

Motions

Motion A – Councillor Lawrence has submitted the following:

The Council notes that:

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr Maple and Cllr Murray, provided unequivocal support for the Chatham Docks outside this very chamber when the Labour and Co-Operative Group formed the Opposition. This included throughout the last local plan regulation 18 and 19 process under the previous administration.

The Labour and Co-Operative Group are now refusing to rule out Chatham Docks being earmarked for development within the local plan.

Labour and Co-Operative councillors voted in favour of a planning application to redevelop Basin 3 of the Chatham Docks, which subject to the Secretary of State's call in, has sealed the fate of approximately 150 jobs and an unknown number in the associated supply chain for a promise of industrial units that may never be built.

The community of St Mary's Island, and people across Medway, feel a sense of betrayal at the disregard of previous promises made by the Labour and Co-Operative Group, and woeful responses claiming the Leader of the Council "arranged a meeting" are not enough.

When this Labour administration came to power in May 2023 one of the promises it made to residents was the creation of 1,000 new jobs. In the administration's first year of power, it has created zero new jobs.

During the period of the last Conservative administration 2,500 jobs were created across Medway, despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic and a very tight financial position.

The Council calls on the Leader, Portfolio Holder for Social and Economic Regeneration and Inward Investment, and the wider Cabinet to:

1. Apologise for the Labour and Co-Operative Group's betrayal of the support for businesses and workers in the Chatham Docks.
2. Urgently set out its detailed strategy for Medway's economic development and job creation. This must detail the action it intends to take to replace any jobs lost because of Basin 3 before those losses can be replaced with new employment.
3. Acknowledge that any loss of businesses based in Chatham Docks will result in reducing Medway's GDP and impact families and other businesses.

4. Through the Local Plan process, properly engage with conversations over the Chatham Docks, with stakeholders, including employees, unions, and community representatives, to gather insights and build consensus.

Motion B – Councillor Sands has submitted the following:

In the 1995 Pensions Act, the Government increased State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further increase to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.

- The change was not properly communicated to 3.8m women born in the 1950s until 2012, giving some only one year's notice of a six-year increase in their anticipated retirement age. Approximately 5000 of the affected women are in our own authority area.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has found the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to have committed maladministration through its failure to adequately communicate State Pension age increases to women born in the 1950s.
- The PHSO has concluded the DWP should apologise to women affected and pay compensation as a result.
- The DWP has refused to accept the findings of the PHSO, which has now led the independent watchdog to lay its findings before Parliament, encouraging MPs to intervene to deliver a remedy to affected women.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women has concluded that "the impact of DWP maladministration on 1950s-born women has been as devastating as it is widespread. The APPG believes that the case for category 6 injustice (£10,000) is overwhelming and clear. Women have had their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances totally obliterated by a lack of reasonable notice."
- As of April 2024, more than 275,000 women have died waiting for justice since the campaign began in 2015.

This Council believes this injustice has not only had a profound effect on the individuals involved but on the wider community in Medway and on local government, not least because:

- Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care.
- Women who would have retired and engaged in caring responsibilities for grandchildren are having to continue working, increasing the childcare burden on the state locally.
- Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing stock.

- There is a broader impact on voluntary services of all kinds locally, which are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned.
- Our local economy is negatively affected by the reduced spending power and disposable income the uncommunicated State Pension Age changes has brought about among women born in the 1950s.

This Council supports:

- A swift resolution to this ongoing injustice before more and more women die waiting for compensation.
- The conclusion of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality that women born in the 1950s have suffered a gross injustice, affecting their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances in addition to causing financial hardship.
- The WASPI campaign and All-Party Parliamentary Group's calls for an immediate one-off compensation payment at category 6 injustice on the PHSO's financial remedy scale (£10,000) to those affected.
- The PHSO's recommendation for the DWP to issue a formal apology to those affected and provide an opportunity for MPs to urgently debate the APPG's recommendations, and any others, in Parliament.

This Council asks:

The Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament; the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions; and Leader of the House of Commons; to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s born women on the community and to seek:

- Urgent proposals from the DWP, outlining how they will deliver compensation for affected women.
- For all MPs to be given an opportunity to debate and vote on these proposals.

Motion C – Councillor Spalding has submitted the following:

Medway has a proud military history and a tradition of hosting wonderful and memorable military experiences.

Recent events, however, have in the eyes of many, particularly in the veteran and military community, fallen below the standard we have come to know and expect.

This Council resolves that hereinafter going forward, Medway Council will, for all events of, or connected to a military nature, engage well in advance of the event with local veterans' groups and military establishments including cadet units to ensure such events are not just 'good' but 'outstanding'.

Motion D – Councillor Louwella Prenter has submitted the following:

The last Labour Government made huge strides in ending homelessness. In 1999 the Rough Sleepers Unit set an ambitious target to reduce the number of people sleeping rough by at least two-thirds by 2002. By 2002 this target was exceeded, with a 70% reduction in rough sleeping.

Under the Conservatives, that progress has been undone, with rough sleepers an all-too-common sight in our towns, and a sharp rise in hidden homelessness. The introduction of the Rough Sleeping Initiative in 2018 had started to reverse this trend. However, the cost-of-living crisis has driven numbers in Medway back to the same level as when it was introduced.

Currently, the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) supports Medway Council in tackling rough sleeping through a multi-agency approach, funding outreach teams, and providing immediate off-the-street accommodation and long-term housing solutions. RSI-funded services include an in-house rough sleepers' team, an outreach team, the Medway Assessment Centre, Housing First, and enhanced hostels. At any one time, approximately 100 people currently or previously sleeping rough are being supported through this provision. However, RSI funding is set to end in March 2025, which could lead to increased rough sleeping due to the loss of critical support services.

Medway Council notes that:

- Labour Governments have a strong track record in tackling rough sleeping.
- Whilst the funding provided by previous the Conservative Government was vital in supporting rough sleeping, the structural issues to prevent rough sleeping weren't adequately addressed.
- Building on the lessons of the past, Labour will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with Mayors and Councils across the country, to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness.

Medway Council believes that:

- Tackling the structural issues which drive the causes of rough sleeping will be a priority for the new Labour Government.
- The huge reversal which is needed is unlikely to have happened before March 2025 when the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding is due to end.

Medway Council resolves to:

- Work closely with the Labour Government to achieve the same levels of reduction in rough sleeping that occurred when Labour was last in power.

Medway Council calls on the Government to:

Continue the funding provided by the Rough Sleeping Initiative which sits at just under £1 million for Medway, either through the existing policy, or any replacement strategy, for the financial year 2025-2026 so that Medway Council can continue the vital work of providing critical support services.