

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Medway Council**  
**Thursday, 14 April 2011**  
**7.00pm to 9.57pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Present:** The Mayor (Councillor Brake)  
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hewett)  
Councillors Andrews, Avey, Baker, Kenneth Bamber,  
Janice Bamber, Bhutia, Bowler, Brice, Bright, Burt, Carr,  
Rodney Chambers, Mrs Diane Chambers, Chitty, Clarke, Crack,  
Doe, Etheridge, Filmer, Gilry, Godwin, Tony Goulden,  
Val Goulden, Griffin, Griffiths, Gulvin, Harriott, Haydock, Hicks,  
Hubbard, Jarrett, Jones, Juby, Sheila Kearney,  
Stephen Kearney, Kemp, Mackinlay, Maisey, Maple, Mason,  
Murray, O'Brien, Reckless, Royle, Ruparel, Shaw, Smith,  
Sutton, Wicks and Wildey

**In Attendance:** Neil Davies, Chief Executive  
Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults  
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and  
Culture  
Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer  
Mick Hayward, Chief Finance Officer  
Richard Hicks, Assistant Director, Customer First, Leisure,  
Culture, Democracy and Governance  
Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services  
Deborah Upton, Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate  
Services/Monitoring Officer

**964 Record of meeting**

The records of the meeting held on 24 February 2011 and the meeting held on 3 March 2011 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as correct.

**965 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chishti, Stamp and Hunter.

**966 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Tony Goulden declared a personal interest in any reference to Chatham Dockyard as he is a trustee.

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Councillor Griffiths declared a personal interest in any discussion that may take place during the course of the meeting with reference to Medway Community Healthcare because he is a Non-Executive Director of the Trust.

Councillor Sutton declared a personal interest in any reference to Napier Road School as she is a governor.

Councillor O'Brien declared a personal interest in any reference to the NHS as members of his family work in the NHS.

### **967 Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor stated that, as this was the last meeting of the Council before the local elections on 5 May he wished to place on record a vote of thanks for the contribution of those Councillors who had decided not to stand for re-election.

Later in the meeting Councillor Andrews presented to the Mayor, to accept on behalf of the Council, a boxed gavel and block, which he had made. The Mayor welcomed Mr Dance, representing the Independent members of the Council's Standards Committee, to the meeting.

He then reminded Members that Council meetings were now recorded to assist in producing an accurate record of supplementary questions and answers to questions. He also reminded Members that a written copy of amendments to any proposals should be provided to the Head of Democratic Services.

Councillor Kenneth Bamber then took the opportunity to thank Members and officers for their letters, emails and flowers sent to him and Councillor Janice Bamber following the recent sad death of their son.

### **968 Leader's announcements**

There were none.

### **969 Petitions**

The following petitions were received and referred to the appropriate Directors:

Councillor Bhutia presented a petition with 280 signatures objecting to the development of a mobile telephone aerial and equipment on the site Bankside/Links.

Councillor Bowler presented a petition with 38 signatures requesting that Binnacle Road be made into a one-way road.

Councillor Carr presented a petition with 130 signatures requesting the Council to provide a public bus service to run along Childscroft Road, Berengrave Lane and Chalky Bank Road, Rainham.

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Councillor Hubbard presented a petition with 69 signatures requesting a bus shelter at the bus stop (outbound from Strood) at the junction of Fulmar Road/Darnley Road.

Councillor Juby presented a petition with 42 signatures requesting the Council to reduce the height of the humps in the Ridgeway.

Councillor MacKinlay presented a petition with 235 signatures requesting that the 20p charge in the Pentagon toilets is scrapped at least until the new free toilets are opened in the new bus station. The petition also requested that the toilets in the bus station upstairs are re-opened.

Councillor Mason presented a petition with 20 signatures requesting double yellow lines in Wainscott Walk both sides from Wainscott Road to outside of 1 and 22 in case of emergency fire ambulance and refuse collections.

Councillor Sutton presented a petition with 36 signatures requesting the Council to re-develop the disused play area on Ottway Street into a communal garden that could be divided up into allotments.

### 970 Public questions

**(A) Chris Irvine, on behalf of Kelly Tollhurst of Borstal, asked the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following question:**

“What are the Council’s initiatives to support businesses in Medway?”

Councillor Chitty responded by thanking Miss Tollhurst for the question. She stated that in spite of the need for the Council to make substantial savings the Council took its responsibilities regarding economic development seriously in Medway. The current climate supporting local businesses was seen as very important. She stated that the Economic Development Unit delivered a number of initiatives based on the principle that start up and established businesses require the following:

- Impartial business advice – Economic Development currently had a Service Level Agreement with Business Support Kent to support this and the Council was a partner in the Kent and Medway Innovation and Growth Team who had a specialist advisor based at the Innovation Centre
- Business accommodation with flexible terms – This was very important as this allowed businesses to grow in the best way possible. The Council owns and runs 3 workspace sites totalling 107 units. This included the new Innovation Centre, which provided state of the art IT services
- Start up and growth funding – Medway Council Partners for Growth scheme provided interest free loans to establish growth

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businesses and since Autumn 2009 had been supporting start ups with business planning training and £1,000 grants – 43 grants had so far been awarded. In total Partners for Growth had supported 197 businesses, levered a combined investment from the Council, the businesses and the Banks in excess of £10 million and protected and created 2726 local jobs.

Councillor Chitty explained that In Autumn 2009 Medway Council launched “Seeds for Business Growth” outlining 10 practical initiatives to support businesses during the economic downturn. In addition she listed the following initiatives:

- Micro Enterprise Graduate placement scheme
- Medway Apprenticeship scheme
- Medway Retail Champions scheme
- Employ Medway programme
- Transmarche Enterprise Network
- Eco-Advantage scheme
- Creative industries business support

She explained that this was designed to ensure that businesses got the support they deserved to create jobs and a good economic climate in Medway.

Chris Irvine asked a supplementary question about how the investment in a new apprenticeship scheme announced at the budget Council meeting on 24 February would help young people in Medway?

Councillor Chitty stated that this was a crucial area to concentrate on for the future and that the Council had an exemplary record for helping young people into employment and apprenticeships and had one of the lowest figures in the South East for young people who were unemployed. She stated that the Council, Connexions and other local partners had joined to form a partnership and that Medway was one of the first areas in the country to be selected for this initiative. A designated co-ordinator from the National Apprenticeship Service was working with the partnership over 100 working days to deliver pledges by 100 Medway employers to create 100 new apprenticeships. This was a government initiative but the Council would work towards those figures. The launch of the initiative would be at the Historic Dockyard on 19 May and was timed to finish on 7 October. The preparation and follow on would feature a marketing campaign to raise awareness. The Medway apprenticeship scheme was somewhat different. She stated that the £100,000 in the budget to support apprenticeship schemes had been match funded by European funds, although this had not yet been confirmed. The Employ Medway team from the Council were co-ordinating, supporting and mentoring young apprentices and once in employment they would work closely with Medway Education Business Partnership. The Employ Medway team had got 290 people into jobs via the Future Jobs Fund. 125 apprenticeships had been found in local

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businesses for 16-18 year olds and adult apprenticeships from 19 plus. This assumed that the European funding would be successful. What was important was the commitment and willingness to help young people to access the jobs market and help them to find a place in society.

**(B) Paul Rai of Strood asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community services, Councillor Doe, the following question:**

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services give an update on the Free Swimming initiative announced at the Budget meeting on 24 February 2011?”

Councillor Doe responded by thanking Mr Rai for his question. He stated that it was very early days since the introduction of free swimming for local under 11s and over 60s on 1 April this year. However he was pleased to report that so far, the feedback from the Council’s customers had been extremely positive and that many of them were in the process of applying for Medway City Cards (around 4,000 applications so far).

In terms of figures, between 1-9 April, he confirmed that junior swimming had increased by 15% compared to the week before. He anticipated that the increase would continue to grow with Easter and the summer holidays coming up.

The most interesting figure was for senior swimming, which had shown the most dramatic increase since the introduction of free swimming on 1 April which saw an increase of 51% when compared to the week immediately before.

Councillor Doe said that despite budget pressures this showed that the Conservative Administration had a commitment to public health and was discharging this extremely well.

Mr Rai asked a supplementary question by querying which Councillors had supported this excellent initiative?

Councillor Doe stated that this was an interesting question. He stated that as part of the budget everyone except the Labour group and Independent group supported it.

**(C) Isaac Igwe of Strood asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:**

“Conservative Councillors in Strood South ward have implied in a recent publication that if Council-subsidised bus routes are not used, they will become unprofitable and services are in danger of being withdrawn.

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What does the Portfolio Holder regard as an unprofitable bus route and should profit be the determining factor in providing vital public services?"

Councillor Filmer responded by thanking Mr Igwe for his question. He stated that the Council did subsidise a number of bus journeys at times or places where there was less demand if it was considered there was a social need for a service but no operator was prepared to provide it at their own commercial risk.

Whilst the Council did not consider the 'profitability' of the services that they supported financially they do rank the performance or value for money of all the subsidised bus services against a number of indicators. These included passengers per journey, cost per passenger journey, prime journey purpose and availability of alternatives both geographically and by time.

The Council's supported services serving Strood varied from single journeys per week to full day, Monday to Saturday services. There were 11 subsidised bus service contracts that serve the Strood area together with a further 4 operated in partnership with Kent County Council. The performance of service was comparable with other supported bus services in Medway.

He stated that, working with officers, he would continue to review the performance of financially supported services to ensure that they offered value for money.

Mr Igwe asked a supplementary question by seeking clarification about how many bus routes in Medway are being or had been amended or scrapped and with this potential reduction in services how the Council would ensure public satisfaction with local public transport?

Councillor Filmer stated that Medway Council had not scrapped any subsidised buses in this financial year. He stated that when looking at amended timetables there was some alterations relating to money Arriva received from the Department for Transport via the Council but he had every intention to keep the residents in Medway fully aware of bus routes and would minimise the affect on residents.

**(D) Wendy Purdy of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:**

"A recent survey by Which magazine reported that Medway's car parking charges are amongst the cheapest in Kent. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that this is true?"

Councillor Filmer responded by thanking Mrs Purdy for her question. He confirmed that a Which magazine survey in February 2011 said that Medway's car parking charges were amongst the cheapest in Kent. It cost as little as 50p to park in Medway compared to one pound in

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Canterbury or 90p in Ashford. This had come about because of the three year freeze on parking charges. The Council had also introduced free parking in the run up to Christmas and frozen residential parking permits for two years, which represented excellent value for residents of Medway.

Mrs Purdy asked a supplementary question about the reports that some local authorities were getting rid of the 9am start for concessionary bus fares and asked whether the Council had any similar plans?

Councillor Filmer responded by stating that there had been a lot of concern because Kent County Council had changed to a 9.30 a.m. start for concessionary fares. Notices had recently been placed in buses to explain that Medway Council had taken a decision to stay at a 9am start.

**(E) Josie Iles of Strood asked the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:**

“How much money is the Council proposing to invest in repairing potholes over the next financial year?”

Councillor Filmer responded by thanking Josie Iles for her question and stating that the over the past two years Medway Council had invested an additional £4m to improve roads, which helped resurface 96 roads and 91 pavements. The total budget was approaching £13m, which included capital investment.

Josie Iles asked a supplementary question relating to the amount that the Council had invested in the last two years and how many roads and pavements had been resurfaced?

Councillor Filmer apologised for not responding to Mrs Iles' previous question and explained that the Council had protected the budget for highway repairs and added an extra £750,000 for this year and the government had given an additional £500,000 so she could rest assured the potholes would get sorted out very quickly.

**(F) Naushabah Khan of Gillingham asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:**

“Given that 3,314 students received the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for the academic year 2009/2010 in Medway, how many fewer 16-19 year olds will receive grants through the government's 'enhanced learner support' scheme, which has a budget of only £180 million compared to the £540 million for EMA?”

Councillor Wicks responded by thanking Ms Khan for her question. He stated that the Educational Maintenance Allowance had never been the responsibility of Local Authorities. In fact the scheme had always been



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managed by the Learning and Skills Council and more latterly by the YPA where Capita had handled the administration.

Medway Council had always been concerned to ensure that young people were not deterred, due to financial concerns, from continuing in education and training post-16.

He stated that the EMA scheme was closed to new applicants from the end of December. The Department for Education published its consultation 'Financial Support for 16-19 year olds in Education or Training' on 28 March; the deadline for responses was 20 May so it was not yet known what the final scheme would be.

Under the proposals the most vulnerable would receive a guaranteed bursary of £1,200 a year, which was more than the current EMA. This group comprised children in care, care leavers and those on income support like teenage parents or young people with severe disabilities.

The remaining £165m would be distributed to schools, colleges and the Council's training providers – the consultation asks for views on three criteria for deciding how to award funding. These were the historic EMA, take up of free school meals at 15 years and using Index of Multiple Deprivation. Until the details of the actual scheme was known it was not possible to calculate how much would be allocated to each provider and thereby how much would be available to each young person.

Ms Khan asked a supplementary question requesting assurances that 16-19 year olds participation in education would not fall in Medway.

Councillor Wicks said that the Council had a good record for young people going onto post 16 education but he could give no guarantees at this stage. He did advise that funding of £75,000 had been provided for research into the effects of raising the school leaving age to 17 in the year 2013.

**(G) Chris Irvine of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:**

“Thanks to the Conservative led government, Medway Council has been able to freeze Council Tax this year. Are there any plans to repeat this excellent scheme?”

Councillor Jarrett responded by thanking Mr Irvine for his question and stated that thanks to the Conservative government the Conservative administration in Medway had been able to freeze Council tax this year and that would mean that households would benefit from up to £55 each year. He explained that the Labour Group had opposed this measure and Councillor Burt and Stamp, which was in contrast with some of the Labour literature, which suggests that Labour had frozen the Council tax.



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He condemned this statement. He said that the Conservative government had given assurances they would repeat this in future years.

Chris Irvine asked a supplementary question by asking how much lower Medway's council tax was compared to others?

Councillor Jarrett stated that the council tax was the lowest in Kent by some margin, on average £130 less and people in Medway welcomed that. It was also considerably less than that charged in Labour or Liberal run authorities such as Bristol, which charged its residents £1,338 at Band D and Nottingham which charged £1,332 some £200 higher than in Medway. He stated that Labour had forced up Council tax by over 100% and that the Conservative lead government in its first year had provided the means to freeze council tax. This proved that Conservatives provided lower council tax, better services and particularly in Medway's case, better value for money.

**(H) Tristan Osborne of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Councillor Mason, the following question:**

“Given the cuts announced to care for the elderly in the Medway Conservative budget, can I ask how many fewer people will receive free Council care as a result of the Council cuts in 2011/2012 when compared with 2010/2011?”

Councillor Mason thanked Mr Osborne for his question and stated that the Council had allocated sufficient funds to ensure that vulnerable elderly people were safe and well supported in Medway. Adult social care was considered to be ‘performing well’ by the regulator, the Care Quality Commission, and the Council intended to continue to provide high quality services. Older people who were eligible to receive free care last year would still be eligible to receive free care this year. The position had not changed in the new budget.

Mr Osborne asked a supplementary question about the pledge that Shaws Wood in Strood would be retained and asked whether any publicly owned care homes would be privatised over the next four years?

Councillor Mason responded by stating that he did not have a crystal ball and stated that the Council wanted to give value for money and be responsible for tax payers' money which was the responsibility that the Council had been charged with.

**(I) Tony Jeacock of Rainham asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:**

“Can the Portfolio Holder please tell me how much the Council will save in 2011/2012 by removing the Empty Homes and Efficiency Team Leader and two full-time employed Empty Homes and Efficiency Officers?”

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Councillor Doe thanked Mr Jeacock for his question. He stated that the Council was delivering a saving of £100,000 as a result of this change. This was a dedicated team located within the Private Sector Housing Service, which worked with owners to help bring their empty properties back into use and to provide energy efficiency advice to households. The team was particularly involved in administering loans previously funded by the Regional Housing Board to help owners bring properties back into use. This funding was no longer available.

Mr Jeacock asked a supplementary question about what the subsequent cost to the community and council would be with the inevitable result of homes being left empty for much longer thereby denying homeless families and inappropriately housed families access to decent accommodation and rendering such properties as magnets for anti social behaviour?

Councillor Doe stated that he did not recognise the basis on which the question was framed. He referred to work being undertaken by the government and energy companies promoting energy efficiency. The Council still had legal duties to keep properties secure where they were open for access and dealing with hazards. There was a target in 2010/2011 to bring 100 properties back into use and that had been achieved. There will be a target for 2011/2012 to bring 120 properties back into use while achieving a saving of £100,000 so the way in which the question was framed was misleading.

**(J) Tristan Osborne of Rochester asked the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:**

“Given the lack of clarity in the Tory budget over the funding of Sure Start; can the Portfolio Holder clarify the figure in cash terms for Sure Start provision in 2010/2011 and in the current budget for 2011/2012 and whether this has been an increase or decrease in cash terms and by how much?”

Councillor Wicks thanked Mr Osborne for his question but stated that he found the question ill-founded and clarified that in the Conservative budget the Council is maintaining Sure Start centres and not closing them unlike many other local authorities including Labour run ones. He stated that in fact there were only two authorities in the country that were not cutting their Sure Start budget, Medway and Northamptonshire. It was also clear from the budget papers who did not support the continuation of Sure Start funding in Medway and who voted against the continuation of Sure Start funding.

Mr Osborne asked a supplementary question and asked if there was a £4,000 cash reduction or cut and £28,000 real terms cut in Sure Start provision. He asked how much of the disabled children access to

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childcare budget and every child a talker programme budget would be cut this year?

Councillor Wicks responded by saying there were no cuts in the Sure Start programme and the centres and services that went with it. The budget was very substantial £6.93 m for Medway and remained unchanged from last year.

**(K) Tony Jeacock of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:**

“Now that the courts have ruled under the ‘Advertising Standards’ that Medway Council must remove any referenced logos and other unauthorised references to “Medway City Council” from their stationery and to desist from newly applying it elsewhere, can the Portfolio Holder tell me the total cost of putting the said references and logos in place in the first instance and the subsequent disposal of all such headed stationery?”

Councillor Jarrett thanked Mr Jeacock for his question and stated that he was unaware that the words Medway City Council had been used on any literature and because of that he was unable to answer the question.

Mr Jeacock asked a supplementary question by asking what justification Councillor Jarrett and his party thought they had in instigating the exercise in the first place and how they felt they could justify applying for City status when as a result of budget cuts under the current financial situation vital staff were being made redundant which would mean that empty homes would remain empty longer thus denying access to much needed rented accommodation at a time when the demand was on the increase?

Councillor Jarrett stated that the supplementary question was unrelated to the initial question and that Councillor Doe had already answered his supplementary question adequately earlier in the meeting.

### 971 Leader's report

#### Discussion:

Members received and debated the Leader's report, which included the following:

- Council tax
- Protection of front line services
- Regeneration projects
- Residential development at Victory Pier

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- Free swimming
- World Heritage Site bid
- Forthcoming festivals
- Strood academy

### 972 Report on Overview and Scrutiny activity

#### Discussion:

Members received a report on Overview and Scrutiny activities. The following issues were discussed during the debate:

- A request for car parking charges to be considered at Overview and Scrutiny
- Concern about the proposed reduction of Overview and Scrutiny task groups as it was felt these had been very valuable

### 973 Members' questions

#### (A) Councillor Sutton asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:

“ According to the latest (RICS) Residential Letting Survey, 40% more Chartered Surveyors reported rents rising rather than falling in the three months to January.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me what proposals he has that will alleviate that situation locally and how soon they will be executed?”

Councillor Doe thanked Councillor Sutton for her question and stated that the figures quoted related to the national figure but that he kept a close eye on the local picture. Rents for 1 bedroom properties for example fell by 5% but there had been a 3% increase for 2 bedroomed properties and no change for 3 bedroomed property rents.

While changes in rent levels did have an impact on tenants they did influence the willingness of private landlords to remain in and invest in the market and so help increase the supply. He stated that it was important that the Council offered a range of assistance to those households experiencing difficulties in meeting their housing costs. This could be achieved by working in partnership and funding a range of organisations, including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, and through the housing benefit and housing options services, which offered a range of advice and assistance in securing and maintaining tenancies. Specific assistance including the Court desk, HomeBond and Debt Advice was available which were effective in helping people to manage their finances.

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Councillor Sutton asked a supplementary question by asking about the Council disposing of the Team Leader and two supporting officers that assisted people to find suitable properties particularly bearing in mind the supply and demand and whether he felt that this would worsen the situation locally and if so if he would consider reversing the decision?

Councillor Doe said that the Council would be meeting targets with the present levels of staff. The situation would be monitored and if there was an increasing problem this would be tackled. He said that the situation was more to do with people's ability to pay rent and the housing benefit applicable to those rents.

**(B) Councillor Sutton asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:**

“As demobbed armed forces personnel and their families are now being treated as a key priority group for social and affordable housing, ahead of 'key workers', will the portfolio holder tell council what Medway Council is doing to put this into practice?”

Councillor Doe stated that the Council was aware of the contribution that those who have served in the armed forces had made and acknowledged the role of those considered as key workers within the community. He stated that in respect of affordable housing in Medway the priority given was primarily assessed in terms of those who were in greatest housing need, as set out in the Housing Act and relevant guidance, rather than prioritising on the basis of either current or previous employment or service.

However, through Medway Council's Allocations Policy, servicemen and women suffering medical or social problems that live in accommodation that was not suitable for their needs would receive additional priority based on those needs, as would members of the public.

Following recent announcements and changes to the allocation of affordable housing introduced through the Localism Bill there would be a need to review the Allocations Policy. The opportunities to award additional priority to members of the armed forces would be looked at following consultation with the public so that others were not disadvantaged.

In terms of shared ownership there had been a number of schemes specifically funded to support key workers into home ownership, these had now been merged with schemes open to all households looking to purchase a home.

He stated that the Government had also established a number of housing schemes that were available to the service and ex-service community, which although not run by the Council were actively promoted, including the Ministry of Defence Referral Scheme and Homebuy which had a priority status for certain Ministry of Defence personnel.

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Councillor Sutton asked a supplementary question relating to the Royal Engineers being based in Medway and being mindful of dangerous engagements in Iraq and Pakistan and whether the Portfolio holder felt that concerted efforts should be made to make sure that empty homes should be made available to them?

Councillor Doe explained that homes were left empty for a variety of reasons and by no means all of them would be suitable. He stated that the target for bringing empty homes back into use had been increased.

**(C) Councillor Crack asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:**

“Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services give the expected total cost to Medway and its residents of holding the Modern Pentathlon European Championships at Medway Park?”

Councillor Doe stated that the Modern Pentathlon European Championships in July were a very significant landmark for Medway. Not only did the competition bring World and Olympic champions to Medway but the event was an official Olympic qualifier and he thought people would be interested to go to it. The Council should be proud that it was coming to Medway.

He stated that Councillor Crack should be fully aware of the funding arrangements from Medway Council for the event as he had been provided with the information in October last year and had raised it at the Council meeting that month.

He confirmed that an agreement had been made with Pentathlon GB to provide financial support not exceeding £175,000. This was monitored through an event steering committee chaired by the Assistant Director for Customer First, Leisure, Democracy and Governance. To put this into context UK Sport evaluated the direct economic benefit from major sporting events to be at least three times the investment. In this case, the direct economic benefit was likely to be around £525,000. This figure had been corroborated by an indicative assessment undertaken by the Sports Development Manager at Medway Park.

Councillor Doe stated that in addition to the direct economic impact there were a number of other benefits to Medway, which included:

- Attracting additional events linked to the Modern Pentathlon. If the Council had not staged the World Cup then Medway would not have been considered for the European Championships. There would be increased media coverage and some 24 countries would be taking part in the European Championships, which would enhance the area's reputation.
- The ultimate aim was to inspire local people and for them to take more of an interest in sport and as such he felt there was nothing to apologise for.

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Councillor Crack asked a supplementary question querying whether expenditure of £175,000 of Council money on something like the Modern Pentathlon could be justified. He felt that the event had a small following and minimal media coverage was likely to be forthcoming and that the money would be better to bring back the staff who had lost their jobs to ensure that empty homes were brought back into use?

Councillor Doe stated that he felt this to be a prejudiced view. He stated that sponsorship had been generated and more was in the pipeline. He felt that this was not just a minority sport and that Councillor Crack was out of touch with events.

**(D) Councillor Crack asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following:**

“Would the Leader of the Council explain why he is pushing ahead with City Status at this time when there are far more important local issues including finance that need addressing?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, responded by stating that he disagreed with Councillor Crack if he felt City Status was not an important local issue.

He felt that City Status would be a fitting recognition of how Medway had emerged from the dark days of the closure of the dockyard to become the successful place it was now. Like two thirds of Medway residents he believed being awarded City Status next year would help to promote Medway more effectively on a national and international stage. With the squeeze on the public sector purse and the downturn in grants from central government, gaining City Status would give a golden opportunity to gain yet more investment from the private sector for Medway and continue Medway’s successful regeneration.

There were potentially significant gains to be had, with very little downside and he felt Councillor Crack would do well to consider why so many important business and organisation backed the campaign. He felt that it was because they could see the potential for the bid for City Status for Medway.

Councillor Crack asked a supplementary question by asking whether given the lack of interest in the community what was the point of the City cards and what would happen to them if the application for City Status did not get approved?

The Leader, Councillor Rodney Chambers, responded by stating that they were intended to give people preferential treatment in businesses in Medway which also benefited the businesses who took part in it.



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**(E) Councillor Maple asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following:**

“Following my previous questions on 13 January and 30 March could you give a further update on the funding for the “Dynamic Bus Facility” specifically from Central Government?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, responded by stating that the Government had made money available for the new bus facility to replace the current substandard bus station inside the Pentagon. The financial claims for the works would not be submitted to the Homes and Community Agency until the end of May. There were allocations for snagging, accruals, works substantially completed and materials on site post completion. He stated that he could not give a more definite response as the accounts had not yet been completed and would not be submitted until the end of May but he was not anticipating any problems with financing the completion of the agreed works from Government and external finance.

Councillor Maple asked a supplementary question by requesting a firm commitment that the funding for the bus facility would be available?

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, stated that he had no reason to believe that the funding would not be available.

### **974 Adjustments to the Capital Programme and Revenue Budget 2011/2012**

**Discussion:**

This report presented changes and additions to the Council’s Capital Programme and Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 following approval by Council in February 2011.

Councillor Jarrett, supported by Councillor Mason, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

**Decision:**

- (a) The Council approved the additions to the capital programme as set out in section 3 of the report;
- (b) The Council approved the increase in revenue budget as set out in section 4 of the report.

**975 Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer**

**Discussion:**

This report contained the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report for the period April 2010 to March 2011, which gave an update on Member conduct issues, and the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring officer.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, supported by Councillor Jarrett, proposed the recommendation contained in the report.

**Decision:**

The Council noted the report and comments from the Standards Committee.

**976 Schedule of Meetings 2011/2012**

**Discussion:**

This report set out a draft programme of meetings for the 2011/2012 municipal year, as set out in the attached appendix, for recommendation to the annual meeting of the Council.

Councillor Kenneth Bamber, supported by Councillor Wildey, proposed the recommendations contained in the report with one alteration, which was to move the Council meeting, scheduled for 14 July 2011 to 21 July 2011 to avoid a clash with the summer concerts.

**Decision:**

- (a) The Council approved the programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2011/2012 to the annual meeting of the Council, as set out at Appendix A, with the exception of moving the Council meeting scheduled for 14 July 2011 to 21 July 2011;
- (b) The Council noted and agreed the proposed reduction in in-depth scrutiny review work as set out in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.4 of the report and that proposals for how this should be coordinated and managed would be presented to the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

**977 Motions**

**(A) Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Jones, proposed the following:**

That Council notes:

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a sustainable, good quality pension scheme that benefits from being funded and locally managed. It is valuable to employers and employees alike. Successive governments have

## Council, 14 April 2011

failed to recognise the distinctiveness of the LGPS in setting policy, most notably in the proposal announced by the Chancellor in the last Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to impose an extra 3.2% contribution tax on scheme members, increasing scheme average member contributions from 6.6% to 9.8%. This tax does not benefit the scheme or scheme members or employers. This proposal is in addition to pension reductions caused by being indexed against the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) instead of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and is in advance of expected benefit reform recommendations from the Hutton Review.

That Council agrees:

An increase in member contributions as proposed will lead to mass opt outs from the LGPS and that would be undesirable and damaging. The views expressed by the Local Government Association (LGA) in its letter to the Chancellor dated 16 February 2011 on this subject are also the views of this Council.

That Council resolves:

Council will write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Local Government within the next month stating this Council's support for the LGA letter referred to above and calling for government to rethink its proposed increases to LGPS member contributions. Council will work with Trade Unions to ensure employees are made aware of the proposals for the LGPS and encouraging them to support the Council's representations to defend their pension scheme.

Councillor Reckless, supported by Councillor O'Brien, proposed an amendment that the motion be replaced with:

"That Council notes:

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a sustainable, good quality pension scheme that benefits from being funded and locally managed. The interim report by ex-Labour Cabinet Minister, Lord Hutton, led the Chancellor in the last Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to propose an extra 3.2% contribution tax on scheme members, increasing scheme average member contributions from 6.6% to 9.8%. This should help ensure the LGPS' long-term sustainability when combined with the move from final salary to career average pensions, which will protect lower paid staff relative to higher earners.

That Council resolves:

Council will write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Local Government in support of the proposed changes to the LGPS in light of the need to restore the public finances to a sustainable position".

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried and became the substantive motion.

## **Council, 14 April 2011**

On being put to the vote the substantive motion was carried and agreed.

### **Decision:**

(a) This Council noted that:

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a sustainable, good quality pension scheme that benefits from being funded and locally managed. The interim report by ex-Labour Cabinet Minister, Lord Hutton, led the Chancellor in the last Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to propose an extra 3.2% contribution tax on scheme members, increasing scheme average member contributions from 6.6% to 9.8%. This should help ensure the LGPS' long-term sustainability when combined with the move from final salary to career average pensions, which will protect lower paid staff relative to higher earners;

(b) This Council resolved to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Local Government in support of the proposed changes to the LGPS in light of the need to restore the public finances to a sustainable position

**Mayor**

**Date:**

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