

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday, 25 March 2025**

**6.30pm to 9.26pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Field (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Bowen, Campbell, Doe, Etheridge, Fearn, Howcroft-Scott, Jackson, Kemp, Lawrence, Myton, Vye and Williams

**In Attendance:** Adam Bryan, Director of Place  
Rob Carmen, Senior Transport Operations Officer  
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer  
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking  
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Andy McNally-Johnson, Head of Corporate Accounts  
David Reynolds, Head of Revenue Accounts  
Rebecca Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer

**787 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Animashaun, Filmer and Peake.

**788 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

**789 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**790 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**791 Attendance of Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment**

**Discussion:**

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Mahil, which fell within the remit of this Committee.

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

**Strengths and weaknesses in attracting investment** – The Portfolio Holder explained that Medway had many natural advantages with the river, gateway to London and power generation opportunities on the Peninsula. Food production, food growth, research led growth, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the creative sector all had a role to play in attracting investment. The skills capacity, good connectivity and the high proportion of self-led businesses were also highlighted. Challenges noted included transport infrastructure and the lack of larger high quality hotel accommodation and events centres.

**Businesses visited** – The Portfolio Holder reported that he made visits on a weekly basis and had visited numerous businesses as well as attending the Medway Business Meet up and Chamber of Commerce. The Committee was informed that knowledge was being accrued from attending various forums and through the Medway Business Survey which was currently live.

**Feedback from Business for Medway Board** – The Committee was informed that approximately 20 to 25 individuals had attended, and this had led to a further meeting with the owner of Veetee Rice regarding business needs. Officers were exploring how the Board could become more of a task and finish group.

**Rainham reimaged** – The Portfolio Holder explained that this involved engaging with local traders and residents to gather tacit knowledge to help inform local plans.

**Jobs generated by AI** – The Committee was informed that whilst the Portfolio Holder had some reservations about AI, Medway needed to be best placed to take advantage of any opportunities, and it could change the way we thought and what could be done, but it was unclear how many jobs it would create.

**Increased unemployment rate** – It was reported that rising unemployment was both a national and local issue and that focused investment and connect to

work initiatives were targeted at the harder to deal with sectors of the unemployed, but there was no single solution to resolve this issue.

**Benefits of the Shared Prosperity Fund** – The Committee was informed that the team had given careful thought about how to deliver the fund in the most impactful way through micro grants and the impacts were meticulously recorded. Members felt that a future report to the Committee would be useful and Members were invited to visit the team to see the good work that they did.

**Hopewell Drive Business Park** – The Committee was informed that the Portfolio Holder was happy to meet with tenants if they had issues with their rent or to explore whether any grants were available to assist them.

**Strood Town Centre** – The Committee discussed the need for balanced services and growth across Medway and was informed that Market Managers had been invested in to grow the markets and explore further opportunities.

**Lower Thames Crossing** – Members requested information on the impact of the crossing on traffic and transport in Medway and discussed job opportunities from the construction of the crossing.

**Mentoring schemes for people with disabilities and long term health conditions** - The Portfolio Holder did not have details to hand regarding schemes in place but offered to provide further information outside of the meeting.

**Key Performance Indicators** – Members felt data on key areas would be helpful and the Portfolio Holder agreed to explore this further.

**Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report and requested that key performance indicators be explored further.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing at a future Committee regarding the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing on traffic and transport in Medway.
- c) The Committee requested a future report on the Shared Prosperity Fund and outcomes.

## **792 Bus Service Improvement Plan**

**Discussion:**

Officers summarised the good progress that had been made so far with the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the ongoing challenges.

Members raised the following queries:

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**Improving efficiency and reliability** – Officers explained that the network was relatively stable with consistently applied budgets and concessionary fare travel and that infrastructure improvements would support reliability.

**Rolling programme for vehicle upgrades** – The Committee was informed that Arriva received 8 new Euro 6 vehicles last year, however any further rollout would be dependent on government deadlines for replacing diesel vehicles and funding made available.

**What would franchising look like in Medway** – Officers reported that discussions were ongoing about how franchising could possibly work in Medway.

**Tackling anti-social behaviour on buses** – The Committee was informed that officers worked closely with the bus operators to promote safety and security for bus users and CCTV on board and security at some stops had been utilised.

**Lack of progress with Cliffe Woods Services funded by S106 funding** – Officers explained that it had taken some time to organise the S106 funded services, however from 27 April 2025 there would be a half hourly service to Strood and an hourly service on Sundays.

**Impact of free bus weekends** – Members queried whether the free bus weekends improved the number of bus users in the long term. Officers reported that 60,000 people made use of the free bus weekend but officers had not looked at whether this led to more people using the buses.

**Possibility of a single ticket covering the whole of Medway** – The Committee was informed that a single ticket had been explored at meetings with bus operators and Arriva still needed to agree to this, but hopefully it would be resolved this year.

**Using capital grants to resolve road blockages** – Officers explained that the bus infrastructure plan identified issues with the road network, and measures to address these and the infrastructure plan would be consulted on in the same way as the BSIP was.

**Real time information & more direct routes** – Members reported difficulties caused by indirect routes and lack of real time information. Officers informed the Committee that real time information was being worked on and a new Tannoy system was in use to relay information as soon as possible. Officers reported that discussions were taking place regarding direct services and the potential for fast track routes and new bus hubs, however any new routes had to provide value for money.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the updates provided in the report and the work underway to support the continued delivery of Medway's Bus Service Improvement Plan in 2025/26.

**793 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary  
- Quarter 3 2024/2025**

**Discussion:**

Members commented on the statements for delivering quality social care and community services on page 165 of the agenda. Members said that social care services did not provide these services and residents had to reach out to charities for support. Officers agreed to ask social care colleagues to respond to these comments.

Members expressed concern that some performance indicators did not have targets and that the graphs from page 173 of the agenda onwards did not contain any data. Officers explained that data was derived from different sources including national data which officers had no control over and agreed to respond to Members regarding the lack of data outside of the meeting.

The shift in risk score from unlikely to very likely was queried for homelessness (page 229 of the agenda). Officers explained that this was due to a large temporary accommodation procurement project falling through however this was expected to be resolved in quarter 1 of 2025/26 with an alternative option.

**Decision:**

- a) Members noted the Q3 2024/25 progress of the performance indicators used to monitor progress of the Council's priorities, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) Members noted the Strategic Risk Summary as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- c) Members requested further information on the statements for delivering quality social care and community services and for the absence of data on the graphs from page 173 of the report onwards.

**794 Capital Budget Monitoring Round 3 2024/2025**

**Discussion:**

Officers explained that the projected underspend for Regeneration, Culture and Environment was £5.25million against a capital budget of £226million and variances were set out in section 5 of the report.

Members queried whether the totals in table 2 on page 253 of the agenda were correct. Officers explained that this was an error and apologised for the mistake.

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Officers informed the Committee that capital budgets could be carried forward and be accounted for on an accruals basis, if works or projects spanned more than one financial year.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the results of the third round of capital budget monitoring for 2024/25.
- b) The Committee noted that Cabinet had recommended to Full Council the removal of the remaining budget of £7,992 from the Building Maintenance scheme as this was now complete.
- c) The Committee noted that Cabinet had recommended to Full Council the removal of the remaining budget of £100,000 from the Mobile Library scheme as this was no longer required with the addition of the Library Improvement Fund scheme to the Capital Programme.
- d) The Committee noted that Cabinet had recommended to Full Council the addition of £559,000 to the Mountbatten House Purchase scheme, funded by prudential borrowing, to cover the costs of holding the building for onward sale to Medway Development Company (MDC).

## **795 Revenue Budget Monitoring Round 3 2024/2025**

### **Discussion:**

Officers informed the Committee that the overspend for Regeneration, Culture and Environment was £144,000, an improvement of £1.903million from the position reported at Round 2.

Members queried whether there was sufficient capacity to repair potholes given the highways underspend of £575,000 due to staffing costs. Officers agreed to pass the request for a briefing note on this issue to the Head of Highways.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the results of the third round of revenue budget monitoring for 2024/25.
- b) The Committee noted that Cabinet had instructed the Corporate Management Team to implement urgent actions to bring expenditure back within the budget agreed by the Full Council.
- c) The Committee requested a briefing note from the Head of Highways regarding capacity to repair potholes given the staffing underspend.

**796 Petitions Report**

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

**797 Work programme**

**Discussion:**

Members expressed concern regarding outstanding actions and in particular the action from 19 December regarding the continuous running of school streets cameras.

**Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report and agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix A to the report.
- b) The Committee noted the action log as set out at Appendix B to the report.
- c) The Committee requested that outstanding actions were followed up and resolved through the usual channels with officers.

**Chairperson**

**Date:**

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