

Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 October 2024

Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety,
Highways and Enforcement

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee are asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- Digital Services (including Medway 2.0)
- Licensing (Executive Functions Only).

3. Background

3.1. I am proud to have taken on Portfolio Holder responsibility for Digital Services and Licensing; two demanding, multifaceted services which have both undergone and been responsible for delivering significant positive transformation in recent years, whilst continuing to deliver key services at the highest of standards.

3.2. I recently took over this portfolio in July 2024 and was very proud to present the Medway 2.0 Roadmap to Cabinet on 30 July as one of my first actions. I would like to recognise the excellent work my predecessor, Cllr Osborne, has done to advance the transformation agenda at Medway. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank this committee for the pre-decision scrutiny and discussion on 20 June 2024, which was incorporated into the final Cabinet report.

- 3.3. This would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the officers and partners involved, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to them for this.
- 3.4. I am particularly pleased to have Digital Services within my portfolio, as I have had personal experience of widescale transformation programmes within my working life, so I recognise the complexities involved with such projects when trying to implement change whilst still providing excellent services, which is akin to building the airplane, whilst flying the airplane.
- 3.5. In my first months as Portfolio Holder, I have been impressed by the dedication and forward-thinking attitude within the various teams under my Portfolio. I recognise that we are not operating with the development resources of Google or Facebook, which has an impact on the pace of delivery, but I have every confidence that we are on the right track to provide excellent services to residents, that are available and accessible to all.

Medway 2.0

- 3.6. The Medway 2.0 Roadmap represents one of the most ambitious transformation programmes the Council has seen. It is not about implementing a new computer system, or “magic bullet”, to quickly transform the Council. It is about reimagining what Medway Council does, and how it does it.
- 3.7. During the last discussion at Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the officers were asked to outline the core principles for Medway 2.0, which I have included in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.8. The delivery of the Medway 2.0 concept is following the 15 universal principles for designing services that work for users, developed by Lou Downe from The School of Good Services, which are included in Appendix 1 of this report. I am ensuring that these principles are adopted to design, assess, and monitor the quality of Medway Council services.
- 3.9. It is vital to me that we are stubborn on these principles and do not allow them to be compromised, even if it means delaying, rethinking or abandoning a project. Our residents deserve excellent services that meet their needs.
- 3.10. I was proud of the team when they made a very brave decision to not go live with a process that had been built by an external company that are a Microsoft Gold Partner and one of the leading companies in the UK building systems for Local Authorities.
- 3.11. Despite the team having mapped the desired process in detail, it became apparent that the software, systems, and approach being used by the provider could not provide the resident journey we had designed; and making the service design fit the computer system would lead to a much worse customer experience – and be like the tail wagging the dog.
- 3.12. A decision was therefore made to stop this pilot and develop the process in-house. Whilst this caused a delay to the implementation, it was vital that we

got this first “service pattern” right, as it will be the template for future processes.

- 3.13. The team took a “service design” approach to the Illegally Parked Vehicle and Abandoned Vehicle processes, which are currently completely separate processes handled by different sections in the Council (parking and the warden service respectively).
- 3.14. Following the redesign of these services, it was quickly identified that residents don’t care whether a vehicle is illegally parked or abandoned, there is just a vehicle there that shouldn’t be! The process was therefore re-named “Nuisance Vehicles”, which also now incorporates vehicles being sold on the highway and vehicles being repaired on the highway – wrapping up 4 separate processes into 1, making it easier for the resident by reducing the number of separate online forms.
- 3.15. The redesigned “report a nuisance vehicle” process is now available here <https://www.medway.gov.uk/NuisanceVehicle> and works as follows:
 - **Report Check:**
Residents can view current nuisance vehicle reports on Medway Council’s web page to avoid duplicate submissions. Future updates will allow progress tracking on existing reports.
 - **Report Submission:**
Residents can report using their location, postcode, address, or map pin. What3Words was considered but not used at this stage due to accessibility and compliance concerns. Landmarks can be added for better identification.
 - **Boundary Check:**
The system confirms if the report is within Medway’s boundary. Out-of-area reports are not accepted, reducing manual checks.
 - **Photo Upload:**
Residents can upload a photo with provided instructions.
 - **Vehicle Details:**
Residents provide the vehicle’s registration number, which is checked against the DVLA database for MOT and Tax status. The form adapts based on these results to minimise input required from residents.
 - **DVLA Submission:**
If the vehicle is not the Council’s responsibility, the system automatically sends the information to the DVLA.
 - **Updates:**
Residents can opt to receive progress updates. Contact information is collected only if they choose this option.

- **Review and Submit:**
Residents review their responses, make changes if needed, and submit the form.

3.16. The new process was recently demonstrated to the Assistant Director of Frontline Services and their senior management team. They were all impressed by the improvements, and the service have estimated that this new process has removed or automated around 75% of their manual work.

Medway 2.0 Delivery

3.17. Now that this first process has been designed, built, and delivered; the “report it” service pattern has been established so that it can be reused to provide the same excellent, resident centric, reporting process to other service areas.

3.18. This will accelerate the delivery of the wider Medway 2.0 programme as the “report it” service pattern is re-used for reporting fly tipping, litter, graffiti, potholes, untidy land etc; creating a snowball effect.

3.19. The new process has transformed the customer experience by only asking for the minimum information to complete the task. It has also removed or automated a significant proportion of manual intervention across Council services, which will deliver big savings as we apply this to the redesign of other service patterns such as “book it”, “apply for it”, and “pay for it”.

The Medway 2.0 Transformation Roadmap

3.20. The nuisance vehicle process is just one example across a range of workstreams the team are working with Council services to streamline, improve, and automate.

3.21. Workstreams and projects on the roadmap include:

- Housing and Homelessness;
- Household Waste Recycling Centre booking improvements;
- automating processes where appropriate;
- reviewing the whole “purchase to pay” process, including the income management and payment platform;
- using technology to automatically record, transcribe, and summarise meetings utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI).

3.22. One exciting project that cuts across a number of my portfolios is to install cameras on vehicles that are travelling around Medway to identify and monitor potholes, road markings, and potentially capture condition data of the road network, which we currently pay a third party to do for us. Other benefits include reducing the cyclical road marking programme as the system will identify faded markings, reduction on unnecessary repairs, identification of priority repairs, and checking repairs have been carried out by the contractor before payment is made.

CCTV

- 3.23. As well as digital services designed to make the lives of residents easier, I have also been championing digital solutions to improve the efficiency of Council and partner processes.
- 3.24. After a tremendous effort from Council staff, Kent Police and Kyndi, we have managed to implement a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) for our CCTV footage.
- 3.25. Medway is now one of the first tranche of Kent authorities using DAMS, which enables CCTV footage to be remotely sent to Police officers via a secure online link and eradicates the need for Kyndi to burn footage on to recordable DVD discs; thus reducing officer time, waste, and effort as well as unlocking opportunities for further digital transformation.
- 3.26. This is something that both Cllr Gulvin and Cllr Osborne were huge advocates for in the Community Safety Partnership forum, and I am pleased to have delivered on this aspiration to digitalise this service.
- 3.27. We have received extremely positive comments from Kent Police, as it has also streamlined their processes and means that officers can spend more time in the community as they do not need to travel and wait for discs to be burned with the requested footage.

Digital Connectivity and the Medway Council Website

- 3.28. Medway has seen a substantial increase in the number of premises with full fibre connectivity and with it, access to gigabit internet speeds. As of October 2024, over 70% of Medway residents and businesses now have full fibre to the premise (FTTP) access (*Source: thinkbroadband.com, data accurate as of 4th October 2024*). This figure has more than doubled in the last 2 years alone.
- 3.29. This is in part down to the vast sums of private investment Medway has attracted in local FTTP infrastructure from the likes of CityFibre, Openreach, and other smaller internet service providers (ISPs); but this is also down to the excellent coordination offered by Council officers within my Portfolio in ICT and the Integrated Transport Street Works teams working together to assist in these vast infrastructure programmes.
- 3.30. The Council are also key stakeholder in Project Gigabit, with officers working alongside the Kent Broadband Team in supporting Building Digital UK (part of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology) CityFibre and their build partner, Pod-Trak, to enable those hard-to-reach postcodes in rural Medway to access gigabit-capable broadband. This demonstrates my commitment to make the Council's digital services accessible to all.
- 3.31. The Council's main website, www.medway.gov.uk, continues to be a vital resource for the residents of Medway, with around 1million views every month.

The Licensing Team

- 3.32. The Licensing Team are responsible for discharging Medway Council's licensing functions in terms of administering and regulating the licensing regimes in respect of:
- Premises Licence for premises and clubs selling alcohol and/or providing regulated entertainment or late-night refreshment
 - Personal Licences for the sale of alcohol
 - Temporary Event Notices
 - Taxi and Private Hire drivers, vehicles and private hire operators
 - Gambling Premises and activities
 - Sex establishments
 - Scrap metal
 - Charitable collections
 - Pavement Licences
 - Street trading
- 3.33. The team continues to work collaboratively with internal departments such as Environmental Health and Trading Standards and external partners including Kent Police and Home Office Immigration in order to ensure effective consultations and joined-up interventions.
- 3.34. The team also liaise closely with other professionals across the council and other Kent authorities through attendance at such groups as the Safety Advisory Group and Kent & Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group.
- 3.35. Officers are ensuring premises, events, street traders and taxi and private hire driver and operators are appropriately licensed and comply with licence conditions through ad-hoc inspections and following receipt of complaints; taking appropriate action when issues are identified.
- 3.36. The Team also do a fantastic job of ensuring that licence applications are processed quickly and reliably, with 100% of applications more often than not being issued within the targeted periods as reflected in their Key Performance statistics.
- ## 4. Providing political leadership and challenge
- 4.1. I have a regular 1:1 meeting with the Council's Chief Information Officer, Paul Boyd, to discuss the strategic direction of the transformation programme, review progress, and provide political leadership and support.
- 4.2. One of the main aims of the transformation programme is to break down silos and wrap services around residents. I am able to engage with my Cabinet colleagues to facilitate these discussions to ensure our services are re-designed from the resident's point of view.
- 4.3. I also play a role where I quality check the new services that are designed, which is something I will be opening up to a wider group of Members through

our new cross party Member User Testing Group, which we are currently in the process of establishing.

- 4.4. The Team also do a fantastic job of ensuring that licence applications are processed quickly and reliably, with 100% of applications more often than not being issued within the targeted periods as reflected in their Key Performance statistics.

5. Championing the Interests of service users and Medway residents

- 5.1. I constantly champion the voices of service users, as a key objective of the Medway 2.0 transformation programme is to make services accessible for all. We have finally killed off the term “digital channel shift”, as it implies we want to force residents to use online services. This could not be further from the truth.
- 5.2. Our challenge is to provide digital channels and services that have been designed for resident’s needs – and are so simple and easy to use; and available 24hours a day, 7 days a week; that a customer would *prefer* to interact with the Council in this way.
- 5.3. This will then enable the Council to focus our telephony and face to face resources on those residents that need additional support.
- 5.4. As an example, on 19 September 2024 we launched a new British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service called ‘Interpreters Live!’, which is making it significantly easier for our deaf and hard of hearing residents to contact the Council for information and to make service requests.
- 5.5. Medway is one of the few local authorities locally to offer the system, which can be accessed through Medway Council’s website, or via the InterpretersLive! app or website.
- 5.6. When using the system, residents can click on a link and a BSL interpreter will appear on their screen to find out which service they require. The interpreter will then call the relevant department and assist with a conversation.
- 5.7. If a Council officer is not able to help directly, a ‘call back’ can be arranged via videolink at a future date.
- 5.8. This is a great example of how technology and digital services can make Medway Council *more* accessible to residents, not less.
- 5.9. I am strongly committed to making our digital services accessible, so I am pleased to inform the committee that we will soon be appointing a dedicated Accessibility Officer to review our online content and systems, as well as support services with the production of digital content, to ensure it is accessible to residents with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, or impaired hearing.
- 5.10. **Current Licensing figures**

The Licensing Team currently look after some 2400 licences, as broken down in the table below:

	Issued	Suspended
Licensing Act 2003 Premises Licences	752	72
Licensing Act 2003 Club Premises Certificate	49	1
Gambling Act 2005 Premises Licence	36	0
Gambling Act 2005 Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permit	20	0
Gambling Act 2005 Club Machine Permit	28	0
Gambling Act 2005 Club Gaming Permit	0	0
Gambling Act 2005 Notification of 2 or less Gaming Machines	57	0
Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driver Licence	563	23
Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Licence	601	26
Temporary Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicle Licence	4	0
Private Hire Operator Licence	43	0
Scrap Metal Site Licence	9	0
Scrap Metal Collectors Licence	20	0
Lottery Registration	98	0
Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence	1	0
	2281	122
	2403	

- 5.11. The impressive scale of these figures goes some way to demonstrate the significant amount of compliance and enforcement activity that Licensing undertake.
- 5.12. Premises licence suspensions are issued following non-payment of annual maintenance fees and the suspensions are lifted only once the debt is cleared. Chasing payment of outstanding fees is necessary, but an ongoing and time-consuming task.
- 5.13. Driver licence suspensions are issued for a variety of reasons including non-compliance with policy requirements such as failing to register with the Disclosure and Barring Service update service
- 5.14. Vehicle licence suspensions are usually issued for non-compliance with vehicle specifications (usually following an accident), no MOT, no insurance.
- 5.15. However, this list is not exhaustive.

Support for key service areas

6.1. Service area

- 6.1.1. The Licensing Team have been tasked to draft Taxi Tariff Review Policy, which is being finalised. This Policy will set out the frequency of the review

and the consultation methodology and will be circulated to the taxi trade seeking their views prior to submission to Full Council for approval.

6.1.2. The Licensing Team contribute to Medway's Climate Change Action Plan and are involved with a feasibility study led by Environmental Protection Team and conducted by Ricardo, an experienced and respected environmental consultancy. A survey was circulated to the licensed taxi and private hire trade; the results of which will be considered by Medway Council and when reviewing the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy in 2025 for implementation in 2026.

6.1.3. A review of the Statement of Gambling Policy has been carried out in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 resulting in minor administrative changes only. A consultation exercise was conducted and no responses received recommending changes. This draft policy has been considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee and Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committees who recommended approval to Cabinet on 1 October 2024 and Council on 17 October 2024. The approved policy must be published on 31 January 2025.

7. Conclusion

7.1. I am fully committed to supporting the services within my Portfolio to continue with the delivery of accessible, easy to use, resident centric processes.

7.2. I do not underestimate the challenge we have ahead of us, but having seen the energy, passion, expertise, and dedication from the teams I have met over the past few months, I have every confidence that we will provide the transformation Medway Council needs to make it fit for the future.

7.3. I will continue to ensure that Licensing Enforcement remains a key priority in my portfolio which will help Medway to be an even greater place to live, work, learn and visit for years to come.

7.4. I continue to be fully supportive of the service and the work which is being undertaken in challenging circumstances, and am committed to supporting continued progress.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 The 15 Principles of Good Service Design