

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 17 October 2024
7.00pm to 11.50pm

Record of the meeting

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

Present: The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway (Councillor Nestorov)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hamandishe) Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Barrett, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Khan, Lammas, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Osborne, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Price, Shokar, Spalding, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke and Wildey

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

354 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarke, Edwards, Etheridge, Filmer, Hamilton, Myton, Mark Prenter, Sands and Williams.

355 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Mahil declared an interest in agenda item No. 14 (Pavement Licensing Policy) and in agenda item No. 19 (Report on Overview and Scrutiny Activity). Councillor Mahil left the room during discussion and determination of the items.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

The Monitoring Officer stated that in relation to agenda Item No. 11 (Annual Review of the School Place Planning), the report recommended capital funding allocations for works to be undertaken at a number of schools, as set out in the recommendations of the report

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The Monitoring Officer advised that where a Member was a governor at one of these schools, he considered that the Member had an Other Significant Interest (OSI) in the matter, arising from the fact that the Member would be in position of general control or managerial control. In such cases, Members were advised they should declare their OSI, leave the chamber and not participate in the debate or vote.

Agenda item 8A was a motion to discuss the changes to the winter fuel allowance payable to pensioners. Some Members might be directly affected by the changes recently announced by the government regarding entitlement to the allowance. Other Members may have family members, friends or others with whom they had close personal relationship whose entitlement to the benefit may be affected. The Monitoring Officer advised that in those circumstances, Members should declare an OSI.

Due to the number of Members that may be affected and the impact that would have on proportionality of votes, the Monitoring Officer had exercised a delegation to grant a dispensation to all Members for a period of six months. This meant that Members who had an OSI would be entitled to remain in the meeting during discussion of the matter and to take part in the discussion and vote.

The following Members declared an OSI for motion 8A in relation to themselves: Councillors Anang, Browne and Van Dyke.

The following Members declared an OSI for motion 8A in relation to a close friend or relative: Councillors Bowen, Cook, Coombs, Field, Gilbourne, Gurung, Hackwell, Jackson, Joy, Lawrence, Mahil, Murray, Osborne, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Stamp, Mrs Turpin and Wildey.

The following Members declared an OSI for motion 8A in relation to themselves **and** a close friend or relative: Councillors Crozer, Gulvin, Jones, Kemp and Price.

Councillor Cook declared an interest in agenda item No. 11 (Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27) as she is an employee of the Leigh Academies Trust and her business relationship with a number of the schools mentioned in the report. Councillor Cook left the room during discussion and determination of the item.

Councillor Anang declared an interest in agenda item No. 11 (Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27) as he is a Governor of Rivermead Inclusive Trust. Councillor Anang left the room during discussion and determination of the item.

Other interests

Councillor Howcroft-Scott declared an interest in agenda item No. 11 (Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27) as her foster child

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attends the Hundred of Hoo School and she sometimes helps the school, although she was not a governor.

356 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 18 July 2024 was approved and signed by the Worshipful Mayor as correct.

357 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful Mayor of Medway announced that former Councillors, Bob Adcock and Mike Franklin, had passed away.

Bob Adcock had served as a Councillor on the Gillingham Borough Council from 1996 to 1998 and then on Medway Council from 1998 to 2003.

Mike Franklin had served as a Councillor on the Rochester Upon Medway City Council from 1976 to 1991 and then on Medway Council from 2015 to 2019.

The Mayor offered condolences to the respective families. Councillor Price also paid tribute to Bob Adcock and Councillor Gulvin paid tribute to Mike Franklin.

The Mayor acknowledged the work of the former Mayor of Medway, Councillor Nina Gurung. During her year as Mayor, she had raised £9,430 for her three chosen charities, Young Medway, Medway Help for Ukrainians and veterans charity, SSAFA. As a result, each charity would receive £3,143.30 in recognition of their valuable work and support in the community.

The Mayor had undertaken a walk across Medway on 30 September 2024. He thanked everyone who had supported him by joining the walk, helping to organise it or by making a donation. £590 had been raised for the Mayor's charities.

It was also announced that tickets were available for the Mayor's next fundraising event at Gurkha Fire on 29 October.

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:

- 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.

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- 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 – 2

Independent Group – 1

Independent Members – 3

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

358 Leader's announcements

There were none.

359 Petitions

Public:

There were none.

Member:

There were none.

A petition was submitted by Councillor Lawrence on behalf of 124 residents adjacent to Fairview Community Primary School. This opposed the establishment of a Safer School Street in the area.

360 Public questions

Question A – Martin Hill, of Gillingham, asked 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

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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?”

In response Councillor Paterson said that selfish, speeding motorists were a scourge on communities and he sympathised with the concerns raised. The Council was not in a position to undertake all the road safety interventions that he would like and all road safety work was evidence based. Recent collision data was examined to ensure resources were used most effectively to reduce the number of people being harmed while traveling on Medway's roads.

Earlier in 2024, collision data for several streets in the Gillingham area, including Napier Road, had been analysed. This study indicated that Napier Road did not meet the criteria for further intervention when compared against other locations in Medway, it was also noted that vehicle activated speed limit signs had been installed on this road to influence driver behaviour and traffic speeds.

Councillor Paterson said that he worked with officers and partners, including Kent police, to promote safe road use and prevent casualties wherever possible. However, priority must be given to locations where recent road casualties were being recorded. This meant that the Council was unable to prioritise additional measures on Napier road at present. Road safety in the area would continue to be monitored over the coming months.

Martin Hill chose not to ask a supplementary question:

Question B – Liz Sweet, of Hempstead, asked 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?”

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In response Councillor Murray thanked Liz Sweet for the kind words about Councillor Gurung's charity support for Medway Help for Ukrainians, a grass roots organisation that continued to demonstrate the compassion, generosity and determination of people in Medway to welcome new communities who needed support.

Councillor Murray gave assurance that the Council and new local MPs were very conscious that Ukraine faced a third year of war with all the difficulties that entailed. The Council would continue to support the efforts of Medway help for Ukrainians to encourage sponsors for families and she was pleased that government support was still available. Mid Kent College, schools, employers and the voluntary sector who had helped the Ukrainian community in Medway were thanked.

Tribute was paid to the resilience, hard work and optimism that Ukrainians who now lived in Medway had shown and to the enrichment achieved through the sharing of their culture, experiences and contributions to life in Medway.

Liz Sweet asked the following supplementary question:

'Hopefully you can agree to an early meeting where we can start to put in place an action plan to find a solution to this difficult challenge?'

Councillor Murray said that she would be very happy to do that.

Question C – Nicholas Craddy, of St Mary Hoo, asked 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.

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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?"

In response Councillor Maple put on record his thanks to the Planning Committee and planning officers. The Committee was run on a quasi-judicial basis which meant no political whipping and often there would be unanimity from all Committee Members. Sometimes Members from different political would vote in different ways.

The role of a ward Councillor at the Committee was a very important one. In Medway, the only people allowed to address the Planning Committee were the ward Councillors. In some other councils there could sometimes be an attempt to build a consensus amongst residents with a resident allowed to address the Committee for 3 minutes.

The role of a Vice Chairperson was critical for democracy with them having a role to play in ensuring that work goes forward and individual items considered, with Vice Chairpersons needing to be able to separate their personal views from those of the Committee as a whole.

Councillor Maple recognised that the work of planning committees could sometimes be frustrating and this was not helped by Medway currently having a Local Plan that was more than two decades old. He said he had absolute confidence in Councillor Jones as Vice Chairperson and considered that he was doing a good job along with the new Chairperson of the Planning Committee, Councillor Stamp. He thanked all Committee members for the work they do on a very regular basis.

Nicholas Craddy asked the following supplementary question:

'At the last Planning Committee meeting, the ward councillor for All Saints ward, Councillor Spalding, raised the matter of missing documents and information, including pre-application communications, as referred to earlier. Looking at the Portal, these documents have still not been uploaded to the Portal by the planning department. Even if they are uploaded now, nobody is able to make any representation about them. People might wonder what the Planning department has to hide.'

Does the Leader of the Council have confidence in the Medway Planning team, which of course includes the Portfolio Holder and Chair of Planning?'

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Councillor Maple said that he had confidence in the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Committee as well as all Members of the Committee. The Committee met more regularly than other Council committees and had to read hundreds of pages of documents. Of the Planning Committees Councillor Maple had seen or participated in as ward Councillor, he considered that the Committee had done a very good job.

If there were specific documents that had been not made available, officers and the Head of Planning would be asked to look into that.

Councillor Maple had absolute confidence in Medway's Planning department. Developers, residents and others said that when they were dealing with Medway, they were dealing with some of the best officers when it came to this particular issue. He considered that the team did a great job in delivering committee papers, delivering hundreds of decisions and also the large public consultation on the Local Plan.

Question D – Matt Nightingale, of Cuxton, asked 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?”

Councillor Curry said that the Council was committed to promoting Active Travel and this was demonstrated by the emerging Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, which would provide a plan for the delivery of improved walking and cycling routes across Medway.

It was recognised that pedestrian and cycle links between Cuxton and Strood were not as good as they might be and there were significant physical and financial challenges associated with improving existing routes along the A228, or via the existing public rights of way adjacent to the River Medway. The delivery of a pedestrian and cycle route through the adjacent Cuxton Marina site was supported, in principle, but this presented challenges as it required the agreement of the landowner, Network Rail as an adjoining landowner, and potentially, wider acceptance of any proposals to redevelop the Marina site. Pre-application discussions had taken place and should a planning application

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for the redevelopment of this site be forthcoming, it would be ensured that every effort was made to progress this important link.

No supplementary question was asked as Matt Nightingale was not present.

Question E – Cat Jamieson, of Rochester, asked 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?”

Councillor Paterson responded to the question as road safety now came under his Cabinet Portfolio. He considered the issue of safe journeys to school to be of the utmost importance and was proud of the work being undertaken at nine locations in Medway to introduce the next phase of school streets.

As a local ward Councillor, along with his ward colleagues, Councillor Paterson had consistently raised concerns about the arrangements for pedestrian access to Rochester Riverside School, including prior to opening to pupils in September. Despite being a recently constructed road layout, the area did not lend itself to the sort of School Street style intervention that had already transformed active journeys to seven Medway schools. These pedestrian access issues were exacerbated by the fact that Gas House Road was currently the only vehicular access point to Rochester Riverside and would remain so until the completion of further phases of the development.

Councillor Paterson had requested that officers explore whether the configuration of the traffic signals could be altered to provide a separate phase dedicated to pedestrians. As part of this, traffic and road safety assessments would be undertaken to understand what impact changing the signals would have on the rest of the junction and design processes undertaken would identify additional infrastructure needed. This work had already commenced and there would be an ongoing dialogue with officers as they work through the technical issues involved.

No supplementary question was asked as Cat Jamieson was not present.

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Question F – Ralph Allison, of Twydall, asked 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?”

In response Councillor Curry said that the Council, as part of a recently completed study on greenspace provision, had included allotments as a specific module. Current provision was being assessed and the study would then recommend how the shortfall of provision may be addressed.

Due to the topography and population distribution in Medway, it was not always possible to provide allotments close to where people wanted them in already densely populated urban areas. The Council over the next year would be exploring a range of options such as new allotment provision aligned with development and Community Growing schemes, such as the provision being worked on at Cozenton Park in Gillingham. This was a hugely important area of work that Councillor Curry was personally committed to.

No supplementary question was asked as Ralph Allison was not present.

Question G – Onyx Rist, of Rainham, asked 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?”

In response Councillor Prenter thanked Onyx Rist for bringing the situation to her attention. She said that she would write to the developers regarding the issue on behalf of residents concerning freedom of choice of service provider.

Councillor Prenter asked Onyx Rist to send her further information, or details regarding the residents, who may require support with the current arrangements on the Otterham Park development.

No supplementary question was asked as Onyx Rist was not present.

Question H – Alan Wells, of Chatham, asked 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?’”

Councillor Murray thanked Alan Wells for raising the issue, which was important to many in the community, both those with young families and to older children and adults who had more complex disabilities. Conversations with the Changing Places Toilets (CPT) team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), had not previously given any indication that there would be further specific funding being made available for Changing Place Toilet (CPT) Facilities. Officers were in regular contact with the CPT Team and would continue to explore the increasing provision if funding became available for potentially more and better CPT facilities across Medway.

Councillor Murray would ask the team to report back on the condition of the existing CPTs given the assertion that some had inadequate facilities because it should be ensured that CPTs are safe and those who needed to use them should not be deterred from doing so. As not all were installed by the Council, standards would vary. The CPT at the Pentagon Shopping Centre had been

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moved to the upper floor and the facilities there had been upgraded and improved.

In July 2024, a CPT, funded by DLUHC had been completed at the University of Greenwich Pembroke Building. This facility was delivered to the current BS 8300 Standard for CPT facilities. It had been fully registered as part of the funding conditions with Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) and was now available to the students/public that had a RADAR Key.

In addition to this facility, a CPT had been installed in the new Cozenton Park Sport Centre that opened in July 2024. This had not been registered with MDUK as it was not funded by DLUHC but this could be explored to see if it could be formally registered and displayed on their website.

No supplementary question was asked as Alan Wells was not present.

Question I – Mike Evans, of Rochester, asked 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?”

At the request of the questioner, Councillor Maple provided an answer. He thanked Mike Evans and the team at Medway Food Bank and said that he and a number of other Councillors had visited the food bank on World Food Bank day and that this had provided the opportunity to thank those involved in its work.

The Essentials Guarantee campaign was a long held ambition and part of the conversation around ensuring that food banks would no longer need to exist within the community. The new Government’s manifesto was very clear that it had pledged to grow the economy but ultimately move the need for emergency food to no longer be within the local community. Councillor Maple considered that the Essentials Guarantee was part of that programme, He urged colleagues visiting the Medway Food Bank to have a look at some very powerful testimony there from individuals within the community. He was prepared to work with Medway foodbank to look at making a declaration of support for the Trussel campaign.

Mike Evans asked the following supplementary question:

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'Could I just ask Councillor Maple, how you'll take this forward and if writing to DWP or the Treasury, might you consider advancing the moral case for everyone being able to afford life's essentials but also the massive saving it will accrue to the NHS and social services if everyone is able to afford life's essentials. I know that the CEO of Barnardo's, Lynn Perry, has said that the best way to reduce the government's very substantial social care bill would be an increase in social security payments.'

Councillor Maple said he was very pleased to have seen Ruth from Mike Evans' team at the Home Start AGM on the day before the Council meeting. She had made the important point that nationally, Trussell, were changing their strap line to "together with Trussell". In the spirit of cooperation, Councillor Maple would want to work closely with Medway Food Bank to understand the specifics on how this could impact the residents of Medway if such a declaration was made. He said that he would be happy to organise a meeting with Mr Evans and colleagues, along with the relevant Cabinet Members. This was a meeting that he looked forward to getting in the diary as soon as practically possible to continue that conversation.

Question J – John Castle, of Chatham, asked 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?"

Councillor Curry said that the Council was in the latter stages of developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which would provide a ten year plan for the delivery of cycling and walking interventions, to support the uptake of Active Travel in Medway. This aligned with one of the sub-priorities within the One Medway Council Plan, which sought to: *"Provide improved opportunities to walk, cycle, use public transport and electric vehicles, reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality"*.

Officers were also in early discussion with businesses on Medway City Estate in line with an estate-wide Travel Plan. This was linked to a Section 106 funding contribution, with the objective to promote non-car accessibility initiatives.

It was recognised that the River Medway was at the heart of Medway's identity but was arguably an under used or under appreciated asset. Focus was therefore on the development of the emerging River Strategy. This would set out a proposed vision, strategy and delivery plan for the future use of the river, including key investment opportunities. This would enable the river to play a more significant role in supporting economic growth and contributing to the life and experience of our communities in Medway. One key aspect would be walking alongside the river.

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The suggestion of an active travel link between Sun Pier and Medway City Estate was appreciated and was something that would be considered further, in accordance with the workstreams that had been mentioned.

John Castle asked the following supplementary question:

‘Following on the Active Travel scheme, other places of similar size to Medway have implemented a cycle hire scheme. Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that working with partners and sponsors to deliver a scheme in Medway would bring a lot of benefits to residents and visitors.’

Councillor Curry said he had looked at cycle hire schemes in some detail in the UK and around the world. Part of the problem was who operates them and how they are operated. The issue was a complex issue, not different from the operation of EV charging on roads with similar types of challenges applying. One of the big issues was people asking what happens when the bikes get dumped everywhere and who would collect them. The issue had been given significant consideration and was not one for which a decision had yet been made.

Question K – Matthew Broadley, of Chatham, asked 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?”

In response Councillor Maple said that he had always been very supportive of the City of Sanctuary. The organisation locally had been fairly inactive post COVID so the starting point for the community of Medway would be potentially a re-ignition of that.

In other parts of the country there were examples of this, some communities around the UK had got universities of sanctuary so that would be a conversation as would council’s of sanctuary.

Councillor Maple was supportive of the principle but recognised that it could not be done in isolation, looking at this would be welcome. He had spoken with one of the existing Committee members from Medway City of Sanctuary and there was a recognition that there was inactivity at the moment, whilst noting that

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there had been a literal sanctuary during the last three years for people fleeing war.

No supplementary question was asked as Matthew Broadley was not present.

Question L – Jeremy Spyby-Stearns, of Chatham, asked 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.”

In response Councillor Maple said that he had been very pleased to give the opening speech of the festival. The Festival recognised industrial struggles forty years ago around the issue of coal mines and the impact of thousands of jobs being lost overnight.

Councillor Maple thanked Medway Trade Union Council, the lead organisers of the Festival and the CWU, who had produced a fantastic documentary, which he encouraged Members and residents to watch. It would shortly be available on YouTube. He also encouraged people to listen to Anthony Martin, who had performed some very moving songs.

In relation to the substantive question, this was not something that was being considered currently. The Council had a huge programme and there would continue to be delivery for the people of Medway.

Jeremy Spyby-Stearns chose not to ask a supplementary question.

361 Motions

Motion A – proposed by Councillor Wildey and supported by Councillor Tejan:

“Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

The Council notes:

- The Labour Government’s recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- Both Councillor Edwards MP and Councillor Osborne MP voted to remove winter fuel payments in the House of Commons on Tuesday 10th September 2024.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Medway and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

The Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Medway sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.

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- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

The Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Ahead of the Autumn Statement, request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Request that the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Council, sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all Members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Medway are supported in claiming their entitlement."

Councillor Murray, supported by Councillor Paterson, proposed the following amendment:

"Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

The Council notes:

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of ~~means-tested benefits like~~ Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves because of identifying a £22billion black hole in the nation's finances.
- Both Councillor Edwards MP and Councillor Osborne MP voted to ~~remove~~ target winter fuel payments to those most in need in the House of Commons on Tuesday 10th September 2024.
- ~~The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.~~
- ~~The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Medway and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.~~

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- Universal Winter Fuel Payments has been a neglected and overlooked benefit payment during the period of the last Conservative Government having sat statically at £200 and £300. Between 2010 and 2023 state pensions have risen from £97.65 a week to £221.20, and average combined energy bills have risen from £1076 to £1,834. The effective spending power of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to this has been greatly eroded.
- ~~The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.~~
- This decision will place an additional strain on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship. Since the announcement, applications increased by 152%. This is also a vital gateway to additional support for the most vulnerable pensions to other benefits such as help with NHS costs, including free dental treatment and travel costs for NHS treatment, help with the cost of glasses and contact lenses, Housing Benefit for renters, reduced Council Tax, Cold Weather Payments, and a Warm Home discount.

The Council believes:

- ~~That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.~~
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Medway sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. However, those on the full state pension who aren't now entitled to Winter Fuel Allowance are receiving just £41.40 a year less than someone on Pension Credit who is also in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 a year – a difference of 79p a week.
- It is regrettable that those over 75 who sit just above the Pension Credit cut-off suffer additional financial hardship due to the Conservative Party's broken manifesto commitment to protect free TV licences, limiting it instead to just those on Pension Credit.
- ~~The decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.~~
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers approach understands there are barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

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The Council resolves to:

- ~~Bring forward a Continue the Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.~~
- ~~Ahead of the Autumn Statement, request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.~~
- ~~Request that the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Council, sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all Members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.~~
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Medway are supported in claiming their entitlement.”

Amended motion reads:

“Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

The Council notes:

- The Labour Government’s recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves because of identifying a £22billion black hole in the nation’s finances.
- Both Councillor Edwards MP and Councillor Osborne MP voted to target winter fuel payments to those most in need in the House of Commons on Tuesday 10th September 2024.
- Universal Winter Fuel Payments has been a neglected and overlooked benefit payment during the period of the last Conservative Government having sat statically at £200 and £300. Between 2010 and 2023 state pensions have risen from £97.65 a week to £221.20, and average combined energy bills have risen from £1076 to £1,834. The effective spending power of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to this has been greatly eroded.
- This decision will place an additional impact on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible. Since the announcement, applications increased by 152%. This is also a vital gateway to additional support for the most vulnerable pensions to other benefits such as help with NHS costs, including free dental treatment and travel costs for NHS treatment, help with the cost of glasses and

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contact lenses, Housing Benefit for renters, reduced Council Tax, Cold Weather Payments, and a Warm Home discount.

The Council believes:

- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Medway sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. However, those on the full state pension who aren't now entitled to Winter Fuel Allowance are receiving just £41.40 a year less than someone on Pension Credit who is also in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 a year – a difference of 79p a week.
- It is regrettable that those over 75 who sit just above the Pension Credit cut-off suffer additional financial hardship due to the Conservative Party's broken manifesto commitment to protect free TV licences, limiting it instead to just those on Pension Credit.
- The government's approach understands there are barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

The Council resolves to:

- Continue the Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Medway are supported in claiming their entitlement."

A Member asked if the amendment submitted should be permitted on the basis that an amendment was a small or minor change or improvement and he considered that the amendment submitted was not small or minor.

The Assistant Director, Legal and Governance advised that the rules for amendments were governed by rule 11.3 as set out in the standing orders within the Council's Constitution. The only restriction was that the amendment must be relevant and only one amendment could be moved and discussed at the same time.

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, Field, Gurung, Hamandishe, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Jackson, Jones, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Nestorov, Osborne, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Price, Shokar, Stamp and Van Dyke. (28)

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Against: Councillors Anang, Barrett, Brake, Crozer, Doe, Fearn, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hyne, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Pearce, Perfect, Spring, Tejan, Mrs Turpin and Wildey. (20)

Abstain: Councillor Spalding (1)

Note: In addition to the Members named under apologies for absence, Councillor Khan was not present when the recorded vote was taken.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty:

The Council notes:

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves because of identifying a £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances.
- Both Councillor Edwards MP and Councillor Osborne MP voted to target winter fuel payments to those most in need in the House of Commons on Tuesday 10th September 2024.
- Universal Winter Fuel Payments has been a neglected and overlooked benefit payment during the period of the last Conservative Government having sat statically at £200 and £300. Between 2010 and 2023 state pensions have risen from £97.65 a week to £221.20, and average combined energy bills have risen from £1076 to £1,834. The effective spending power of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to this has been greatly eroded.
- This decision will place an additional impact on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible. Since the announcement, applications increased by 152%. This is also a vital gateway to additional support for the most vulnerable pensions to other benefits such as help with NHS costs, including free dental treatment and travel costs for NHS treatment, help with the cost of glasses and contact lenses, Housing Benefit for renters, reduced Council Tax, Cold Weather Payments, and a Warm Home discount.

The Council believes:

- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Medway sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. However, those on the full state pension who aren't now entitled to Winter Fuel Allowance are receiving just £41.40 a year less than someone on

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Pension Credit who is also in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 a year – a difference of 79p a week.

- It is regrettable that those over 75 who sit just above the Pension Credit cut-off suffer additional financial hardship due to the Conservative Party's broken manifesto commitment to protect free TV licences, limiting it instead to just those on Pension Credit.
- The government's approach understands there are barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

The Council resolves to:

- Continue the Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Medway are supported in claiming their entitlement."

Motion B – proposed by Councillor Shokar and supported by Councillor Mahil:

Councillor Shokar proposed an alteration to his previously submitted motion. In accordance with Council Rule 11.4.1, the meeting's consent was signified without discussion, therefore, the altered motion was considered as follows:

"Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on July 29th. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist and Islamophobic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up operations throughout the country in order to mend the damage caused by rioters.

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has strongly been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

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Council also recognises the swift, strong response from Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Prime Minister Keir Starmer whose rapid, well-publicised measures served to deter further violence.

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing building of positive communities. As the elected body closest to communities across our region, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for all those they serve, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

~~Council reaffirms that no form of racism is ever acceptable, including racism directed at the Gypsy Roma Traveller community~~ Council reaffirms that no form of racism or discrimination is ever acceptable, no matter a person's race, country of origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and this applies to all communities and individuals."

Altered motion to read as follows:

"Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on July 29th. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist and Islamophobic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up operations throughout the country in order to mend the damage caused by rioters.

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has strongly been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

Council also recognises the swift, strong response from Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Prime Minister Keir Starmer whose rapid, well-publicised measures served to deter further violence.

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing building of positive communities. As the elected body closest to communities across our region, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for all those they serve, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

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Council reaffirms that no form of racism or discrimination is ever acceptable, no matter a person's race, country of origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and this applies to all communities and individuals."

Councillor Gulvin, supported by Councillor Mahil, proposed an amendment to the motion as altered [There was a brief adjournment to the meeting in order to finalise wording]

"Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on 29th July 2024 and the attack on Lieutenant Colonel Mark Teeton at Brompton Barracks on 23rd July 2024. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist, ~~and~~ Islamophobic and antisemitic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom. Council notes that there were no outbreaks of violence in Medway following these events.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a small minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the spontaneous work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up operations ~~following the rioting throughout the country in order to mend the damage caused by rioters.~~

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has ~~strongly~~ been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

Council also recognises the swift, strong response from ~~Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Prime Minister Keir Starmer whose rapid, well-publicised measures served to deter further violence.~~ those working in HM Government, the Civil Service, Local Government and the emergency services who acted quickly to get disorder under control in many towns and cities across the United Kingdom

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing mission of building of positive communities. As the elected body closest to our communities ~~across our region~~, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for the whole community ~~all those they serve~~, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

Council reaffirms that no form of racism or discrimination is ever acceptable, no matter a person's race, country of origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and this applies to all communities and individuals."

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Amended motion reads:

“Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on 29th July and the attack on Lieutenant Colonel Mark Teeton at Brompton Barracks on 23rd July 2024. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist, and Islamophobic and antisemitic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom. Council notes that there were no outbreaks of violence in Medway following these events.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a small minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the spontaneous work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up.

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has strongly been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

Council also recognises the swift, strong response from those working in HM Government, the Civil Service, Local Government and the emergency services who acted quickly to get disorder under control in many towns and cities across the United Kingdom.

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing mission of building positive communities. As the elected body closest to our communities, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for the whole community, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

Council reaffirms that discrimination on the grounds of race or religion has no place in modern Britain, including Islamophobia and antisemitism. No form of racism or discrimination is ever acceptable, no matter a person's race, country of origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and this applies to all communities and individuals.”

Decision:

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

Council is saddened by the tragic killings in Southport on 29th July and the attack on Lieutenant Colonel Mark Teeton at Brompton Barracks on 23rd July

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2024. Our thoughts are with the families of those affected, the wider community and all those whose lives are impacted by violent crime.

Council is angered by the subsequent outbreaks of racist, ~~and~~ Islamophobic and antisemitic thuggery which led to violent protests and intimidation in parts of the United Kingdom. Council notes that there were no outbreaks of violence in Medway following these events.

Council welcomes the clear and unified message from government, police, councils, faith groups, charities, pressure groups and individuals that unlawful acts by a small minority will not detract from their important work of developing and maintaining cohesive communities.

Council applauds the spontaneous work of volunteers and tradespeople who turned out in force to deliver clean-up.

Council welcomes the respectful and joined up approach taken by key stakeholders to strengthen communities before, during and after the threat of riots across the country. This has been the case here in Medway with Kent Police working closely with Medway Council, our local MPs and other key Medway stakeholders taking a one Medway approach.

Council also recognises the swift, strong response from those working in HM Government, the Civil Service, Local Government and the emergency services who acted quickly to get disorder under control in many towns and cities across the United Kingdom.

Council re-commits to the unique leadership role it has in the ongoing mission of building positive communities. As the elected body closest to our communities, Medway Council will continue to be at the heart of delivering positive changes for the whole community, grounded in respectful partnership and meaningful communication.

Council reaffirms that discrimination on the grounds of race or religion has no place in modern Britain, including Islamophobia and antisemitism. No form of racism or discrimination is ever acceptable, no matter a person's race, country of origin, religion, sex, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and this applies to all communities and individuals.

Motion C – proposed by Councillor Pearce and supported by Councillor Murray:

“Wednesday 11th September 2024 marked the 200th anniversary of Thomas Aveling's birth - a pioneering Victorian engineer who grew up in Hoo and later established the world famous Aveling and Porter Company (with Richard Porter) at the Invicta Works in Strood.

Mr Aveling served as Mayor of Rochester between 1868 and 1869. During this time, he introduced many improvements, including allowing public access to the gardens at Rochester Castle and redesigning the layout. He also spearheaded

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the construction of both the New Corn Exchange, a public swimming bath and implemented improvements at Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School. Mr Aveling represented Strood and Frindsbury Ward on the City of Rochester Corporation and was, politically, an advanced Liberal.

Mr Aveling received the Knighthood of the Imperial Order of Franz Joseph (from Austria) and the Chevalier of the National Order of the Legion of Honour (from France). On 7th March 1882, he passed away aged 57 at Boley Hill House in Rochester. This followed a short illness from catching a chill/infection whilst on board his 28-ton yacht 'Sally'. He was a keen local yachtsman and sailing barge enthusiast and is laid to rest at St. Werburgh Church in Hoo.

This Council commemorates the life, the achievements, and the legacy of Thomas Aveling and pays tribute to him."

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

362 Leader's report

Discussion:

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

- The possibility of devolution of powers to local authorities and what this could mean in practice and the need for any increased responsibilities to be matched by increased resources.
- The development of Medway's new Local Plan and the review of responses being undertaken following the recent consultation. There had been effective cross party work and officers were thanked for their work.
- Two important inspections of Council services had recently been undertaken by the Care Quality Commission and by the Regulator of Social Housing. The results of these inspections were awaited.
- Cross party conversations being undertaken with a view to reducing the length of full Council meetings.
- Fundraising activities undertaken by Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin for Demelza Hospice were recognised as were Councillor Mandaracas and Khan's activities for One Big Family.
- The Paddock regeneration project in the centre of Chatham that had recently been completed.
- Recent events and commemorations in Medway, such as the International Dance Festival, the 40th anniversary of Wisdom Hospice, the 200th anniversary of Thomas Aveling, the Big Day Out love Gillingham event, the 40th anniversary of the Medway African and Caribbean Association, the Rainham Community Awards and Super Saturday, part of the child friendly Medway programme.
- Development of the Children's Assessment Unit at Eden House.

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- Updating of the Council's Cost of Living Plan and the extension of the Household Support Fund.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Round 3 which had received nearly 100 applications in Medway.
- Development of the Medway 2.0 transformation project.
- The forthcoming Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan referendum.
- Olympic gold medallist shooter, Nathan Hales, who is from Medway.
- Discussion and concern about some historic social media posts made by a Member of the Council
- The centralisation of some health services with some patients having to travel out of Medway.
- The Hoo Peninsula and North Kent Downs and potential for these to be designated as areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

363 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Pearce asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Does the Leader of the Council believe the Member of Parliament for Rochester and Strood should respond to constituent emails and letters from residents in my ward?”

In response Councillor Maple said that at the General Election, Medway had elected three new MPs to represent the local community in the Houses of Parliament. After having been in the spotlight for a number of weeks campaigning in advance of the election, the new MPs effectively had to set up a small business as that was the reality of becoming an MP.

All three local MPs were working hard for their constituents, but there were some challenges in finding the relevant staff and officers, which was a work in progress.

Councillor Maple considered it fair to say that there had been zero handover between the three outgoing MPs and the three incoming MPs. All MPs should respond to emails and letters, and all MPs were responding to emails and letters, as well as being present in the Houses of Parliament, attending the Chamber and Westminster Hall debates. These colleagues had made interventions there and other Kent MPs had hosted Westminster Hall debates.

Lauren Edwards MP held an adjournment debate on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. She was working hard, highlighting the work she had done as a Council Cabinet member, which Councillor Mahil was continuing. Her office had responded to over 900 emails already. This was compared to at least one example where a constituent didn't get a response for more than three years from the previous MP. The former Leader of the Council had not responded to an important employer for close to four years.

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Councillor Maple said that when he and the Chief Executive took up their posts they had responded very quickly and quick responses would continue. He was proud of the work that all three local MPs were doing for the residents of Medway.

Question B – Councillor Perfect asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Can the Leader of the Council please update the Council on conversations surrounding devolution?”

Councillor Maple thanked Councillor Perfect both for the question and for the conversations that had been had at their cross-party Leader’s meetings, which had been helpful. There had been a number of conversations surrounding devolution. An important Kent Leader’s meeting had taken place in Maidstone, There had been a number of individual conversations between Councillor Maple and the Leader of Kent County Council, Roger Gough, and their teams.

Councillor Maple had spoken to a number of Labour Group Leaders and Council Leaders and had undertaken other conversations with key stakeholders. One example of that was meeting with the Senior Leadership Team from the University of Kent. It had been made clear that all fourteen voices of Local Government from Kent and Medway should be around the table and at the appropriate time conversations would be had at Medway Council meetings, which may require a special Council meeting.

There would be different views on a Mayor/non-Mayor, on priorities and of what should be devolved. Those conversations continued and Councillor Maple paid tribute to Medway’s Chief Executive, officers and Corporate Management Team. A number of conversations were happening with, for example, the Chief Executives across the County of Kent to ensure that Leaders know what each other is doing and to ensure that action is taken at the appropriate time when deadlines are tight. There had been an appetite to get that in place and colleagues would be kept informed.

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

“Even though the previous Conservative administration left your Labour administration over £16M of reserves, of which you have already spent £6M to support the 23/24 financial year, and your administration is planning to use £14.7M of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to attempt to balance the budget for this year, with a further £16.3M in 25/26, what is your plan to return to a balance in the black, with restoring reserves to their previous amount, and when will this happen?”

In response Councillor Maple said that the situation inherited by the current Council administration was a budget based on reserves that was using additional budget to balance the books, a situation which was not sustainable. Some difficult decisions had been taken in the early months of the new

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administration. The important decision had been taken to utilise CIPFA, which provided the Council with a strong report including some key recommendations, one of those was the addition of the Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan, which had been published to ensure transparency. Delivery of the Plan was being worked on with there continuing to be difficult conversations in relation to the current and future financial years.

Budgetary pressures in a number of areas were increasing, which was not unique to Medway. Four key areas were Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Temporary Accommodation. As a unitary authority, Medway had to deal with all of these areas and pressure was mounting year-on-year, sometimes rapidly.

The Council had the FIT Plan, there were conversations around Exceptional Financial Support, CIPFA had been brought back in and a report was awaited which would also be published in order to be transparent and to demonstrate the professional advice and guidance received, which would be carefully listened to.

Question D – Councillor Kemp asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“Although the much-derided motoring restrictions in Rainham have been in place for several months, I have first-hand and a wealth of anecdotal evidence that the rules are continuously being flouted. For example, traffic illegally turning right from the A2 into Orchard Street; Cars and Lorries parking with all four wheels on the pavement; and cars parking in the loading bays whilst drivers use the ATM machines. There is a growing perception amongst residents that the regulations are not being enforced.

Can the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, release the information appertaining to Rainham, how many PCNs have been issued, including the corresponding amount of revenue that has been accrued since the inception of the scheme?”

Councillor Paterson said it was regrettable that some opposition Members had previously sought to undermine measures such as the Red Routes in Rainham, with a campaign that seemed to back selfish motorists, rather than standing up for the law-abiding majority. He hoped that this public expression of concern at a level of enforcement represented a three-point-turn and a recognition of how illogical and indefensible that position was.

Councillor Paterson said he was grateful for the opportunity to highlight the number of contraventions, the need for these interventions and that the culprits were being punished. There had been enforcement of the right-turn ban from the A2 onto Orchard Street since 5 February 2024 and the ANPR camera was fully operational. Between February and August, warning notices were issued to drivers who ignored the restriction. Since August, 1,347 Penalty Charge Notices had been issued and this had generated £30,675 in revenue to date.

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The Red Route scheme had been introduced in May 2024. The ANPR cameras were fully operational, and offences reviewed by a specialist team. Between May and November, warning notices were issued to drivers ignoring the restrictions, and therefore no revenue had been accrued from Penalty Charge Notices. 95 warning notices had been issued to date. From November 2024, Penalty Charge Notices would be issued to drivers contravening the red route restrictions.

Question E – Councillor Spring asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, the following:

“The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, the Deputy Prime Minister, stated on the 12 August 2024 that British people will not be given priority for social housing in favour of those who arrived in the UK illegally. This is not about being inhumane, it is about equality and fairness.

Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm to the Council that Medway Council will not give priority to those who arrived in the UK illegally ahead of those residents of Medway who are in need of social housing, such as pensioners or those who are unable to go into the private sector?”

In response Councillor Prenter said that the announcements made by the Deputy Prime Minister had been around effectively scrapping the previous government’s proposals in respect of eligibility for housing waiting lists, therefore maintaining the existing status quo.

Medway Council’s Allocations Policy detailed the eligibility criteria to access social housing and only those with recourse to public funds were permitted to join the housing register. Those without a status from the Home Office were not typically eligible for social housing.

Question F – Councillor Joy asked the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, the following:

“Following the major issue with the Medway Test English paper, for which you stated:

“This is the first year the English exam has been included within the Medway Test, alongside the Mathematics and Reasoning elements. The questions for each of the tests, and the amount of time required to answer them, is set by our provider GL Assessment. The English test is 30 minutes this year.

However, we appreciate that the guidance around the timing of the English exam could be clearer. To ensure this is the case moving forward, when we write to parents and carers to confirm the arrangements for their child’s test, we will also include advice on how long each test will last.”

It was also stated that as all children had the same issues that this year’s test would not be reviewed, even though children from outside Medway were not sitting the test for a further three days.

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The advice which was issued on timings stated that no test paper would last longer than one hour, (although not specifying a time). However, it was mentioned that GL Assessments were delivering the test, and their website was stating 50 minutes.

With Medway not being able to prioritise Medway children on this test, as found out by your predecessor, the then Councillor Martin Potter, and the fact that although Medway Council does not condone the use of tutors, although they are aware that this practice does take place, giving the children outside of Medway an unfair advantage over Medway children, can the Portfolio Holder please explain how they are going to ensure that Medway children do not suffer from this incident in the knowledge that the Council has not reviewed this immediately and knowing that some children will benefit from advance knowledge of the timing of the test?"

In response Councillor Coombs said that there were many resources for 11+ papers online, but it was not claimed that any of these resembled the Medway Test. The website of the resource mentioned in the question made no reference to the Medway Test and explicitly stated that timing of questions and number of questions may differ by area or Local Authority.

Medway's website stated that tests were written specifically for Medway. It was important to understand that Medway Grammar School's admissions criteria prioritised local children, because apart from a very small number of exceptions, grammar school places were offered based on the distance a child lived from a school. This meant that Medway children who achieved the minimum score would be offered places before children living further away, no matter how highly they may have scored. Councillor Coombs said it was unfortunate that no action had been taken by the previous Council administration to make sure that this happened.

The cut-off score to be eligible for a Medway grammar school was determined by the performance of Medway Children, and until this year had been adjusted each year to ensure that 23% of the Medway year 6 cohort would be eligible. A number of places were held back so that a further 2% might get through in review. In practice, the majority of these additional places went unfilled by Medway children, and instead went to out of area children. This had been changed, moving away from a flawed process which the previous administration had persisted with, and instead increasing the proportion of Medway children who met the minimum score to 25%. This had resulted in, during the current year, more Medway children than ever achieving the minimum score. This was 936 pupils, compared with 847 in the previous year.

Question G – Councillor Clarke submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

"Could the Leader of the Council please advise if he expects Portfolio Holders to respond in a timely manner to emailed questions from opposition Members?"

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I have not received any responses from Portfolio Holders to the enquiries I sent on 9 May (SC re moving traffic offences), 6 August (two - SC and VM re moving traffic offences), 22 August (VM re Rochester Airport) and 3 September (LP and AP re traveller encampments). Said enquiries related to resident matters in the Fort Horsted ward and were not political in their nature.”

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

Question H – Councillor Gulvin asked the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, the following:

“There is now a critical shortfall developing in the capacity of Medway’s schools to meet the needs of Medway’s children. A recent article in the Medway Messenger stated that there will be an estimated 207 too few year seven places in Medway’s non-selective schools and a further shortage of 260 in the year after.

Children living in Lordswood are already being sent to Holmesdale School in Snodland because of the lack of school places in Medway. This is resulting in an unacceptably long school day for them which can be overwhelming for many students.

What is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure that there are sufficient places in Medway’s schools for Medway’s students?”

In response Councillor Coombs said that any child living in the Lordswood area who is a Medway resident would not have been allocated a school in the Kent County Council area through the Medway admissions process. Any Medway child attending Holmesdale School would be there not because they were sent there, but because the parent had named the school on the application. Both Greenacre Boys and Walderslade Girls schools, which were the most local secondary schools to Lordswood, had places available in year 7, as did a few other schools around Medway. Parental preference was the reason for these placements.

There were some children living in Lordswood who were Kent County Council residents, and these children would have been placed by Kent County Council. Meanwhile, the Council was working with secondary school colleagues to create bulge classes and permanent expansion to provide sufficient school places, as set out in the Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy, which was due to be considered later in the Council meeting.

Councillor Coombs thanked school colleagues and said she was making sure that the demand for future housing from the Local Plan was aligned with school places through the infrastructure delivery plan, which educational officers were fully involved in. The Council would continue to explore all options for creating additional, appropriate school places to meet demand where and when required and place planning conversations with the Department for Education took place twice a year.

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

“Do you agree with the Labour MPs that voted to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance, and that Labour MPs should have had the courage to vote against this cut to our most vulnerable in society given this will lead to deaths?”

In response, Councillor Murray said that the winter fuel allowance changes had already been discussed at length earlier in the meeting and that she was surprised that opposition Councillors were not taking responsibility for the state of the economy.

Councillor Murray said that Labour MPs who supported means testing the fuel allowance understood that tough decisions to rescue the economy while still protecting the most vulnerable pensioner households, were necessary.

Councillor Murray suggested that time could be better spent supporting the local campaign to ensure that those pensioners in Medway who may be entitled to pension credit and the fuel allowance but were not yet claiming came forward to be helped to do so.

Question J – Councillor Campbell asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“What is the Council doing to encourage the sign up of Pension Credit among pensioners?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, had written to hundreds of Medway residents directly to encourage them to sign up for Pension Credit. All the normal methodologies through traditional, and also social media were being used to advertise that, in particular, the event taking place on Monday 21 October. Members were encouraged to share details through social media and other local networks.

Councillor Maple considered that the Council had done a great job. He put on record his thanks to Council officer, Gemma Gilley, who had stepped up and gone above and beyond. He also recognised Becky Waller, the Department for Work and Pensions Stakeholder Manager who had made sure that the event would be well supported. The local MPs offices were involved as were a number of fantastic voluntary sector organisations who supported the Medway community. In a short period of time, Medway was stepping up to the challenge to make sure that all possible support was available. This work sat alongside the existing support of the Household Support Fund and the recently updated Cost of Living Plan.

364 Annual Review of the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27

Background:

This report provided an update on the progress made against the School Place Planning Strategy 2022 - 2027, highlighting areas of demand for school places and made recommendations to ensure that sufficient good quality school places would be available through to 2027 and beyond. The report set out options to fund the proposals.

This annual review report and the recommendations in it were based upon the annual round of forecasting undertaken in April 2024, using the latest available data.

The report had previously been considered by the Cabinet on 1 October 2024, the decisions of which were set out at section 19 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Price, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council agreed the addition of £5.4m High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to the SEND capital programme and approved the addition of:
 - i) £600k to Rivermead at Stoke (9x589) to fund additional costs in the project as set out in paragraph 16.3 of the report.
 - ii) £200k to Danecourt to fund additional costs in the project as set out in paragraph 16.3 of the report.
 - iii) £4.6m to increase education provision for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- b) The Council agreed the addition of £798k of s106 funding to the Hundred of Hoo Academy expansion 9x592, as set out in paragraph 23.9 of the report.
- c) The Council agreed the addition of £21k to the capital programme for Pilgrim Primary School, as set out in paragraph 23.10 of the report.
- d) The Council agreed the addition of £35,799.51 of s106 funding to Greenvale Primary School (9x566) as set out in paragraph 23.11 of the report.

365 Medway Youth Justice Plan 2024-25

Background:

The report presented the annually reviewed Medway Youth Justice Partnership Strategic Plan, which was a strategic plan that formed part of the Policy Framework for Medway Council. The Plan had also been updated in line with guidance received by the National Youth Justice Board in March 2024.

Consultation had taken place primarily through the multi-agency Youth Justice Partnership Board, which was the main forum for governance and oversight of the Youth Offending Team in Medway and had good representation from all statutory partners and a range of non-statutory partners.

The report had previously been considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 August 2024 and by the Cabinet on 1 October 2024. The comments of the Committee and the decisions of the Cabinet were set out in sections 7 and 8 of the report respectively.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken and was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Price, supported by Councillor Animashaun, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council noted the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 7 to the report and the decisions of the Cabinet set out at section 8 of the report.
- b) The Council approved the Medway Youth Justice Partnership Strategic Plan 2024 – 2025.

366 Sports Centres Capital Investment - Virement of Underspend

Background:

The report sought approval from Council to use capital savings identified from an underspend on the allocated Cozenton Park Sports Centre budget, to undertake a range of improvements to Medway Park and Strood Sports Centre. Allocation of the underspend to Medway Park and Strood Sports Centre, together with the planned investment in Hoo Sports Centre and The Strand, would mean that all five sports centres would benefit from Council investment over the coming year.

This would increase the longevity of the centres, improve sustainability through increased income generation opportunities, and not require any additional Council capital investment beyond what was already committed. This created the potential for ongoing improvements to the Council's revenue budget

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position and aligned with the ambition to remove the operational subsidy required for the sports centres without increasing projected capital expenditure beyond that already within the capital budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Leisure, Councillor Gurung, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Mahil, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council agreed the addition of a new scheme to the capital programme for sports centre improvements, which would undertake improvements to Medway Park and Strood Sports Centre with the aim of improving income generation. This was proposed to be funded by £1.5 million capital investment savings arising from the delivery of the Cozenton Park Sports Centre scheme.

Note: Councillor Pearce requested that his vote against the decision be recorded in accordance with Council rule 12.6.

367 Pavement Licensing Policy

Background:

This report set out the draft Pavement Licensing Policy and proposed fees.

The report explained that amongst other provisions, the Business and Planning Act 2020 had introduced a new 'Pavement Licensing' regime to support businesses selling food and drink only, in order to support economic recovery and growth as Covid lockdown restrictions were lifted but social distancing guidelines remained in place.

It was implemented as a fast-track process in light of the reopening of premises following the disruption caused by COVID-19 and was initially due to expire on 30 September 2022, but later extended until 2023 and then again until 21 September 2024.

As the Business and Planning Act 2020 had been amended to include the ability to enforce food and drink premises putting table and chairs on the highway without a licence, Medway was now in a position to implement the Pavement Licensing regime in Medway.

The report had previously been considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 6 August 2024, the minutes of which were set out at section 4 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, supported by Councillor McDonald, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council approved the draft Pavement Licensing Policy, as set out at Appendix A to the report.
- b) The Council approved the proposed fees set out in section 8 of the report.
- c) The Council agreed the proposed review procedure set out in section 6 of the appended Draft Policy.
- d) The Council agreed for all powers and functions relating to Pavement Licensing as set out in the Business and Planning Act 2020, including any legislation amending or replacing the same, to be included within the existing delegations set out in the Constitution made to the Licensing and Safety Committee, and Assistant Director, Legal and Governance, respectively.

368 Statement of Gambling Policy 2025-2028

Background:

The report sought the Council's approval of the Statement of Gambling Policy 2025 to 2028. It presented the consultation responses received in respect of the draft revised Gambling Policy: along with an evaluation of each response; a recommendation as to whether to amend the draft revised policy statement; and, if so, in what way and to what extent.

The report had been previously considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 6 August 2024, the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 August 2024 and the Cabinet on 1 October 2024. The comments and decisions arising were set out in sections 6, 7 and 8 of the report, respectively.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, supported by Councillor McDonald, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council noted the responses received during the consultation.
- b) The Council noted the comments made by the Licensing and Safety Committee on 6 August 2024 and the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 August 2024 and the decisions of the Cabinet, as set out in sections 6, 7 and 8 of the report.
- c) The Council approved the Draft Statement of Gambling Policy 2025-2028, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

369 Review of the Constitution

Background:

This report set out a review of the constitution, for consideration and approval of the recommended changes to the financial limits at chapter 3, part 5 and the rules at chapter 4, parts 3 and 6.

The report explained that the Constitution is reviewed and updated on an on-going basis to ensure it remains fit for purpose including compliance with legislation, in accordance with Article 14 of the Council's Constitution.

As part of the on-going requirement to review the Constitution, the Chief Operating Officer had recently reviewed the Council's budget and policy framework rules, financial rules and financial limits, which had not been reviewed for many years.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Browne, proposed the recommendations set out in the report, subject to the removal of ex gratia payments to Members of the Council from the Financial Limits set out within Appendix 1 of the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council approved the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the removal of the reference to ex gratia payments to Members, as set out in paragraph 5.5(b) of Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) The Council approved the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the report:
 - i) Budget and policy framework rules (chapter 4, part 3)
 - ii) Financial rules (chapter 4, part 6)

370 Allocation of Committee Seats

Background:

This report set out the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees on a receipt of a notice from the Independent Group requesting a review following notification that Councillor Williams had joined the Independent Group on 16 July 2024.

The result of this change required the Council to allocate two additional seats to the Independent Group whilst the Conservative Group would lose two seats. Specifically, the Independent Group gained one seat on both the Appointments Committee and the Governor Ad-Hoc Committee, both at the expense of the Conservative Group.

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The Labour and Co-operative Group retained an entitlement to three additional seats on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to preserve its majority, in view of the seats for statutory voting co-opted Members on that Committee.

There were six unallocated seats to which none of the three political groups were entitled to.

Councillor Peake, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council noted the review of the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council as set out in section 4 of the report.
- b) The Council agreed the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- c) The Council agreed to remove the following Conservative Group Members from the following committees: the “relevant Spokesperson” from the membership of the Appointments Committee and Councillor Kemp from the membership of the Governor Ad-Hoc Committee.
- d) The Council agreed to add the following Independent Group members to the following committees: Councillor Crozer to the membership of the Appointments Committee and Councillor Mrs Turpin to the membership of the Governor Ad-Hoc Committee.

371 Appointment of Independent Persons

Discussion:

This report provided an update on progress made in recruitment of an Independent Person to investigate allegations that a Member is in breach of the Code of Conduct and recommended the appointment of one Independent Person.

The Localism Act 2011 required the appointment of an Independent Person and this appointment was required to be approved by the majority of the Members of the authority.

The Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Gurung, supported by Councillor Browne, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council agreed the appointment of John Greenhill as an Independent Person under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 with effect from 18 October 2024 for a period of 4 years, to carry out the

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functions required by section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 and where necessary, the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/881).

- b) The Council agreed that the fee for an Independent Person be set at £350 (£175 per half day).
- C) That Council agreed to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to agree the fee with the Independent Person on a case by case basis.

372 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 18 July 2024.

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

Members raised the following issues during debate:

- The development of and focus on governance and improving Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) at Medway.
- The effective cross party working undertaken by the O&S committees and the need to keep party politics out of scrutiny committees, including seating order.
- The work being undertaken by the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board to transform community health services and the concerns raised by Medway. The Health and Adult Social Care O&S had determined that the proposals amounted to a substantial change to health services in Medway.
- Good scrutiny work undertaken in relation to topics such as the Local Plan and Asset Management Strategy.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

Mayor

Date:

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