

## **Motions**

### **Motion A – 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.

**Please note:** Motion A was previously included on the agenda for the Council meeting held on 23 January 2025. Consideration of the Motion was adjourned to allow external legal advice to be sought. Due to this adjournment the Independent Group is therefore entitled to have this motion and an additional Motion, as submitted at Motion C, to be considered at this Council meeting.

**Motion B – Councillor Spalding has submitted the following:**

Abbey Court Community Special School is a school for those aged 3 -19 with severe, and or profound and multiple learning difficulties. I took up an invitation, as, I understand, did other members, to visit the school.

Meeting the head and touring the facilities was eye opening as was being told that over recent years, facilities have been modernised to ensure a state of the art educational learning experience is available, but this only caters for ages up to 15. It was evident some current facilities were cramped, inadequate and out of date. Although staff and those connected with the school do their best, there is now an urgent need to complete the modernisation of facilities so those pupils aged 16 to 19 have the benefit of the same experience. It was put to me a failure to modernise may see children transported out of area for their education.

The advantages of modernisation so there is a local facility are clear. As pupils move through the years, they can continue their education close to home in surroundings and an environment they have grown accustomed to thus providing a more settled and beneficial experience. There are the long term cost benefit considerations.

Accordingly, this Council asks the Cabinet to commission a detailed report from officers, following discussions between the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, and Abbey Court School, as to what is required, along with cost, to allow this modernisation to take place, with a view to utilising some of the significant cost savings from the changes to Innovation Park Medway to fund same. And, or, in the alternative, to organise and obtain alternative or additional funding sources so those children within the 16 to 19 year age group that require these educational services can continue their learning development locally in modern safe familiar surroundings.

**Motion C – Councillor Pearce has submitted the following:**

This Council resolves to only publish a Regulation 19 draft Local Plan for consultation, if supported with a completed and final Evidence Base, including:

- A completed and final Local Housing Needs Assessment
- A completed and final Employment Land Needs Assessment
- A completed and final Retail Needs Assessment
- A completed and final Strategic Transport Assessment
- A completed and final Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- A completed and final Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- A completed and final Viability Assessment
- A completed and final Developer Contribution Guide
- A completed and final Playing Pitch Strategy
- A completed and final Sustainability Appraisal
- A completed and final Habitats Regulation Assessment.

**Motion D – Councillor Finch has submitted the following:**

Introduction of a Collaborative Case Management System for Ward Work

This Council notes:

- That effective case management is essential for ward Councillors to represent and serve their residents efficiently and transparently.
- That currently, the primary tool provided for managing ward casework is Microsoft Outlook, which lacks the dedicated functionality of a proper case management system.
- That this absence makes it difficult to track progress, manage deadlines, record outcomes, and share case details where appropriate with fellow councillors or officers.
- That Councillors often handle complex, ongoing issues on behalf of residents, where clear records and continuity are crucial.

This Council believes:

- That councillors should be equipped with professional tools to carry out their responsibilities to the highest standard.
- That a modern, secure, and collaborative case management system would improve accountability, service delivery, and continuity, especially when multiple Councillors are working on the same issue or in the same ward.
- That investing in such a system would enhance residents' confidence in local government and support councillors in their day-to-day duties.

This Council resolves:

- To request that the Chief Executive and relevant officers investigate and report back on options for implementing a dedicated, collaborative case management platform for ward Councillor casework.
- To explore systems that allow for shared access between ward Councillors, basic tagging and categorisation, secure storage of sensitive resident information, and case progress tracking.
- To consult with Councillors across parties to identify key requirements for such a system, ensuring it is fit for purpose and simple to use.

**Motion E – Councillor Murray has submitted the following:**

**Changes to Welfare Benefits**

Over 17,600 Medway residents receive Personal Independence Payment (PIP), a benefit designed to help with the additional costs associated with disability, such as transport, equipment, and support, regardless of employment status. A further 7,600 residents receive the health-related element of Universal Credit (UC), intended to support those unable to work due to serious health conditions.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the number of working-age individuals claiming health-related benefits. Spending on these benefits has risen from £36 billion in 2019–20 to £48 billion in 2023–24, with projections indicating a further increase to £63 billion by 2028–29. This trend is notably large in the UK compared to other developed countries. The Office for Budget Responsibility projects that, without reform, spending on health-related working-age benefits could rise by over £15 billion by 2030.

Council acknowledges the Government's Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper and Spring Statement 2025 proposals to reform health-related benefits, including:

- Reducing the UC health element for new claimants from £97 to £50 per week starting April 2026.
- Freezing the health element for existing claimants until 2030, resulting in a real-terms income reduction for many.
- Changing eligibility criteria for individuals under 22, while introducing new support for those with potential to return to work.

At the same time, the standard allowance of Universal Credit is set to increase above inflation from April 2026, reaching CPI +5% by April 2029. UC has not seen a substantial real-terms increase since its inception.

While recognising the need for a sustainable welfare system, Council is concerned that the current structure may inadvertently create financial disincentives to work. In some instances, individuals may find themselves better off receiving health-related UC than standard UC, potentially discouraging a return to employment. The current system for PIP assessment is equally not fit for purpose, with people waiting up to two years for appeals, the vast majority of which are upheld. Reforms should ensure that work is financially advantageous, while maintaining essential support for those genuinely unable to work.

Council believes that rather than relying solely on reactive welfare spending, there should be a focus on proactive investment in public health, mental health services, social care, and employment support. Such investments can help prevent health deterioration and assist more individuals in remaining in or returning to work.

Furthermore, any changes to benefits must be approached with caution. Over 900,000 children in the UK live in households receiving health-related Universal Credit. Reforms must not exacerbate child poverty or diminish the independence of

individuals with long-term conditions. It is imperative that those with genuine needs are protected and do not experience a decline in income or well-being.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to express concern about the potential effects on vulnerable residents and seek assurances that individuals with genuine health needs will not be adversely affected.
- Write to Medway's Members of Parliament to highlight these concerns and request that they seek further clarity and safeguards in Parliament.
- Collaborate with local disability and advice organisations to assess the impact of any changes on residents.
- Respond to the Government's consultation on the *Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working* green paper in due course
- Continue to support affected residents by directing them to relevant advice services, advocacy support, and financial assistance where available.
- Monitor the potential social and financial implications of the proposed changes on local services and ensure this is considered in future planning.

**Motion F – Councillor Lawrence has submitted the following:**

The Council notes that:

- The people of Medway are rightly concerned that the roads in our authority are in a poor condition and despite some limited work since the administration took control of the Council, no-one can doubt that there remains much to do.
- Whilst the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Community Safety and Enforcement has been concerned with imposing red routes and cameras around schools in a vain attempt to raise revenue, the roads continue to deteriorate due to the Administration's incompetence.
- The Leader of the Council has acknowledged that the people of Medway are "deeply unhappy" with the state of the roads. This reflects a recognition of the problem's severity.
- The Council's performance under this Administration has fallen off a cliff, as demonstrated below:

Pothole Repairs Completed

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025*
8,613	13,901	15,630	4,315

\* 10 months

- The Cabinet has not only reduced the budget for pothole repairs but has also managed to underspend the highways budget for 2024/2025 by £575K despite £401K extra resources provided by the Government.

The Council requests that:

1. The Cabinet considers to reallocate the underspend for 2024/2025 so it is carried forward into 2025/2026.
2. The Portfolio Holder publishes a detailed plan within 30 days setting out to residents of Medway how he intends to fully utilise the resources available to the Council, preferably with clear targets for the number of pothole and carriageway repairs to be undertaken in 2025/2026.
3. The Portfolio Holder sets out how he intends to use the additional £1,289,000 made available by the Government for 2025/2026.

**Motion G – Councillor Shokar has submitted the following:**

**Protecting disability benefits**

Council recognises that over 17,600 Medway residents receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP), a benefit designed to assist individuals with the unavoidable costs associated with disability, regardless of employment status. Many disabled individuals rely on PIP to cover essential expenses such as transportation to work, necessary equipment, and social care costs. Additionally, Universal Credit supports 7,600 residents with severe health problems through a health-related element.

Council condemns the recent announcement by the Government in their Spring Statement regarding severe cuts to disability benefits, which total £6 billion, including:

- Reducing the health element of Universal Credit for new claimants from £97 to £50 per week starting April 2026.
- Freezing the health element for existing claimants until 2030, resulting in a real-terms income loss for over 2 million households.
- Restricting access to the health element for individuals under 22.
- Introducing stricter assessments for PIP, which could disqualify an estimated 370,000 people with disabilities, reducing their payments by an average of £1,720 annually.

These measures will force many disabled individuals into unsuitable work, moving those unable to work into the main Universal Credit category, risking loss of financial support and potential sanctions. Removing PIP for some disabled people will mean they will no longer be able to work, the opposite of the government claim. This will exacerbate the already high rates of material deprivation faced by disabled residents, many of whom are unable to heat their homes, are behind on bills, or face food insecurity. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that 900,000 children live in households receiving health-related Universal Credit. The last Conservative government's austerity measures since 2010 have disproportionately impacted those with disabilities and in poverty, contributing to the tragic loss of hundreds of thousands of lives in the UK. (Research by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and the University of Glasgow, published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, shows that their austerity measures were linked to 334,327 more deaths than would have been expected between 2012 and 2019.)

Furthermore, Council notes that plans to cut £18 billion in disability benefits between 2016 and 2021 resulted in minimal savings of only £0.8 billion, as these cuts ultimately shifted costs to other areas of the public purse. The government's current plans to cut £6 billion from disability benefits could place additional financial strain on our already cash-strapped Council.

Council believes these changes represent an attack on those with disabilities and health conditions, undermining their independence and dignity. They violate the Government's manifesto commitment to co-produce disability benefits rules with disabled individuals and their organisations. Rather than facilitating employment, these cuts threaten to deepen poverty, inequality, and social isolation among some of the most vulnerable members of our community, especially amid the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions expressing the Council's grave concerns about the impact of these changes and urging them to reverse their decision to target those with disabilities and health conditions with cuts to their support payments.
- Write to all our local MPs to oppose these unfair changes to the welfare system and raise concerns in Parliament about their impact on disabled constituents.
- Work with local disability organisations to access and publicly report on the impact these changes will have on disabled residents.
- Explore ways to support disabled residents locally, including signposting them to advice, advocacy services and hardship funds.
- Ask the Council's scrutiny function to convene a Task & Finish Group to identify likely impacts on the local population and to assess the likely demand for support from the Council and its local partners.
- Write to the Chancellor, expressing the Council's concern around these plans and urge the Government to reverse the decision and instead focus on sustainable and fair economic policies rather than punishing those who need support the most.

This Council stands in full solidarity with disabled people and calls on the Government to reverse these damaging proposals immediately.