

## Public Questions

**Question A – Martin Hill, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:**

I live in Napier Road, Gillingham, this used to be a quiet road, but now it is a racetrack for speeding motorists and motorbikes. Over the last 10 to 25 years we have had two children killed by speeding motorists, one suicide on a motorbike, several severe crashes and regular speeding cars going over 40 mph. This road has a school on it.

We need proper speed bumps and cameras, what can be done about this situation?

**Question B – Liz Sweet, of Hempstead, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:**

I would like to start by placing on record the thanks of Medway Help for Ukrainians to the former Mayor, Councillor Nina Gurung, for choosing us as one of her charities. We are extremely grateful for the funds raised.

Can I also thank the Council and their excellent Homes for Ukraine team for their support since our creation at the start of the war.

Although not in the same media spotlight as at the start of the conflict, the risk to lives in Ukraine remains real and present, and our and your continued support is very needed.

One area where there has been a reduction is individuals and families stepping forward as sponsors for those seeking support in the UK.

Will the Council work with Medway Help For Ukrainians to find a means of attracting people in Medway to become sponsors to Ukrainians wishing to flee the war?

**Question C – Nicholas Craddy, of St Mary Hoo, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:**

The application for 44 houses at Fenn Corner came to the Planning Committee on 25 September 2024. The All Saints ward Councillor, Councillor Spalding, made reference to documents missing from the planning portal including pre application and traffic surveys.

Councillor Pearce proposed deferring the application so all the documents referred to by the ward Councillor could be scrutinised by the Committee and taken into account before an informed decision could be made, and so for Members of the Committee not familiar with the location could see first hand the situation on the ground. Councillor Peake seconded the proposal for a site visit and he was subsequently joined by Councillor Etheridge.

The Committee Chair called on the Vice Chair, Councillor Jones, to move the vote on a deferral.

Councillor Jones stated he was not quite sure what he was supposed to be moving because he was opposed to a site visit. He stated the planning presentation had told the Committee everything it needed to know, that the planning presentation was quite expansive and had given a clear picture. He stated his inclination was the Committee did not need a site visit.

At this point the Chair intervened and moved a vote for a deferral which was carried.

The ward Councillor had made it clear documents containing reasonably required information were missing. Councillor Pearce took the view the Committee needed to see them.

The Council's own planning code at paragraph 5.1 states:

'Councillors making planning decisions must come to a decision only after due consideration of all information reasonably required upon which to base such a decision.'

Does Councillor Maple have complete faith and confidence in Councillor Jones given he seems content to ignore the Council's own planning code?

**Question D – Matt Nightingale, of Cuxton, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:**

Currently there is no safe route for residents from Cuxton to walk into Strood Town Centre. A lack of a continuous, paved route means that anyone using a wheelchair, mobility scooter or a pram are unable to get out of the village without the use of a vehicle.

A commitment was made as part of the proposed Cuxton Marina to deliver a continuous, safe route into town from the village, but this has been delayed due to a pending planning application and by Network Rail.

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update about when the riverside footpath between Cuxton Station and Medway Valley Park will be opened, including what representations the Council has made to expedite the delivery of this vital artery?

**Question E – Cat Jamieson, of Rochester, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:**

Rochester Riverside School has now been open for over 12 months, yet the main crossing at the junction of Gas House Road and Corporation Street is still not safe and has no signage indicating there is a school there and that drivers need to be careful of children crossing.

Despite numerous concerns being raised by many parents to the Council and to our local political representatives back in September 2023, nothing has changed and we have not been kept updated of any progress.

Please can the Portfolio Holder publish any risk assessments that have been completed and provide a route-map on how they intend to make this route safe for children and families who are walking, cycling and scooting to and from Rochester Riverside School?

**Question F – Ralph Allison, of Twydall, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:**

The National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) recommends that local authorities should provide 20 allotment plots per 1,000 households. Medway currently provides 1,000 plots, with 1,996 people on waiting lists as of April 2024. According to the NSALG calculation, Medway should be providing over 2,000 plots.

What actions will the Council take to address this shortfall in allotment plots, given that some people on waiting lists are likely to pass away before they ever get access to a plot?

**Question G – Onyx Rist, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, the following:**

Many residents living on the new development on Otterham Park, built by Persimmon, are having to deal with a company run by Persimmon called FibreNest and at the moment are left without choice as Open Reach are not yet in the area. Many residents are having issues with Fibre Nest WiFi.

Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness agree that residents should have choice and will she write to Persimmon to force them to allow Open Reach to come onto the estate so residents can have a choice?

**Question H – Alan Wells, of Chatham, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:**

I am highlighting the importance of fully-accessible Changing Places toilets, which are needed by people with severe disabilities. Changing Places UK – co-chaired by Muscular Dystrophy UK – has campaigned for more than a decade for people with severe disabilities, who need extra equipment and space to use toilets safely and with dignity. More than 2,400 Changing Places facilities are now registered across the UK, but many areas like Medway still lack adequate provision.

Changing Places Toilets are different to standard disabled toilets with extra features and more space to meet the needs of people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and others with personal care needs and their carers, and others who have a disability or condition that means they need personal support. This includes people who have had a severe stroke and people with muscular dystrophy.

There are currently 10 Changing Places toilets across Medway, with 4 of these having limited availability, and some of the other 6 having older inadequate equipment installed.

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of many disabled people and without Changing Places toilets, carers are often forced to change severely disabled family members on a dirty toilet floor. This is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified. However, the alternative is to limit outings to a couple of hours or to not go out at all.

With only a few Changing Places being available across our towns, for the people who need them to use the toilet safely and with dignity, my question is

'What is the Council's plan regarding more 'Changing Places' facilities to be installed at various venues across Medway?'

**Question I – Mike Evans, of Rochester, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:**

The Council will be aware that Trussell Trust and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation are campaigning for an Essentials Guarantee, which will ensure the Standard Allowance of Universal Credit is sufficient to cover life's essentials such as food, clothing, transport and utility bills. The current rate of £91 a week is too low for people to afford these essential requirements.

As historically low rates of Social Security are the main driver of foodbank use, and given that in their manifesto, Labour committed to ending the need for emergency food, will the Council consider making a Declaration of Support for Trussell Trust's Essentials Guarantee campaign?

**Question J – John Castle, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:**

Active travel across Medway brings many advantages, including to both health and the environment.

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that a walking and cycling bridge from Sun Pier to Medway City Estate would be a great benefit to people in Medway?

**Question K – Matthew Broadley, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:**

Labour supported a (defeated) motion in July 2016 that would have seen Medway Council adopt the culture behind the City of Sanctuary movement. A number of Labour Councillors have, at various times, sat on the Steering Committee of the Medway City of Sanctuary Group.

I recognise that the previous administration and current administration have made progress in working towards being a Council of compassion.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm if the current administration intends to fully align with the City of Sanctuary campaign and seek recognition as a Council of Sanctuary?

**Question L – Jeremy Spyby-Steanson, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:**

History was made in 2021 when Green Councillor Cleo Lake proposed a motion to back the campaign for reparations. This motion would not have passed without the support of the Bristol Labour Group.

Cross-party motions between elected Greens and elected Labour councillors have also passed in other councils around the country, including Islington and Lambeth.

Last Saturday, multiple political parties came together for the William Cuffay Festival, to celebrate a Chatham icon who himself was the son of a former slave. Slavery therefore goes to the heart of our political psyche in Medway.

It is in this spirit of cooperation that I ask, will Medway Labour commit to the following?

- Publicly support the campaign for reparations;
- Call on the British government to establish a commission to study the impact of the UK's role in transatlantic slavery, its legacies and impact today;
- To write to Bell Ribeiro-Addy and affirm that Medway Council is committed to the aims and ambitions of the All Party Parliamentary Group for African Reparations.