognition of further work required.
- Development of the Refresh Medway Cultural Education Partnership project and the increased signage in Chatham, Gillingham and Strood.
- The Exceptional Financial Support for Medway agreed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the development of the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan.
- Development of the One Medway Council Plan, which was the first time the Council had undertaken public consultation on the priorities within its Plan.
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Round 3 – following Round 2, which had been oversubscribed, Round 3 would be launching on 1 May at the Rochester Corn Exchange.
- The Business and Skills Showcase recently held at Mid Kent College featuring small and medium sized businesses.
- The Pride in Medway awards, which would take place on 19 April. People and organisations nominated for awards were congratulated.
- The poor condition of some roads in Medway.
- Some concern about the introduction of Red Routes.
- Development of Adult Education in Medway and skills development work being undertaken with Job Centres.
- The development of the Gillingham Task Force to address challenges in Gillingham town centre.
- Concern about support available for armed forces veterans.
- Medway residents who had come together to clean their communities as part of the Great British spring clean.
- Commencement of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which targeted nuisance use of vehicles.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

761 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Crozer asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Could the Portfolio Holder update us on any progress with the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site status bid, for East Coast Wetlands, and a bid for

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Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status - both benefiting the Hoo Peninsula?"

Councillor Curry said that the bid had been submitted by the RSPB and supported by Medway Council, following a motion submitted by the Independent Group at a previous Full Council meeting. The process could take several years, Councillor Curry had contacted the RSPB to reiterate the Council's support and to establish what progress had been made.

The RSPB had provided the following update:

"Following the successful addition last year of the East Coast Flyway to the UK tentative list of NWHS sites, we are now assessing how best to move forward with completing the nomination dossier (indicative costs, proposed funding streams, further detail on how partnerships might work, etc). This dossier is required before a nomination can proceed.

We have commissioned a specialist consultant to produce a report to this effect and we expect this to be completed imminently.

RSPB staff continue to engage with stakeholders (local authorities, coastal forums and statutory bodies) to maintain momentum and cultivate awareness of the tentative listing.

Links with other similar World Heritage Sites (Waddensea Secretariat and the Getbol Korean Tidal Flats) continue to strengthen. We are working on an arrangement with the Korean Ministry for Oceans and Fisheries for bilateral sharing of expertise related to coastal habitat management and successful UNESCO inscription.

UNESCO's preliminary assessment is expected in September 2026 with potential nomination and World Heritage Status inscription in 2029."

In relation to the AONB, which were now called Natural Landscapes, the Government had changed the rules and Councillor Curry had therefore spoken to the North Kent Downs, a national landscape team, to understand the impact of the changes and whether they could be applied to the Hoo Peninsula and North Kent Marshes.

The Council had been working hard with communities on the Hoo Peninsula over the previous year. Community consultations in relation to local infrastructure had been established and funding for the development of Deangate Country Park was in place. The development of Neighbourhood Plans had been supported Hoo and in High Halstow.

Question B – Councillor Mandaracas asked the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, the following:

"Given the national struggles post-pandemic, what progress has the Council's education team had on increasing attendance rates in the last year?"

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Councillor Coombs said that school attendance had taken a significant dip following the pandemic. Poor attendance had a significant impact on outcomes for children, significant work had been undertaken to improve it in Medway.

In the last year, the Attendance Team had worked to implement the Council's Attendance Action Plan, following the publication of further statutory guidance on attendance in 2022 'Working together to improve attendance'. The Plan included identifying and working with priority schools and taking a wider multiagency approach. Work had also been undertaken with the Department for Education on a joint Kent and Medway attendance alliance to analyse data and share good practice.

In January 2023, the average attendance in Medway was 89.9% and persistent absence was 29%. In March 2024, this had improved significantly with average attendance at 93.4% and persistent absence at 18.5%. This compared favourably to national averages of 92.7% and 22.5% respectively.

Councillor Coombs thanked the Attendance Team and staff in schools who worked hard to help more pupils to attend school regularly.

Question C – Councillor Animashaun asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“How many Medway employees who are also resident in Medway will be receiving a 5% cost-of-living pay increase in their wages next week, thanks to the budget passed by the Labour and Co-operative Group in February?”

Councillor Maple said that he recognised the efforts made by the Human Resources team and by trade unions during negotiations as well as the contribution of the Employment Matters Committee. Medway Council should be an employer of choice and it was therefore appropriate to take a different approach compared to the previous Council administration.

It was disappointing that a previous Member question had questioned the pay award, particularly as the question had not correctly represented how the pay award had been calculated.

The pay system at Medway was also now being fixed with the former structure considered to be potentially discriminatory. Evidence from other councils demonstrated that not dealing with discriminatory pay systems could be very costly to taxpayers.

A total of 1,888 Council employees who would receive the 5% pay increase were currently living in Medway. This represented about 80% of the workforce.

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Question D – Councillor Gulvin submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

“The Leader of the Council talks a good game on the administration's so called "sixth pledge" of reducing locums. Following the response given to the Member question at the October 2023 Council meeting, what further progress is being made in this area?”

As Councillor Gulvin was not present, the Mayor announced that he would receive a written response to his question, in accordance with Council rule 9.1.

Question E – Councillor Hackwell asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Since March 11th, the new Safer Streets Scheme has been introduced in one of the primary schools in my ward. As expected, this has made the situation even worse than it was before, the parents are now coming earlier parking in adjacent roads which are making these adjacent roads, even more congested and dangerous than the road that is now closed to non-residential traffic.

Although some residents, particularly in the road that has now been closed to traffic at school times are supportive of the scheme, the ones who live in adjacent roads are not.

Will the Portfolio Holder please urgently review the effectiveness of the Safer Street Scheme and if deemed necessary, remove it, to make the streets safer for our young people attending this school, before there is a serious accident?”

Councillor Osborne answered this question as it fell within his Cabinet Portfolio

He considered that the question was actually referring to the School Streets scheme as opposed to the Safer Streets Scheme. The School Streets Scheme was integral to the commitment to provide safe environments for Medway school children and their families, whilst also advancing efforts to enhance the overall quality of life in relation to air quality. Initial feedback on the scheme had been positive in some areas, with requests from other schools having been made to participate in the scheme.

Councillor Osborne had met with parents, carers and teachers, who had offered their support and suggested improvements. Councillor Hackwell was requested to contact the Portfolio Holder directly should he wish to request that specific streets be added to the Scheme.

Data from the Road Safety Trust and Sustrans indicated children were safer travelling to school because there were around 18% fewer cars on roads around schools in London and in Oxford this was roughly 22%. Monitoring would be undertaken to confirm the impact of the scheme in Medway. Overall perception of safety was significantly higher, with parents and teachers strongly in favour and active travel increasingly leading to healthier lifestyle choices. There would be a period of adjustment for the new initiative.

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Councillor Osborne also suggested that the Member might wish to clarify their position on the Red Routes Scheme.

Question F – Councillor Wildey asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan, the following:

“How much did Labour borrow to fund the scheme to buy housing to home the homeless, was it £50 million?”

Councillor Khan said that no money had been borrowed for this purpose. The Council had approved £42 million for the purchase of temporary accommodation to support Medway families on 24 January 2024. This capital addition had been supported on a cross-party basis. The funding would be drawn down as and when the purchases required this.

Question G – Councillor Anang asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“This current administration has been claiming to be the champions in fighting climate change with Simon Curry as the “most passionate about the environment”.

I would like to ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, how the Council is looking to working with relevant private individuals, voluntary organisations, and civic actors in the area of climate change to produce an updated local air management action plan which will be readily available to members of the community.”

Councillor Curry advised that the 2015 Air Quality Action Plan covered Gillingham, Rainham and the central Medway air quality management areas. This was currently being reviewed and revised and it was anticipated that a draft of the updated Plan would be ready in Summer 2024. A public consultation would be undertaken.

The Four Elms Hill Air Quality Management Plan, which had been agreed in 2022, had now come into effect. There were currently four Air Quality Management areas in Medway. Councillor Curry wanted this to be reduced to none in time as it would demonstrate an improvement in air quality, benefitting the environment and the health of communities.

A number of initiatives had been established as part of the Council’s response to climate change. This included the Healthier Streets programme, which involved easing congestion and introducing new schemes, such as the cycling and walking initiatives to get people active during travel. Two working parties, one of which was a cross-party Member group, had been established. These would support the development of local ward action plans to address a variety of issues, including environmental issues and air quality. The other working party included representatives of the whole community and was scrutinising the work of the Council.

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Councillor Curry also highlighted the work being undertaken at MidKent College to de-carbonise the whole college campus in Medway and Maidstone and the learning opportunities associated with this.

Question H – Councillor Filmer asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry the following:

“Please can the Portfolio Holder confirm the timelines around the Local Plan, and specifically when it will be submitted for examination?”

Councillor Curry said that a report had been presented to Cabinet on 13 February 2024 which set out an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS). This set out the timetable for the Local Plan. This included a further consultation on Regulation 18 options in June 2024, a Regulation 19 consultation in January 2025, leading to a submission for examination by June 2025. The report and full LDS were available to view on the Council’s website.

Question I – Councillor Lawrence asked the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:

“Medway Labour made it a clear plank of the local election campaign to deal with the shortage of GPs serving the people of Medway. Councillor Maple stated in his first full Council that he was on top of the issue.

Following the response given to the Member question at the October 2023 meeting, can Councillor Murray provide a further update to the Council as to the current number of GPs now operating in Medway and the increase or decrease since May 2023 providing the target for recruitment as the context?”

Councillor Murray said that the administration aimed to ensure that every resident of Medway could access timely high-quality NHS services. In keeping with that and actions taken by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC) to date, close work was continuing with the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (KMICB) to improve access to primary care in Medway.

GP numbers were not the sole measure of good primary care access. A key recommendation made by the Committee was to ensure that residents would be directed to the primary care professional best placed to meet their needs. These may include nurse practitioners and pharmacists.

In Medway, the whole-time equivalents of GPs had increased from 84 in May 2023 to 86 in February 2024. These numbers did not include representative part-time or portfolio career GPs.

Recruitment of GPs was challenging both nationally and in Medway. Practices were constrained within the national funding mechanism and their available budgets were also utilised to recruit higher numbers of other direct patient-facing workforce, such as nurses and paramedics.

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There were currently no GP recruitment targets, but to encourage GP recruitment, the Kent and Medway ICB had implemented a GP attraction package in December 2022, incentivising GPs from outside Kent and Medway to join practices in areas of highest need, which included Medway, Swale and Thanet. In addition to incentive payments for both GPs and practices over a 2-year period, this attraction package included a marketing and social media campaign, coastal fellowships, Kent and Medway Council support for housing, schools, childcare and relocation, mentorship, and clinical supervisor training. This package had resulted in recruitment of three GPs in Medway practices to date.

The Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board had also invested in support and reimbursement of application fees for all practices to obtain Home Office approval as a Tier 2 visa sponsor so that they could recruit international GP graduates. Over half of Kent and Medway practices were now Tier 2 sponsors with one GP recruited in Medway through this route. It was envisaged that the significant number of international graduates seeking employment each year should provide a steady flow of GPs in future years. For further information, the Member was encouraged to contact Dr Logan Manikam, Consultant in Public Health.

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, written responses would be provided to questions 10J to 10AA.

Question J – Councillor Perfect submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services, Councillor Price:

“Medway’s recent SEND inspection demonstrates the progress made under the previous Portfolio Holder and officers on SEND services, particularly in relation to positive co-production within the service.

Please can the Portfolio Holder update on what he will do to support further improvements as laid out in the Ofsted report from 2nd April?”

Question K – Councillor Tejan submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards:

“In light of the Labour and Co-Operatives group’s high-profile campaign over many years in support of the docks, supported by Sir Keir Starmer. The Association of Chatham Docks, which includes commercial entities, have shared their proposals for the future of the Docks with two thousand high value jobs protected.

Could the Portfolio Holder update the Chamber on the current number of people employed in a “high skilled job” at Chatham Docks as well as the number of high skilled job vacancies there currently are at Chatham Docks?”

Question L – Councillor Lammas submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs:

“What steps will the Council take to improve the consistency of outcomes for children with SEND across Medway, given the recent OFSTED Inspection found Medway’s Local Area Partnership’s arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities?”

Note: The question had been submitted to Councillor Coombs but the written response would be provided by Councillor Price as Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) was within his Cabinet Portfolio.

Question M – Councillor Kemp submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne:

“Further to the response given at the January 2024 Full Council meeting, which did not set out a start date, is the Portfolio Holder now able to advise when we will see the promised wardens out on the streets of Medway?”

Question N – Councillor Brake submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“There is not a road across the length and breadth of Medway that can be identified as being free of potholes. From Halling to Grain, Walderslade to Cliffe and Strood through to Rainham and the surrounding villages and communities, it is recognised there is much to be done.

With over half a million pounds allocated to Medway by Central Government to assist with dealing with this issue, would Councillor Curry please advise how and where this money has been spent?”

Question O – Councillor Etheridge submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards:

“Seeing as you stated in a recent scrutiny meeting that you were having meetings with officers and other Portfolio Holders in relation to the Local Plan, can you elucidate on any of your proposals that have received support?”

Question P – Councillor Williams submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“Could Councillor Curry confirm what engagement the administration has had with the Lordswood and Walderslade litter picking group after the Full Council meeting where it was confirmed, via an amended motion, that the Administration will engage with them along with ward Councillors Lammas and Hyne?”

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Question Q – Councillor Barrett submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“Councillors in Rainham have had feedback from residents on the proposed cycle lane for Maidstone Road and most of it has been negative. Given Councillor Curry's track record of ignoring feedback he does not agree with, can he advise Council how he intends to keep cyclists and other road users safe in his new cycle lane given the large number of parked cars and heavy traffic using Maidstone Road and the narrowing of the road that would occur from the introduction of the cycle lane?”

In giving his answer, I would expect Councillor Curry to provide evidence that cyclists would use the cycle lane in sufficient numbers that makes the costs worthwhile.”

Question R – Councillor Clarke submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Edwards:

“Can the Portfolio Holder please update the Council on what businesses and inward investment she has secured for Medway since her appointment in May 2023?”

Question S – Councillor Fearn submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs:

“Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm how regularly she meets with primary and secondary Headteachers?”

Question T – Councillor Gilbourne submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property, Councillor Khan:

“The travellers located at the former Wigmore Coach Park remain in situ several months after the end of the temporary licence granted in July.

Can Councillor Khan please update the Council with the action taken since last full Council and legal costs incurred in attempting to seek possession of the land?”

Question U – Councillor Hyne submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“What initiatives are the Council bringing forward to reduce litter in our towns?”

Question V – Councillor Joy submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

“How are things progressing in relation to the discussions around the next steps in relation to the exceptional financial support?”

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Question W – Councillor Spring submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne:

“In the Administration's budget, it was stated that you are scrapping the free swimming for the over 60s and under 16s. This was despite strong and proven evidence that this could have been protected.

It was also announced that parking charges across Medway would increase as of 8 April by up to 85%.

I have had constituents communicate to me that they are very concerned about the increase in charges as they feel it may deter people from using the local shops thus damaging the local family run businesses and the larger national companies.

It is this deterrent that is a current concern. Constituents are already alive to the fact that your administration has made multiple U-turns. The Cozenton Park Sports Centre (which from many I have spoken to in the Rainham North ward consider the re-naming to be a waste of money and will be called Splashes (and the administration is going to spend unnecessary costs amending all the street signs)), constituents are worried that, albeit it has been stated that the parking at the venue will remain free as it has always been.

They fear that in line with your apparent anti-car policies you will do a U-turn and put them in.

They fear that by doing so you discourage residents from attending. This fear along with the scrapping of the free swimming will not be well received by constituents.

Can the Portfolio Holder categorically confirm to my constituents that for the remainder of your time in administration you will not place any parking charges at the Cozenton Park Sports Centre (Splashes) given that they have never been there previously?”

Question X – Councillor Doe submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“Further to the response given at the October 2023 Council meeting which was before the statutory consultation was undertaken, could the Portfolio Holder confirm if any further action has been taken on listening to the results of the public consultation on the Rainham Red Route where the overwhelming number of respondents were against such a proposal, or do the administration still intend to railroad this plan through despite genuine concerns of the public and businesses?”

Question Y – Councillor Mrs Turpin submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

“Further to the road closure on Frindsbury Hill, one week later there was another road closure on Medway City Estate due to the need for resurfacing. This could have been predicted and the risk eliminated by timely resurfacing ahead of the major and long-term road closure on Frindsbury Hill. Instead, traffic issues were inevitably exacerbated as there were then two road closures in close proximity. Therefore, can the Portfolio Holder ensure that the Council, before any planned major road closures of long duration, diversion routes are surveyed and roads so that any resurfacing can be prioritised before the road closure takes place?”

Question Z – Councillor Campbell submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services, Councillor Price:

“What is the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services doing following the announcement that British Youth Council will be closing after 75 years, due to financial challenges?”

Question AA – Councillor Jones submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

“Building on the points raised at the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 April 2024, regarding spending reserves to balance the budget, and the point that the budget which needs to be balanced this year is that of the outgoing administration, and whose Leader has alluded in media interviews, to cutting huge amounts from Directorates on the day of Council budget setting meetings, leaving officers with the challenge of closing this gap over the financial year, there being no plan in place as to how to make these savings.

Are you confident that the collaborative approach you have taken in setting the budget with the corporate management team, from the bottom up, will lead to a better outturn position?”

762 Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area - Request to Extend the Conservation Area

Background:

This report sought Council approval to extend the boundary of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area, as recommended in the Management Plan.

The Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan had previously been approved by Cabinet on 13 February 2024, as set out at section 6 to the report.

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Extensions to the Conservation Area boundary, as proposed within the Management Plan, required Full Council approval.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, supported by Councillor Campbell, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council approved the extension of the boundary of the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area to include the Bethal Chapel, Chatham High Street, Manor Road and Hammond Hill, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report.

763 Cumulative Impact Assessment

Background:

This report set out the proposed Licensing Cumulative Impact Assessment 2024 to 2027. Cumulative Impact Assessments were required to be reviewed every three years, with the current Assessment due to expire on 30 April 2024. The Cumulative Impact Assessment formed part of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy.

The report had previously been considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 19 March 2024 and by the Cabinet on 9 April 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Enforcement, Councillor Osborne, supported by the Chairperson of the Licensing and Safety Committee, Councillor McDonald, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council approved the Cumulative Impact Assessment 2024 to 2027, as set out in Appendix E to the report.

764 Constitutional Issues - Planning Committee

Background:

This report sought approval to amend the Scheme of Delegation in relation to the referral of planning applications to the Planning Committee. It also requested approval to amend the Planning Code of Good Practice, in relation to the role of ward Councillors addressing the Committee.

The report had previously been considered by the Planning Committee on 13 March 2024, the minutes of which were set out at section 6 of the report.

The proposed changes were detailed in paragraphs 3.2-3.6 of the report and at Appendix A. There was an additional change detailed in paragraph 7.2 of the

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report regarding the need for consistency on the number of letters of representation from different households.

In relation to the number of letters of representation, Members were referred to a drafting error on page 520 of the Agenda. "More than five" should read "five or more". This confirmed that the minimum number of relevant letters of representation would be five – the proposed change, as drafted, implied that the minimum number could have been six, which was incorrect.

The Chairperson of the Planning Committee, Councillor Stamp, supported by Councillor Jones, proposed the recommendations set out in the report, subject to the reference to "more than five relevant letters of representation" on page 520 of the Agenda being amended to read "five or more relevant letters of representation".

Councillor Hackwell, supported by Councillor Gilbourne, proposed the following amendment:

Council is recommended to approve the changes to the Planning Code of Good Practice, as set out in Appendix B to the report subject to the following wording to be added to the end of section 7.1 (ii) of Appendix B (page 523 of the Agenda):

Each Ward Councillor will also be permitted to speak for up to 2 minutes at the end of the debate, prior to any summing up by the Chairperson and the vote being taken.

Amended recommendation 1.2 reads:

Council is recommended to approve the changes to the Planning Code of Good Practice, as set out in Appendix B to the report subject to the following wording to be added to the end of section 7.1 (ii) of Appendix B (page 523 of the Agenda):

Each Ward Councillor will also be permitted to speak for up to 2 minutes at the end of the debate, prior to any summing up by the Chairperson and the vote being taken.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

Decisions:

- a) The Council approved the changes to the Employee Delegation Scheme, as set out in Appendix A to the report, subject to the reference to "more than five relevant letters of representation" on page 520 of the Agenda being amended to read "five or more relevant letters of representation".
- b) The Council approved the changes to the Planning Code of Good Practice, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

765 Establishment of Committees, Appointments and Schedule of Meetings 2024/2025

Background:

This report asked the Council to make a number of recommendations to the Annual meeting of the Council on 15 May 2024 regarding the committees and other bodies to be appointed for 2024/2025 and also set out the proposed programme of meetings.

On 24 January 2024, the Council had agreed a draft schedule of meetings for 2024/2025. Since then, there had been ongoing discussions around the dates of some of the Cabinet Sub-Committee meetings. It was anticipated that finalised dates would be included in the report to the Annual Council meeting.

Councillor Myton, supported by Councillor Browne, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

The Council agreed to recommend to Annual Council on 15 May 2024:

- a) The establishment of committees, sub committees and task groups, their size and the allocation of seats to political groups as set out in Appendices A and B to the report, together with terms of reference as set out in the Council's constitution.
- b) That appointments should be made to Joint Committees, outside bodies and other bodies as set out in Appendix C (with nominees to be reported at the Annual Council meeting).
- c) The timetable of meetings for the 2024/2025 municipal year as set out in Appendix D.
- d) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings during the 2024/2025 municipal year as required, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.

766 Report on Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Background:

This report provided a summary of the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees since the last report to Council on 24 January 2024.

Councillor Tejan, supported by Councillor Paterson, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

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Members raised the following issues during debate:

- Work undertaken by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to access of children and young people to dental services.
- Acknowledgement of the work undertaken by all four overview and scrutiny committees including Members and officers supporting them.
- The opportunity available to each Committee to look at the development of the Local Plan.
- The return of Transient *Ischemic* Attack (TIA) and Dermatology services to Medway, although other Stroke services were not returning.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

767 Contract Letting - Exceptional Circumstances

Background:

This report provided details of one contract awarded during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, in accordance with the provisions paragraph 1.8.2 of the Contract Procedure Rules which were effective for the period covered by the report.

The report stated that exemptions to Contract Procedure Rules to deal with the letting of contracts in exceptional circumstances, where it was in the best interests of the Council to do so, could be approved by the Monitoring Officer, provided that the exemption did not breach any UK Directive, Statute or Regulation.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, supported by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the contents of the report.

768 Use of Urgency Provisions

Background:

This report provided details of one contract awarded during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, in accordance with the provisions paragraph 1.8.2 of the Contract Procedure Rules which were effective for the period covered by the report.

The report stated that exemptions to Contract Procedure Rules to deal with the letting of contracts in exceptional circumstances, where it was in the best interests of the Council to do so, could be approved by the Monitoring Officer,

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provided that the exemption did not breach any UK Directive, Statute or Regulation.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, supported by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the contents of the report.

Mayor

Date:

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