

Motions

Motion A – Councillor Etheridge has submitted the following:

The Council notes that on the 30th October 2024, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP, delivered the largest tax raising budget since the Second World War with the biggest burden falling on businesses. The £40bn tax raising measures included adding inheritance tax to farmers, as well as increases including inflation busting national minimum wage rises, national insurance increases and higher capital gains tax liabilities. The national insurance rises alone will cost business more than £24bn and will be devastating for the charity sector and vulnerable residents dependent on Council services provided by the private sector.

The Council further notes that each one of these measures affects families living in Medway who have worked hard to create businesses to pass on to their loved ones. The impact of the Budget has been a plunge in business confidence, economic output going into reverse, inflation increasing, and hiring rates down.

Medway's economy is dependent on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and it is important that this sector thrives for the future of our community and future economic wellbeing.

For farmers, this is especially galling as farming is capital-intensive with extremely low margins and will mean the end of family farming across the country. It will affect the country's food security, biodiversity and employment opportunities as farmers reduce investment.

The Council believes that the Labour government have committed shameful betrayal of working people and let down farmers by breaking their promise not to raise taxes nor introduce a family farm tax.

The Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at the recent Budget and call on the Government to stop the family farm tax.

The Council further resolves to request that the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment engages with local businesses and farmers to understand the impact of the budget and to better understand what the Council can do to support them.

Motion B – Councillor Shokar has submitted the following:

The horrific attacks on 7th October by Hamas in Israel have resulted in a war against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and on Lebanon. While the actions taken by Hamas cannot ever be justified, the current military campaign by Israel against the Palestinian and Lebanese people is unconscionable and cannot continue.

Over 46,000 people have been killed in Gaza, of whom around 60% are women and children, and over 3,000 people in Lebanon, also many of them civilians. The actual figures, however, are considered to be far higher. The capture and recapture analysis, presented in the Lancet Medical Journal suggests a 41% underreporting of traumatic injury mortality. A total death toll of over 180,000 could be expected when including indirect causes such as starvation, lack of medicines and disease.

The International Court of Justice has said there is a plausible case that Israel's actions amount to genocide and the United Nations has recently stated that Israel's blocking of aid in Gaza is genocide. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime, Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and ex-Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant for war crimes.

Many Medway residents are appalled and traumatised at what has been happening in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and have supported repeated protests here in Medway as well as joining the many huge demonstrations that have taken place in London over the last 15 months.

The UK is required by both international and domestic law not to supply weapons to States that are committing genocide and crimes against humanity, yet our Government has failed to stop all sales of weapons to Israel. BAE Systems, a major employer in Medway, is manufacturing some of those weapons. Though BAE Systems is an important asset in Medway, providing employment and much-needed technological apprenticeships, this doesn't make them immune to upholding international humanitarian law. It's also important to ensure Medway employees at BAE Systems are not involved in producing such weapons for such crimes.

An end to the fighting and international leadership to work for peace in the region is needed urgently and it is extremely important that Medway sends a clear message to the Government and BAE Systems in support of this. Medway has a history of showing solidarity for international citizens in times of conflict, as seen by the tremendous support for Ukrainians. To abandon the Palestinians at their time of most need would be morally indefensible. It's our duty to apply scrutiny and pressure to the full extent on those involved in providing weapons that are being used to commit mass atrocities. Failure to do so could imply a degree of complicity by the Council.

Therefore, the Council resolves:

1. To call on the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs:
 - a) to press all parties to agree:
 - i) to an urgent permanent, bilateral ceasefire in Gaza, Israel, West Bank and Lebanon and to work tirelessly to resume a just and sustainable peace process.
 - ii) to guarantee that international humanitarian law is upheld and that civilians are protected in accordance with those laws.
 - iii) to allow the Red Cross immediate access to hostages and detainees in Gaza and Israel and to ensure that all aid is allowed into the region including unfettered access to medical supplies, food, electricity, other fuel and water.
 - b) to suspend all arms exports to Israel given the plausible case for genocide and illegality of the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.
 - c) to implement sanctions including travel bans and asset freezes against those involved in maintaining Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
 - d) to exercise international advocacy for the right of return and compensation for all Palestinian refugees and their descendants.
2. To write to BAE Systems and ask them to:
 - Adhere to the "UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights" and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)
 - Cease their business relationship with Israel and ensure that no products are used to violate civil liberties or human rights overseas.
 - Commission an immediate internal report on whether their continued business relationship with Israel is compatible with international law or BAE Systems Product Trading Policy, knowing that Israel is committing war crimes and breaching international law.

Motion C – Councillor Mrs Turpin has submitted the following:

Chatham Docks is under threat of development from landlords Peel Land and Property, who continue to claim that the site is no longer financially viable, despite having used their ownership of the land to demonstrate their commitment to employment when applying for residential planning permission on the adjacent Chatham Waters site.

The Docks has a 400-year history but in last year's Regulation 18 consultation the Chatham Docks site appeared in the Council's preferred Spatial Growth Option - The Blended Strategy.

This Council notes that:

- Chatham Docks is a thriving commercial port which directly provides 795 skilled local jobs.
- The Docks indirectly supports an additional 1,440 jobs through the supply chain.
- The businesses located at Chatham Docks make a significant positive contribution to Medway's economy, with £89 million of annual investment into Medway. The Docks use environmentally sustainable methods to transport goods, which would otherwise be exported by road.
- The closure of Chatham Docks would have a disastrous impact on the employees and their families because they would either lose their jobs or have to relocate; and some of the businesses at Chatham Docks are physically unable to relocate due to the nature of their operation.
- Medway's Local Plan has not yet been approved, and previous iterations have been criticised for failing to designate sufficient levels of employment land.

This Council resolves to ask the relevant officers to consider to remove the Chatham Docks site from the Council's preferred option in the forthcoming Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft Plan to safeguard employment, skills and the local economy and re-designate Chatham Docks as solely for employment use before the Local Plan is submitted for approval.

Motion D – Councillor Spalding has submitted the following:

In addition to its rich military, industrial and power generation heritage, Medway has a long history of farming.

These are farms which provide award winning produce not just locally, but to major supermarkets too.

This excellence is not just restricted to Medway. Throughout Kent our farmers grow the necessities and the pleasurable.

A few miles down the road a family run farming business provides over thirty four tonnes of strawberries to the Wimbledon Championships.

Farming has been under threat from central government house building targets as landowners such as the Church Commissioners seek to sell off farmland to developers in the name of short term profit.

Now family farms face threat from the current government's changes to agricultural property relief.

This Council believes that farmland and family farms should be protected so they can continue to provide first rate produce to feed the nation and to provide a continuing green lung that is so vital in maintaining good air quality.

This Council calls on the Government to protect farmland and family farms by:

- a) Ensuring building and construction on Farmland only occurs in the most exceptional circumstances.
- b) Reverse the changes to Agricultural Property Relief.

This Council requests the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to jointly write to:

- a) The respective Secretaries of State stating this Council's wishes.
- b) The three Medway MPs asking them to lobby ministers to ensure the above.

Motion E – Councillor Field has submitted the following:

On the 23rd of December, a burst water main in Strood led to the loss of running water supply to over 1,000 households. The majority of homes had their supply reinstated on Christmas Eve, but come Christmas Day, 50 properties were still without a running water supply.

Many of Medway Council's staff will have been looking forward to their own Christmas break, but in the face of the crises affecting the people they serve every single day, mobilised to support to make sure people had the information they needed, worked with Southern Water to ensure people had access to bottled water, and even took the extraordinary step of opening up Strood Leisure centre on Christmas Day and Boxing Day to allow those still without running water the ability to take a hot shower.

This Council recognises the extraordinary efforts of all staff involved in providing this support and requests that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council write to those involved to pass on its thanks and gratitude.