

Cabinet

27 August 2024

Protest of the 7 August 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alex Patterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

Report from: Adam Bryan, Director of Place

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Summary

This report provides a reflection on the events of the 7 August 2024 and the online social media call for a protest at Horsted end of Maidstone Road, Rochester.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet note and recognise the Authority's excellent record on community cohesion and the work of the Council, Kent Police, Partner agencies, Community & Faith Groups and our community in responding to the challenges of the events of the protest on the 7 August 2024.
- 1.2. That Cabinet note and support a workshop on community cohesion in Medway.
- 1.3. That Cabinet note and support a reflective exercise by officers and key partners in considering any lessons learnt from the management of the events of the 7 August 2024.

2. Suggested reasons for decision

- 2.1. To provide the Cabinet with an update on the protest that took place in Medway on 7 August 2024.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1 This report has no budgetary implications.

4. Background

- 4.1 In the week beginning Monday the 5 August, an online statement asserted an anti-immigration protest was to occur at the Horsted end of Maidstone Road, Chatham at 8 p.m. on the 7 August 2024. Officers immediately began liaising

with Kent Police to better understand the credibility of this information and how best to manage this situation.

- 4.2 A local authority tactical command and control structure was implemented, encompassing a wide range of Council services. Kent Police undertook regular high-level briefings with Council Leaders, MPs, Community Leaders and Council officers in which information was freely and frankly shared.
- 4.3. The week saw Medway collectively move from a single line of online intelligence into the protest and counter protests which manifested itself in Maidstone Road, Chatham. The response to this changed as the information became more concrete. Our Communications team maintained an open channel with Kent Police Comms to ensure that coherent messaging was communicated across our organisations.
- 4.4. Throughout the process the Authority was prepared for the eventualities that might occur and managed the developing situation as it progressed.
- 4.5. On the evening of Wednesday, the 7 August 2024 approximately 150 individuals congregated in the vicinity of Maidstone Road, these consisted of protestors, a group of anti-protestors and uninvolved onlookers. This situation was successfully managed by Kent Police and culminated in 3 arrests for low level public order issues. There was no substantive violence, injuries or damage to property.
- 4.6. Council Officers and partners were called upon by Kent Police to support in the highways management, subsequent street cleaning and direction of CCTV assets.
- 4.7. Throughout these events Community and Faith Groups were supported by the Council Officers and Kent Police. These groups provided reassurance to our community and acted a conduit of credible information at a time of misinformation.
- 4.8 Kent Police was fully prepared and delivered an excellent service to the whole of Medway, from the community reassurance provided by the local Community Safety Unit to the challenges presented to the Public Order Unit deployed to manage the protest.
- 4.9. Medway's community emerged from the events of the 7 August to swiftly resume normality and affirm our collective commitment to 'One Medway'.

5. Options

- 5.1 The Authority holds a workshop, facilitated through our Community Safety Partnership, with key stakeholders to reflect on the events of the 7 August 2024 and to consider how we can collectively build upon our excellent community cohesion to make Medway more resilient to these occurrences.

5.2 Officers conduct a reflective exercise with key partners to consider any lessons learnt from the management of the events on the 7 August 2024.

6. Risk management

6.1. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community, as detailed in the table below.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Community Tension	The events of the 7 August 2024 deteriorate wider community cohesion in Medway	The Authority holds a workshop on Community Cohesion in Medway with key stakeholders.	BII
Response capacity	Lack of capacity and ability for the Authority to effectively respond to similar occurrences.	The Authority conducts a reflective exercise by officers and key partners in considering any lessons learnt from the management of the events of the 7 August 2024.	CII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

7. Climate change implications

7.1. This report does not have any significant overt Climate Change implications.

8. Financial implications

8.1 This report does not have any financial implications outside of the Community Safety Team's normal budgetary capacity.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 The Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which was established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, was used to collectively manage the events of the 7 August 2024 and facilitated partners in delivering a collective response.
- 9.2 Underpinning this was the preparedness of the Authority's Emergency Planning team who were established under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None