

Public Questions

Question 7A – Peter Skudder, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, the following:

I hear that the travellers in Wigmore / Bredhurst have been given permission to stay, I am concerned as this could impact the value of our properties and have not seen any consultation with residents in the area, or any contributions that they are making to the local Council if the land was sold to them. How long will they be staying?

Question 7B – Robert Wyatt, of Cliffe, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

Could the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement please give an update on the Council's progress with pothole repairs to date including information about any additional funding from the Government to tackle potholes?

Question 7C – Carolyn Hart, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Could the Leader of the Council give an update on what is being done to support those who may need additional assistance but might slip through the net following the Government's decision to means test Winter Fuel Allowance?

Question 7D – Liubov Nesterova, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

What is the Council doing in terms of improving Gillingham High Street?

Question 7E – Sultana Bhatti, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

I have been made aware that a ceasefire motion continues to be opposed within the Labour Group.

The International Court of Justice found that there was a plausible case of Genocide as far back as January 2024 and the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for key Israeli individuals, including the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in November. These rulings were not made lightly and indicate grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

The Medway Palestine Solidarity Campaign has consistently lobbied the Council to call for a ceasefire, the banning of arms licenses with Israel (export and import) and for international law to be upheld.

Can the Leader of the Council please ask why Medway Labour continues to oppose any ceasefire motion being accepted onto the agenda at Council meetings, particularly as other councils, including Manchester and Maidstone, have passed their own motions, and continue to do so?

Question 7F – Saboor Ahmed, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

As a resident of Gillingham for 25 years, I understand the parking issues in the area very well. With much of the area under permit restrictions, and with pay and display charges up 185%, the cost of parking a car for local families, households and those using the High Street is becoming a significant burden, at a time when everything is going up. Furthermore, shopkeepers are saying the Council's increases in parking charges are impacting their businesses in the High Street, this was something that was raised again in recent months with the then Councillor for Gillingham South, and MP, Naushabah Khan. To date no action has been seen to be taken on these matters.

With all of the above in mind, I ask the Portfolio Holder to listen to calls to reduce the cost of resident parking permits and to reintroduce the free parking sessions for the High Street, therefore, will he now act to help local families with the cost of living, and to support local businesses?

Question 7G – Trish Marchant, of Gillingham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Will the Leader, Vince Maple, advise if, as part of the devolution changes, there is any intention to revise the election process to a fairer voting system which would be proportionate to voters' wishes, so that the electorate across the new unitary authority will be represented equally. Noting that at the 2023 locals, Labour took control of the Council with just 10% of the available vote.

Question 7H – Onyx Rist, of Rainham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

I would like to ask Councillor Vince Maple to ensure that Gillingham is protected in any decision regarding devolution. Gillingham's former Liberal Democrat councillors warned that the Unitary Authority, now known as Medway (our Council) would mean that Gillingham is forgotten. This has happened given the lack of investment that Medway Council has given Gillingham in comparison to Chatham or Rochester.

I want to ask Councillor Maple to rectify that, and ensuring that Gillingham gets the investment it desperately needs in any deal, in doing so, making sure any elections that may need to be postponed are quickly held within a matter of months?

Question 7I – Matthew Broadley, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

On 30th November, a Council leader addressed the Kent Association of Local Councils and spoke about the democratic deficit that the UK has in local government, particularly when compared to the rest of the world. This Council leader stated that should Kent switch to wider Unitary Authorities, this would not only exacerbate this democratic deficit, but would also reduce the democratic accountability of the system.

The English Devolution White Paper is set to almost double the existing democratic deficit, with the resident to councillor ratio in Medway expected to increase from approximately 3,500 to over 6,000.

Can you please confirm who it was that made those representations to the Kent Association of Local Councils?

Question 7J – Doug Bray, of Chatham, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

Under what rationale do you justify your request to delay elections and extend the Councillor terms, which is beyond the democratic mandate that residents voted for and in doing so explaining what steps will be taken to uphold democratic integrity and maintain public confidence?

Question 7K – Bryan Fowler, of Chatham, will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:

Mindful of the recent decision to grant a Premises Licence to an Off Licence in a designated Cumulative Impact Area, what assurances can you give to the Public Health Team, the Police and public, that Medway Council still supports the Cumulative Impact Policy?

Question 7L – Jeremy Spyby-Stearns, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Whilst I welcome the long overdue development of the site of the old Strood Civic Centre, I am alarmed to see no council housing being delivered as part of the development. We had the opportunity, through the Medway Development Company, to deliver a mixed-housing development that could have included a proportion of council housing, to accommodate some of those desperate families who have been on the council house waiting list, sometimes for years.

With the fire sale of the Union Place Car Park (Chatham) and Temple Street Car Park (Strood), it appears that we are missing opportunities to meet this housing demand. I can only assume that this is having a detrimental impact on the delivery of affordable and social/council housing across Medway as profit becomes more important than meeting local housing demands.

What measures are Medway Council taking to ensure that we do not miss these opportunities going forwards?