

Cabinet

3 June 2025

Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Annual Update Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zoë Van Dyke, Portfolio Holder for Business Management

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Summary

This report provides an update of all activities since the inception of the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board in September 2024. This is the first annual update in the programme cycle.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. Full Council is responsible for agreeing additions to the Capital Programme and Cabinet is responsible for ensuring effective Capital Programme Delivery through Quarterly Capital Budget Monitoring Reports.
- 2.2. A capital additions request for £22,000,000 for the refurbishment of Gun Wharf was agreed at Cabinet on 13 February 2024, followed by Full Council agreement on 29 February 2024. In addition to this a budget of £263,266 was vired from the Council Meeting Facilities scheme, approved by the Director of Place in November 2024, leaving a total budget for this scheme of £22,263,266.

3. Background

- 3.1. Following a structural inspection of Gun Wharf in October 2023, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) planks were identified within the roof

space. The use of RAAC as a building material used during the 1950's to 1990's is well documented and was subject to Central Government advice.

- 3.2. Following guidance available at the time, the Council was forced to trigger its Business Continuity Management Plan(s) resulting in a reduced usable capacity at Gun Wharf. The building has steadily opened up to enable more desk space for colleagues (see 4.1 below).
- 3.3. The Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board was established and met for the first time in September 2024. The Board is made up of senior officer representation from the Capital Projects Team, Financial and Business Improvement, HR and Communications. The Board is chaired by the Assistant Director of Regeneration, who also acts as the Corporate Programme Champion.
- 3.4. A governance pathway was established. The Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board has the delegated authority to drive the day-to-day delivery of the programme and reports into the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB). Both boards meet monthly. The CLB acts as the sponsoring group. The CLB is a non-statutory cross-cutting Senior Officer Board that discharges corporate landlord functions on behalf of the Authority in accordance with corporate priorities; the relevant Director or Assistant Director uses their delegated authorities.
- 3.5. Although the programme came about due to the discovery of RAAC in Gun Wharf, the scope has evolved beyond the remediation and repair of the building. To note, no substantial repairs or refurbishment have been carried out since its opening in the late 70's and it is well overdue on works that will ensure another 40 plus years of effective operation. The scope now encompasses our aspirations of redesigning the interior and changing the way that we work and are perceived as an employer, including our aspiration to become an 'Employer of Choice' in an ever more competitive and dwindling recruitment pool for local authorities across the country.
- 3.6. We see this as an opportunity for us to 'reset' our working environment, evolving the culture and attitude towards Gun Wharf as our headquarters, looking at more creative, and innovative spaces in the building. We want to provide good conditions for our staff and drive productivity with a building we can be proud of. We have developed some key principles for the building design, agreed by Corporate Landlord Board at their meeting on 26 February 2025. These can be found in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.7. The overriding priority within the programme is to ensure that the building is safe and fit for purpose. This includes an element of future proofing, so that we are not only addressing the building's current issues, but also proactively managing works and investing in improvements that will ensure the building's longevity after it is handed back for full operations.
- 3.8. Decisions are agreed on a prioritised basis reflecting the factors that are most important to Medway Council against the available budget to deliver the

project, as defined based on the criteria below. Priority 1 indicates the highest level of importance, while priority 5 signifies the lowest level of importance.



Image 1: Programme Prioritisation Hierarchy

- 3.9. The programme covers multiple workstreams, integrating not just the physical elements of the building but also the less tangible ‘people’ side. For example, we want to ensure that the building reflects our Council values and integrates equality, diversity and inclusion into the design, enabling a broader span of choice in employees, encouraging high productivity and again taking the Council forward as an employer of choice.
- 3.10. External factors such as Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation have also been accounted for as much as we can at this stage. These inputs will all inform the final design, but it should be noted that as additional requirements emerge, these may affect delivery deadlines.
- 3.11. The programme works fall into one of two phases:
- **Phase 1** involves the ongoing management of the Gun Wharf Offices and the allocation of temporary workspace for employees. This phase includes making certain areas safe by performing minor works and addressing RAAC that has been identified as lower risk due to its current condition.
 - **Phase 2** includes all tasks related to establishing the permanent layout and usage of the building. This phase includes major refurbishment projects and the critical removal or more intrusive work on RAAC that has been identified as higher risk due to its condition.

The two phases run concurrently, meaning that Phase 2 work is already ongoing to deliver a fully operational building.

4. Progress to Date

Phase 1: Interim Management

- 4.1. Since the discovery of RAAC in October 2023, the Facilities Management Team have worked to open up desk areas (equipped with monitors, keyboards, phones) as soon as spaces have been made safe. To date, this is 724 desks, including dedicated team space and dropdown areas.
- 4.2. These dropdown areas have been used to pilot culture change; getting used to hot desking and adopting a clear desk policy.
- 4.3. **Ministry of Justice** One of the early RAAC remediation works was in the MOJ areas. This was prioritised and allowed HMCTS to resume the Medway Family Courts in November 2024.
- 4.4. **Interim Parking Policy.** Due to the high demand for parking at Gun Wharf, we have implemented an Interim Car Parking Policy to ensure fair and efficient use of the available spaces. Free parking space is offered to staff contractually based at Gun Wharf, along with overflow parking at The Brook Multi-Story Car Park.
- 4.5. **Art.** As we invite more staff back to Gun Wharf, we are attempting to make the building a more inviting environment and a reflection of current and future communities. We are investigating the installation of art with colleagues from the Culture team that also bring out the rich history of the building and Medway. This includes both interim and semi-permanent pieces (i.e. Phases 1 and 2).
- 4.6. **Café.** The FM team are in discussions with a self-service type operator based on the GWIP Board's visit to other authorities. This is both to look at longer term delivery and what we can also achieve in the short to medium term, piloting the self-service option to gauge uptake.

Phase 2: Refurbishment and Redesign update

- 4.7. Much of the work contributing to Phase 2 – making the building fully operational – is already under way. This incorporates RAAC remediation, governance and decision-making, staff engagement and relocation of the CCTV Monitoring Hub into Gun Wharf.
- 4.8. RAAC Remediation Update. RCS (RAAC Consulting Solutions) have been working with the Capital Projects Team since April 2024 to establish the most appropriate solution for managing the RAAC panels. This has included the recent removal of approximately 40 panels for transportation to the Building Research Establishment (BRE) for testing.
- 4.9. The Council is due to receive a final report from RCS in mid-May 2025. This report will outline the options open to the Council in respect of RAAC removal and/or remediation, including anticipated costs and timeline. This will establish

the remaining budget and inform the level of refurbishment that we will be able to undertake, based on our defined priorities.

- 4.10. As part of the panel removal, RCS have identified that certain roofing repairs are required. This is currently being verified independently. We propose to make use of the scaffolding currently in situ as the most cost-effective solution, as opposed to removing the scaffolding and reinstating it later.

Engagement & Communications

- 4.11. The Programme team has engaged with numerous stakeholders to capture their views for the design, including the Disabled Workers and Carers Network, Deaf Services, Medway Makers and Service Managers. A fully accessible building for Members, officers and visitors is a key priority and would again help place Medway Council as an employer of choice whilst broadening the potential recruitment pool.
- 4.12. The results of the survey to Service Managers have been collated and are being analysed in more depth. This is to establish how we can manage the evolving needs of services as they engage in person and virtually. For example, one of the main reasons that services want to come into Gun Wharf is for team meetings – this implies that we may want to incorporate more collaboration areas into Gun Wharf rather than revert solely to traditional desk spaces.
- 4.13. Further engagement sessions are planned with services, forums and committees over the next few months – to share the concepts of the design stage report (RIBA 2) and provide inputs into the spatial design and floor layout (RIBA 3).
- 4.14. A recent newsletter updated staff on progress so far. In addition, MedSpace (the Council intranet) has been updated to enable staff to access information on what is happening at Gun Wharf. This will become more critical as works commence, because the floorplans, evacuation routes and health and safety advice will need to be continuously updated.



- 4.15. GWIP Board members visited both Canterbury City Council and Camden Council. Each council demonstrated how they adapted their buildings and working practices to accommodate new ways of working post-COVID-19 and evolving work practices. These insights shaped our design principles, and the brief provided to our consultants. Both programmes experienced time and budget overruns. In Camden, this was mainly due to the choice of a Design & Build Procurement method, while in Canterbury, it was due to contractor delays and market factors. This is not unusual in the industry where multiple economic factors can affect delivery. Officers have made note of the lessons

learnt and where applicable will consider this in taking the Gun Wharf project forward.

- 4.16. The design concept report (RIBA 2) has been issued by Bailey Partnership. It outlines concepts for the delivery of a building which will meet our aspirations for Gun Wharf, including quiet zones, collaboration spaces and a reimagined café area.
- 4.17. The RIBA 2 report also covers the concept for a Council Chamber in Gun Wharf that could, if called upon, accommodate the forecast increase in Council members, based on ongoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) discussions. This will be a flexible space that can be adapted to meeting rooms or further office space as needs require. In addition, when not in use for formal Council meetings, the space could be used with local stakeholders and partners to increase its community value and productivity. The design and location of the proposed Chamber can be found in Appendix 2 to the report.
- 4.18. Alongside the new Council Chamber, additional community space has been initially looked at under RIBA 2 and this will be evolved in the RIBA 3 designs. Areas being focused on are those near to the main reception: the aspiration being to bring back some community uses that were happening pre-RAAC discovery.
- 4.19. GWIP Board members are mindful of the need to ensure the longevity of our redesigned offices, by leveraging our learning and achievements from the Medway 2.0 delivery programme, which aspires to rethink the ways that we deliver services to our residents. To support the Gun Wharf programme aligning with Medway 2.0, the Chief Information Officer (the lead officer on the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan) sits on the GWIP Board.
- 4.20. **Next steps for Phase 2.** Once the design concepts are finalised, we will be able to prioritise key work phases, based on need and cost. This will enable us to highlight what can be achieved, by when and within budget.
- 4.21. At the early stages of the programme, it was agreed to commission a design consultant only to the end of RIBA 2 (design concepts), as when taking the RAAC element into account and costs associated around removal/repair/replacement of panels, we could not commit to a budget around the refurbishment element. We have now procured the remaining stages of design and commissioned Bailey Partnership to partner with us from RIBA 3 to RIBA 7 - which entails detailed design (covering findings/solutions with the RAAC panels, planning, procuring, agreeing contracts and phased work packages before delivery/construction to give a fully operational building).
- 4.22. We are initiating the process of informing construction partners that we will be inviting tenders for the construction phase in Autumn 2025, when RIBA 3 has been issued (as this will cover specific floor plans and layouts). It is planned that the Gateway 3 process will begin in October. We aim to align the programme milestones with the requisite decision-making meetings.

4.23. An overview of the programme timeline, as of production beginning of May, can be found in Appendix 3.

Note: The programme timeline is at early stages and further work is underway to refine this with procurement colleagues and Bailey Partnership. This will be refined throughout the RIBA 3 and RIBA 4 stages as the programme takes further shape and ultimately will also depend on market factors such as availability of contractors to deliver under RIBA 5.

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Delays to the programme	Lack of accurate data and inputs may delay the design brief.	Robust monitoring of progress and information requested. Programming specific time and dates with phasing within the relevant contracts.	BII
Increased costs to the RAAC programme	RAAC remediation and construction works may reveal need for additional works. This could lead to the remediation work accounting for a larger share of the budget than anticipated.	Early testing on RAAC will inform on our options.	BII
Lack of clarity in the programme design brief	Unless we clearly communicate our aspirations, the building may not be as successful as it could be.	Ensuring all partners and contractors understand the brief.	CII
Works delivered on time to brief	Time and budget constraints may dictate a less comprehensive refurbishment, compromising our aspirations.	Evaluation of what elements can be cost engineered alongside elongation of programme for certain elements that may fit within a longer term maintenance strategy.	BIII
Managing people aspects of the programme	Failure to consider impact on staff, including accessibility could lead to disengagement. The scale of remediation work will impact the budget available to deliver to all expectations.	A programme of stakeholder engagement and communications is being drafted.	BII
Procurement and governance delay works	Our procurement and governance procedures could cause delays to the	Maintain an active oversight via programme plans with PMO support flagging at early	BII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	programme as alignment of key milestones is critical.	stages where milestones are at risk.	
Health & Safety monitoring	We need to ensure all on site are safe during works,	Ensure procurement process is robust and clear on the responsibilities and need for a work methodology that keeps both staff and contractors safe during construction. Consistent monitoring of the work processes thereafter.	CII
Economic climate impacts finance of the project	The national and international economic climate conditions lead to financial impacts for the project, materials, labour, goods and services.	Maintain delivery in accordance with the prioritisation hierarchy established. Break the tender of the project into individually costed areas that can be omitted should the need arise.	All
Lack of parking	Future LGR, expansion by incorporating Broadside staff and Brook MSC not being a permanent solution could lead to a lack of parking vs staff working at Gun Wharf offices.	The introduction of a staff travel plan as part of the wider people strategy for workers at Gun Wharf will seek to address this alongside cultural change and encouragement of greener forms of travel as part of the environmental considerations.	BIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Whilst working on a hybrid approach, the majority of colleagues who work from Gun Wharf are contracted to do so and are frequently in the office. Should it be decided that there is an opportunity for more remote working (i.e. work at home full time), contract variations and consultation would be required.

- 6.2. This will be largely dependent on service requirements, and utilisation of our space for greater productivity.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019 and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 7.2. All Council officers have a responsibility to take action to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the services they provide. Work is ongoing to scope, design and deliver improvements to Gun Wharf that will improve the carbon footprint of the building; and forms an essential component of the Climate Change Action Plan.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. The total budget for phases 1 and 2 of the programme is £22,263,266, including the move of CCTV into the building and the previously planned Council Chamber adaptations. The budget for the improvement covers both phases of the programme, therefore increased spend in Phase 1 will have an impact on Phase 2 deliverables. A detailed monitoring schedule is being compiled as part of the overall programme plan. Actual expenditure to the end of April 2025 totalled £875,000 since the start of the programme. The total committed spend to date, which accounts for the investigatory works on the RAAC panels, essential roof maintenance works, surveys, scaffolding, reconfiguration of the data centre (to facilitate construction of the new CCTV Monitoring Hub) and consultancy fees stands at £3.34m.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The contracts for the works and services provided have been procured in conjunction with category management colleagues and have followed the Council's Contract Procedure rules.
- 9.2. As noted above if there are changes required to where staff are contracted to work on a permanent basis this will require consultation as it will be a change to the terms of employment.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key principles
Appendix 2: Proposed Council Chamber plans
Appendix 3: Programme plan

Background papers

None

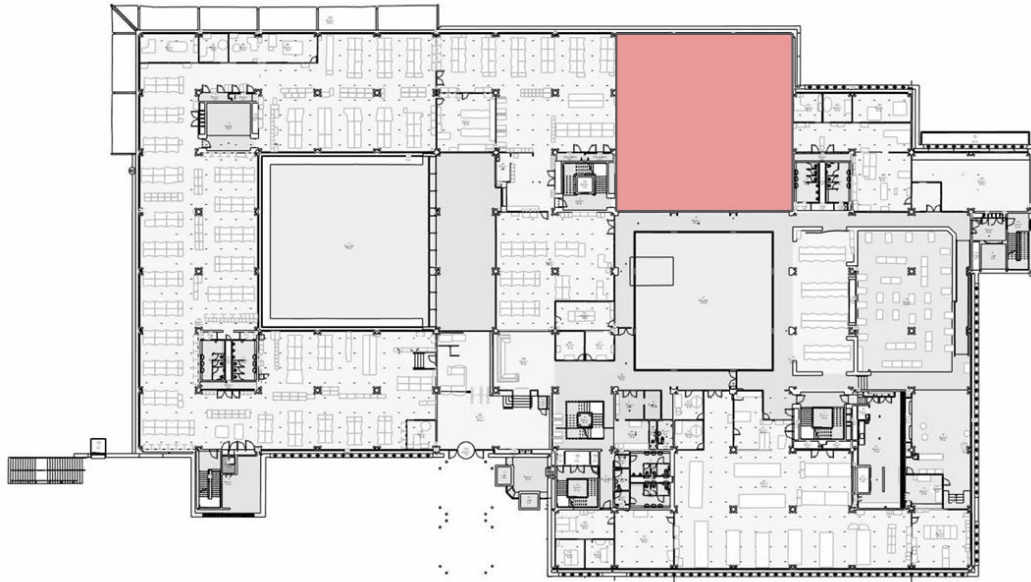
Appendix 1: Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Key Principles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futureproofing: The building must be future-oriented/sufficiently versatile to accommodate long-term developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational headquarters: The building will continue as the headquarters for Medway Council staff. Residents will be able to access front-line services through Community Hubs situated throughout Medway. Staff at Gun Wharf will be available to signpost residents to their nearest location. Gun Wharf will be operational Monday - Friday 8am - 5pm.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible Working & Office Utilisation: Staff must be equipped to support new ways of working, primarily hybrid/hot desking arrangements, reflecting the available capacity as part of the Council's rationalised estate, unless specific fixed areas required. The office space must be designed for staff to use as needed, to enhance productivity whilst offering opportunity for flexibility depending on service requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Chamber: Designed to accommodate up to 90 members at Gun Wharf, pending further investigation, confirming member numbers and capacity of the building. A final decision still to be made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café: Provision of catering facilities and somewhere for staff to take a break and eat meals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Space: The building might have bookable space/meeting rooms for community activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change: The building's operations will align with Medway's Climate Change Action Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational Timeline: The office will be operational for new ways of working by the end of 2026.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception: A secure and welcoming reception area will be established for officers and visitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility: The building will have an inclusive design and cater to physical, neurodiverse accessibility and equality needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed Building: the works will be carried out in line with constraints (legislation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Footprint: The site footprint, including parking space, is fixed and cannot be increased or extended.

Appendix 2: Council Chamber Plan and location

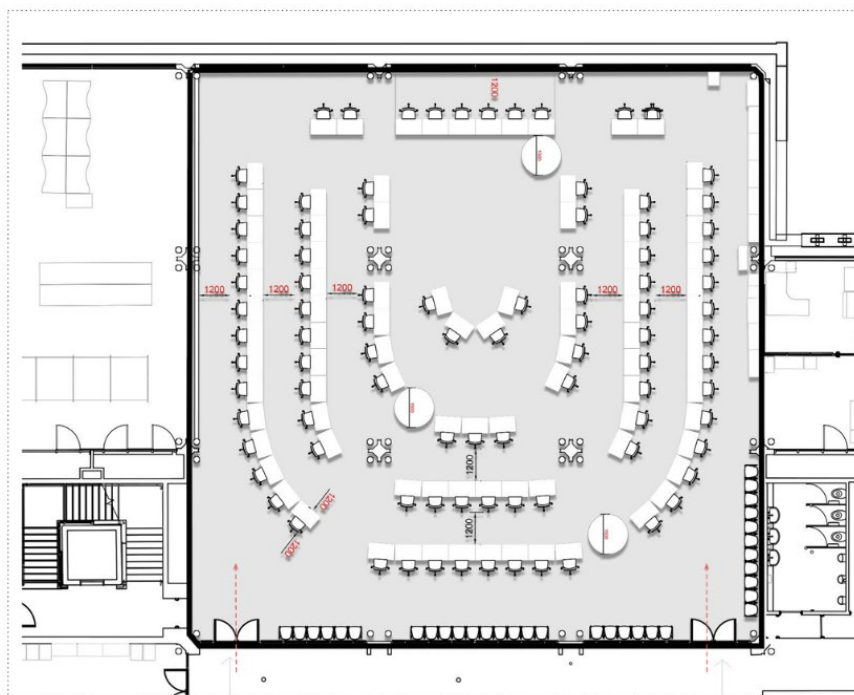
River side of Gun Wharf

LEVEL 3 FLOOR PLAN



Gun Wharf Level 3

In terms of capacity, the proposed option for the Council Chamber caters for up to 100, including public gallery (please see proposed layout below)



Appendix 3: Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Phases

The RIBA Plan of Work organises the process of briefing, designing, constructing and operating building projects into eight stages and explains the stage outcomes, core tasks and information exchanges required at each stage:

0. Strategic Definition
1. Preparation and Briefing – the brief and specification of the project are defined- initial feasibility study produced.
2. Concept Design – the architectural concepts are proposed and approved.
3. Spatial Coordination – architectural and engineering information are laid out based on floorplans.
4. Technical Design – all design information required for construction is completed.
5. Manufacturing and Construction – construction and commissioning completed.
6. Handover – building is handed over.
7. Use (Phase 3) – Building is used, operated and maintained efficiently.

The below plan reflects the approximate timing of the refurbishment programme based on the level of reconfiguration/refurbishment agreed. This is an early-stage indicative draft, produced at RIBA2 – which is only the conceptual stage. The timing represents the middle ground offered by the designers (ranging from complete reconfiguration and refurbishment to minimal upgrade); it will evolve, as there are many variables (internal and external) which may impact the delivery of the programme.

The draft programme was prepared based on the request to provide estimated construction periods for each option or area as if they were standalone projects. It is based on a number of assumptions (please see below). Once the level of refurbishment is agreed, we will review the actual construction period in line with the available timeframes and delivery requirements.

At this stage, the full extent of the works has not been determined. The assumptions below represent a best estimate based on current information.

1. The programme is subject to change based on final client decisions regarding the scope of works. No contingency period is included for potential client-driven design changes.
2. Dependencies on third-party approvals (e.g., planning, building control, fire strategy) are not factored into the current timeline.
3. No provision has been made for unforeseen structural issues beyond the assumed RAAC panel reinstatement.
4. The programme assumes sufficient funding and approvals are in place to progress without delays.

Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Indicative Timeline
(produced on 12 May 2025)

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