

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 24 April 2025
7.00pm to 10.53pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next Full Council meeting

Present: The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway (Councillor Nestorov)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Hamandishe) Councillors Anang, Barrett, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Finch, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Joy, Kemp, Lammass, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Sands, Shokar, Spalding, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke, Vye, Wildey and Williams

In Attendance: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

849 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Animashaun, Etheridge, Gurung and Jones.

850 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

Councillor Field declared an interest in motion 8B as he is a Governor of Abbey Court Community Special School. Councillor Field had been offered a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to enable him to participate in discussion and voting on the item but Councillor Field considered that it was appropriate for him to leave the room during discussion and determination of the item. He therefore left the room during consideration of the item.

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Councillor Kemp declared an interest in motion 8B as he is a Governor of Abbey Court Community Special School. Councillor Kemp had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to enable him to participate in discussion and voting on the item and he therefore remained in the room during consideration of the item.

Other interests

There were none.

851 Record of meeting

The record of the Full Council meeting held on 27 February 2025 was approved and signed by Worshipful the Mayor as correct.

852 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway announced that Councillor Filmer's wife, Di, had recently passed away. The funeral had taken place recently and had been attended by a number of Council Members and officers. The Mayor offered the Council's condolences to Councillor Filmer and his family.

The Mayor reflected on the recent passing of Pope Francis. He said the Pope had inspired millions with his compassion, wisdom, and unwavering faith and had championed peace and the love of all neighbours.

The Mayor thanked everyone who had attended the Annual Mayor's Ball on 11 April 2025 in support of my Mayoral charities, the Halpern Charitable Foundation and Medway Culture Club. Over 260 guests had attended and the evening had been a great success with a significant amount having been raised to support the work of these charities.

The Mayor, supported by Members of the Council, moved a suspension of Council Rules. This was to facilitate continuation of the changes set out below to how the meeting would be run.

Decision:

The Council agreed to suspend Council rules to facilitate the following changes:

- a) Public questions would be extended from 30 minutes to 40 minutes with a reduction in the time allocations for the Leader's Report from 35 minutes to 30 minutes and the Overview and Scrutiny activity report from 25 to 20 minutes.
- b) Public questioners unable to attend this evening had been allowed to send a representative to read out their question or the Mayor would put the question on their behalf. Only public questioners attending in person would be able to ask supplementary questions.

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- c) The order of business had been changed as indicated on the Agenda. In summary the agenda item on motions would be taken after public questions. Any information reports or reports for noting would be the last agenda items.
- d) Limit the number of speakers per motion to the proposer and seconder, plus up to 10% of each group (rounded up) as follows:

Labour and Co-operative Group – 4
Conservative Group – 2
Independent Group – 1
Reform UK Group – 1
Independent Members – 3

The same number of speakers would be allowed for each amendment to a motion.

853 Leader's announcements

There were none.

854 Petitions

Public:

There were none.

Member:

A petition was submitted by Councillor Wildey on behalf of residents of Lordswood Close and Slade Close, Chatham. This opposed the removal of a protective wall on the grounds that it would be a road safety danger to children.

A petition was submitted by Councillor Field that called on the Council to introduce a 20mph speed limit in central Strood.

855 Public questions

Question A – Lewis Bailey, of Gillingham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Despite receiving legal advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Independent Group refused to alter their motion to a form which would make it compatible with not predetermining any elements of the Local Plan. Council resolved to seek additional external legal advice on this issue, with a view to bring it back.

Instead of just listening to the expert opinion of the Council's own legal team, the Independent Group forced a situation where the Council had to outsource this work. How much did this external legal advice cost the Council?”

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In response, Councillor Curry said that it was not unusual for a second opinion to be sought on some matters for the Council, particularly where the stance taken differed from that which was historically accepted. On this occasion the provision of the external advice had cost £3,120, inclusive of VAT.

Lewis Bailey asked the following supplementary question:

“Given there’s already another motion being put forward by the Independent Group, do we not think this has potential to damage the Local Plan and what are the potential financial implications for the Council if these options pass?”

Councillor Curry considered that there would be an impact if the Local Plan stalled at the current stage, which would be difficult to manage. Medway’s previous Local Plan dated from 2003 when Plans usually only covered a maximum period of 15 years and therefore there would be an implication if there was a further delay.

The Council had been fighting speculative planning applications from developers across Medway, including Cliffe, the Hoo Peninsula and the Capstone Valley. Where the Council opposed these developments, it constantly lost planning enquiries. The cost to the Council had been in the hundreds of thousands of pounds and that could not be sustained. Medway had one of the highest planning enquiry costs of anywhere in the country so the lack of a Local Plan was one that needed to be resolved.

Question B – Katie Lowe, of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“How many dinosaurs have you seen in Medway this month? You may have noticed 1 of the new 21 signs in Medway’s four Air Quality Management Areas asking drivers to switch off their engines at traffic lights, featuring our recently recruited mascot Dino, a logo designed by young creatives at MidKent College.

These signs have been erected to reduce pollution, protect the health of children and those with asthma, and save our pennies. "Turn Off When You Stop", our Medway Breathes slogan, is intended to go far broader. We are looking to find ways to spread the message and particularly encourage drivers to turn off outside schools. We are already building partnerships across the local communities, schools and businesses to ensure our children’s lungs are protected.

Beyond the School Streets scheme, which is not practical for all schools, what can the Council do to help us to amplify the message and change driver behaviour?”

In response, Councillor Paterson said that the Environmental Protection Team had been pleased to work closely with the Medway Breathes project team on their exciting initiative. Following the successful DEFRA funded Rainham idling

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project, which tested the effectiveness of different signs to change driver behaviour and switch off their engines when stationary at a busy traffic junction, the Team had been able to use some of the remaining air quality grant received to manufacture and instal new signs across the Medway Air Quality Management Areas as part of a wider idling campaign.

The project team had also committed to using the remaining grant on some smaller signs for schools that were not suitable for inclusion in the School Streets programme. These aimed to encourage drivers to switch off when parked near school gates. Work would continue with the Medway Breathes team on rolling out these signs and the other elements of their project and Councillor Paterson encouraged other Council teams to engage with the project to help maximise its success and was proud to have collected a car sticker to promote the project.

Katie Lowe asked the following supplementary question:

“What message does the Council wish to give parents, carers and grandparents who idle outside Medway schools?”

Councillor Paterson said that he had been clear in his public statements in relation to the School Streets Scheme that it was incumbent on drivers to behave responsibly around schools. This meant reducing speed, not parking around the school if it can be avoided and making some of the journey to and from school on foot where the parent / carer and child were able bodied.

The Scheme was a clear example of how small steps could be taken to make a massive difference to air quality around schools. Councillor Paterson said he did not appreciate any driver who put their own convenience ahead of the health and safety of Medway residents. He was grateful to the questioner for their work and wished them every success.

Question C – Daniel Broom, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Gurung, the following:

“My name is Dan Broom from the Q-ship Society – the Q-ship Society was set up to save, restore and home the last Astute Class sloop from World War One, one of three purpose built Royal Navy ships left in the world, and was listed as a national treasure, which currently sits abandoned on Chatham Docks. With the future of Chatham Docks uncertain, the Q-ship's future is also at risk. The loss of such a significant piece of Medway history will surely be catastrophic.

Will the administration honour our maritime history, which directly links to Medway, agree a plan of restoration led by our volunteers and experts, working with the society to find a home for this vessel to be enjoyed as a tourist attraction for many years to come, rather than send her to her grave?”

Answering the question on behalf of Councillor Gurung, Councillor Louwella Prenter thanked Daniel Broom for bringing HMS Saxifrage to the Council's attention. She said that the Council was extremely proud of the military and

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maritime history of the area and had celebrated and supported both over many years. This had included marking Armed Forces Day and being a strategic partner in the development of the Chatham Historic Dockyard.

As the Council entered into Year 2 of the 10 year plus partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it would be happy to meet the Q-Ship Society to discuss proposals for the ship and its potential as a tourist attraction.

Daniel Broom asked the following supplementary question:

“Ideal sites that, come to mind, could be something like industrial sites that are no longer in use or anything like that. Such as Collier Dock, which is behind Asda, any industrial site near water would be ideal for the vessel to be homed.

Councillor Louwella Prenter said that the meeting the questioner would have with the Portfolio Holder could investigate and discuss all these options.

Question D – Alan Wells, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“In early 2024, the developer Esquire applied for planning permission to build 34 homes at Grain Village. The application proposed a new footpath connection to a new pedestrian crossing on Grain Road at the rear of the development, with bee and insect habitat planting included in the plans.

Grain High Street, across the road from the development, is where the Co-Op, the main shop in the village, the pub, and a road to the primary school, church and beachfront can be accessed.

On the 4 November, the Council's Planning Committee approved the development with the pedestrian footpath and crossing, and I quote, 'The access arrangements are considered acceptable with pedestrian footpaths and a pedestrian link to Grain Road.'

On 28 November, Esquire submitted a new application to remove the pedestrian footpath connection and planting, submitting the change to its 4 November plans as a 'non-material amendment'. The Council could have rejected the amendment under the 'non-material' proposal if it had wanted to.

The lack of a footpath to link to the new crossing will mean it will take longer for residents to access the High Street, as well as the loss of the planting of biodiversity flora on verges as originally agreed.

The Council approved the application on 5 December, allowing no time for any objections to the change.

My question to Council is this: Why did the Council not allow villagers at Grain to voice their concerns to Esquire reneging on their original infrastructure plans?”

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In response, Councillor Curry said that in terms of the original approval by the Council's Planning Committee, due to the time limits on obtaining Government funding for affordable homes for MHS Homes, a Non-Material Amendment (NMA) was needed to temporarily change the scheme while various authorisations and legal agreements were sorted. This had been done and a further NMA agreed which returned the scheme to that originally approved by the Planning Committee.

Councillor Curry gave reassurance that nothing would be done to change the scheme permanently without engaging with the local community, it had been a purely administrative process and the scheme would come forward as originally approved.

The proposed development would be delivered as per the plans originally approved by the Planning Committee. The scheme would be built by a local Small and Medium Enterprise developer, which had a reputation for delivering high quality development, using local labour and services and being considerate to local residents during construction, as well as delivering much needed affordable homes, which it was hoped would provide valuable accommodation for local residents.

Alan Wells chose not to ask a supplementary question.

Question E – Vivienne Parker, of Chatham, submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson:

"I have noticed signs on the Chatham - Maidstone Road warning about pedestrians crossing by the hotel. Does this mean that the crossing by ASDA is no longer going ahead?"

In response, Councillor Paterson said that as part of feedback from local road users at Maidstone Road, Chatham, the Council undertook to look at the possibility of pedestrian facilities serving the route to and from the nearby supermarket at Bridgewood Roundabout.

It was noted that there were crossing facilities along this section of the A229, although they were situated a short distance away. The Council supported and encouraged sustainable travel choices and had developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. This Plan helped identify where pedestrian and cycle infrastructure could be improved and also helped to prioritise where pedestrian and cycle routes should be improved.

This part of Maidstone Road did not form part of the routes identified as part of the Plan, but the Council had continued to investigate the location. Appropriate road signage had been placed there to help highlight to all road users the potential for there being pedestrians crossing ahead under the existing road layout arrangements. The Council was continuing to consider the matter and to monitor operation.

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No supplementary question was asked as Vivienne Parker was not present.

Question F - John Castle, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Many councils have adopted buses using hydrogen fuel cells for the local delivery of bus services. There are many reasons to do so, climate change is certainly one, hydrogen fuel cells can store green energy and when converted into electricity only water vapour is produced. It's clean energy and delivers clean air.

Putting hydrogen infrastructure in place is useful beyond bus services for meeting climate change goals for the Council and local area. For instance, waste and recycling vehicles could also switch to hydrogen fuel cells.

Does the Council agree with me that Medway should commit to removing diesel buses and deliver bus services using clean, green energy?”

In response, Councillor Curry said that he was very passionate about this issue. 92% of bus services were operated commercially by Arriva so any decision on vehicles would be a commercial business matter rather than a matter for the Council. This was also the case for similar independent operators who owned their own vehicles. Across operators in Medway, around 80% of the lower emission Euro 5 and Euro 6 engines were now being used and newer buses were currently being introduced by Arriva.

The Medway Bus Improvement Plan had a medium term ambition to improve the bus fleet to cleaner engines. This was estimated to be at a significant capital cost of at least £100m and would be dependent on the availability of private funding and/or Government grants. There were issues associated with the installation of electric charging and getting the electric charging capacity into the bus stations.

Sourcing hydrogen was currently an issue in the UK, not enough of it was being produced in an environmentally friendly way and the storage of the hydrogen on site was an issue as the largest Medway bus depot in Gillingham was in a residential area.

The Council was committed to removing diesel buses from Medway and this was part of the Climate Change Action Plan and part of the plans going forward through the Active Travel Group. Councillor Curry said he fully agreed with the principles and that it would be pursued as urgently as possible, dependent on costs and other factors.

John Castle asked the following supplementary question:

“Several times Medway Council has put out a statement saying electric buses are not suitable for Medway and that's almost certainly true. What the Council doesn't follow up with is the reasons why hydrogen is inappropriate and I think

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Councillor Curry has gone some way towards answering that and I just think that it would be helpful if that communication was made clearer in the future.”

Councillor Curry said that he apologised if the messaging had not been correct in relation to Hydrogen. It was a complicated issue and getting the messaging correct was difficult, which depended on where the buses could be located for charging or fuelling with hydrogen. This was a difficult fuel to cope with in an urban area. One thing to consider was where bus depots might be located in the future.

856 Motions

Motion A – Proposed by Councillor Mrs Turpin and supported by Councillor Pearce:

“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.”

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The Monitoring Officer informed the Council that he had advised all Members that in his opinion, the motion should not be debated during the current meeting and that the matter ought to be considered at the June meeting of full Council when the draft Medway Local Plan will be considered. To have a debate in advance of that meeting would increase the risk of legal challenge to the draft local plan because challenges may be brought on the basis of predetermination and / or bias.

The Monitoring Officer had recently shared the advice of King's Counsel with all Members who had advised that the Monitoring Officer "should allow the matter to be debated, if pressed"

King's Counsel had further advised:

"It is highly desirable that all Members now refrain from communications about the Local Plan until their opportunity to do so at that determinative Meeting that must be conducted with all Members of the Council having demonstrably not closed their minds, which, were it to occur, would be contrary to their decision-making duties."

The Monitoring Officer stated that when the substantive motion was put to the vote, he advised Members to vote against the motion to avoid having a Council decision being made prematurely in advance of proper consideration of the Local Plan. Any such vote should be cast on the basis that this was not making a determination on land use, but would be rejecting the motion because the proper time for that debate on land uses would be on consideration of the Draft Local Plan.

In accordance with Rule 11.6.2 of the Council Rules, a procedural motion was moved and supported that the substantive motion be put to the vote without further debate.

Upon being put to the vote, the procedural motion was carried.

In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the substantive motion was taken:

For: Councillors Crozer, Finch, Pearce, Sands, Spalding, Mrs Turpin, Vye and Williams. (8)

Against: Councillors Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Field, Hamindishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Jackson, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Stamp and Van Dyke. (28)

Abstain: Councillors Anang, Barrett, Brake, Clarke, Doe, Fearn, Filmer, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hyne, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Perfect, Spring, Tejan and Wildey. (19)

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the substantive motion was lost.

Motion B – Proposed by Councillor Spalding and supported by Councillor Mrs Turpin:

“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.”

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion C – proposed by Councillor Pearce and supported by Councillor Mrs Turpin:

“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

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- 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.”

In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the Substantive motion was taken:

For: Councillors Anang, Barrett, Brake, Clarke, Crozer, Doe, Fearn, Filmer, Finch, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hyne, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Pearce, Perfect, Sands, Spring, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Vye, Wildey and Williams. (26)

Against: Councillors Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Field, Hamindishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Jackson, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Stamp and Van Dyke (28)

Abstain: Councillor Spalding (1)

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion D – proposed by Councillor Finch and supported by Councillor Vye:

“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.

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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."

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion E – This motion was withdrawn and was therefore not discussed by the Council.

Motion F – proposed by Councillor Lawrence and supported by Councillor Hackwell:

"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.

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- 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."

In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the Substantive motion was taken:

For: Councillors Anang, Barrett, Brake, Clarke, Crozer, Doe, Fearn, Filmer, Finch, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hyne, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Pearce, Perfect, Sands, Spalding, Spring, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Vye, Wildey and Williams. (27)

Against: Councillors Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Field, Hamindishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Jackson, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Stamp and Van Dyke (28)

Abstain: (0)

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

Motion G – This motion was withdrawn and was therefore not discussed by the Council.

857 Leader's Report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader's Report. The following issues were discussed:

- Local Government Reorganisation proposals which were expected to see the current 14 councils in Kent and Medway replaced by three or four unitary authorities. Medway's preference was for four unitaries to be created. Following public engagement over summer 2025, Medway and the other councils would be required to submit final proposals to Government in November.
- Disappointment that Kent and Medway had not being included in the Government's Devolution priority programme and the impact this could have on funding.
- The work being undertaken to support Medway becoming a Marmot Place. This was recognised as being an important step to tackling health inequalities in Medway.
- The approaching 80th anniversaries of Victory in Europe (VE) Day and Victory over Japan (VJ) Day and the events taking place in Medway to mark the anniversaries, such as a service and parade taking place at Rochester Cathedral, 13 local street parties and six beacons being lit across Medway.
- Year 4 of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and its availability for Medway businesses.
- The hosting of the Brickwrecks sunken ships Lego exhibition at the Historic Dockyard, Chatham.
- The latest Medway Question Time and City Hall events which provide an opportunity for residents, stakeholders and young people to put questions to the Leader and other senior Council figures.
- The second year of 'Welcome to Medway' family events.
- Hosting of the LV21 Light Ship at Chatham Historic Dockyard.
- The Pride in Medway event with 199 nominations having been made with there being particular recognition of the overall winner, Paul Dennington.
- Recognition of Ashley Hook, the Chief Executive of MHS Homes for his work in relation to housing and charity.
- The development of the Medway Climate Change Action Plan including the target of planting 10,000 trees by 2028. 3,500 had already been planted at Deangate Ridge.

858 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Spalding asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“The condition of road surfaces in Medway remains at the forefront of public attention.

In some cases, potholes and deteriorating top surfaces are the result of water leaks which often continue for days despite being reported to Southern Water.

An example of this being the Allhallows Road between Lower Stoke and Allhallows. Other causes are overburdened wastewater and sewage facilities which Southern Water is aware of but does nothing about.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how much money has been reclaimed by Medway Council from Southern Water to cover road surface damage that could have and indeed should have been avoided, but for the apparent failings of Southern Water?”

In response, Councillor Paterson said that between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2025, the Council had recovered £117,800 from Southern Water through failed reinstatements, fixed penalty charges, and over-running works.

No reports had been received of road surface damage caused by water leaks on the highway network. In the event of surface water damage being identified, the Council would use its recharging mechanism to reclaim costs from Southern Water.

Question B – Councillor Mrs Turpin asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Back in February this year, consultants engaged the community in Rainham to launch work on a new feasibility study for the town centre. This event included a number of Councillors, the MP and Cabinet Members.

A similar community consultation group was put together for the Hoo Peninsula - named the Hoo Community Infrastructure Framework, again using consultants. However, this engagement work excluded elected ward Members and Parish Councillors.

Can the Portfolio Holder explain the difference in approach taken, which snubbed elected Members for the Hoo Peninsula?”

In response, Councillor Curry said that the consultation had been put together for the Hoo Community Infrastructure Framework engagement programme. The draft framework that had emerged and its recommendations had been informed

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by an extensive programme of engagement that over 650 people had participated in.

13 events and drop-in sessions had been hosted and a Community Panel created, made up of people living across the Hoo Peninsula. The Panel held four workshops and a final presentation to ward and parish Councillors and it was therefore slightly unfair to say that they had been excluded from the process.

All the events and drop in sessions had been promoted through local and social media and over 50 groups based on the Peninsula were contacted directly, asking them to make their members aware of the ways in which they could get involved.

This was a co-design process by which trust was built by sharing knowledge and experience, with everyone in the group being equal. It was designed so that the Panel was a mechanism for in depth engagement. This included a group of residents, who could share their experiences, build their knowledge about planning, section 106 and other factors that impacted on community infrastructure to enable informed recommendations to be made.

A recommendation was put forward by the commissioned consultants, PRD, that certain groups should not be allowed on the community panel. These groups included elected officers and Members, staff from the Council's Culture, Libraries and Heritage Team, Regeneration Team and Planning Team and NHS decision makers. At all times, people had had opportunities to comment and contribute to this debate.

Several meetings were held with PRD and stakeholders, including the parish councils and elected Members. At the request of the Community Panel, parish Councillors and elected Members were invited to the final panel session, where they presented their findings, shared their experiences and took questions.

Question C – Councillor Finch asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“Over the past year, we’ve seen a surge in camera enforcement across Medway - including over 2,000 fines from the School Streets scheme and more than 3,000 from moving traffic offence enforcement. These clearly generate significant revenue for the Council. However, the red routes scheme, despite its £805,000 cost and rollout across five key roads, issued just 35 fines between May and November 2024.

Given this inconsistency in enforcement outcomes, can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether the Council intends to expand, repurpose or replace these schemes for schemes such as congestion or ULEZ-style charges or limiting how frequently residents can drive in certain areas, including undertaking a full public consultation?”

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In response, Councillor Paterson strongly criticised Reform UK and its presence on Medway Council. He considered that figures contained in the question were incorrect and that it demonstrated an ignorance of how moving traffic offences were enforced. He continued that there were no plans to introduce the initiatives set out in the question.

Question D – Councillor Vye asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“Residents in Rochester East and Warren Wood are fed up. They're dodging potholes, tripping over broken paving slabs, and wondering why their council tax isn't being reflected in the state of their streets. It's not just an inconvenience - it's a safety issue. The people I represent deserve answers, and more importantly, they deserve action.

The Labour-led Medway Council must finally take responsibility for the crumbling state of our roads and pavements across Medway - especially in Rochester East and Warren Wood - where potholes and broken footpaths are putting residents at risk every single day.

When will this Council stop the excuses and deliver the repairs our community desperately needs?”

In response, Councillor Paterson was critical of Councillors who did not live near the ward they were seeking to represent and asked questions of other Councillors who knew the area a lot better than they did. He said that this was the case in relation to this question.

Councillor Paterson said that it was a monumental task to reverse what he called two decades of neglect of Medway's 831 kilometres of publicly maintainable highways and that the administration was not under any illusions about the scale of the task. While the funding available was not sufficient for the task, there was an objective scoring of roads according to multiple factors, including level of degradation and use. This allowed scarce resources to be allocated to roads most in need of repair. There was no guarantee that those resources would touch every ward every year, local Councillors who knew the area well would be aware that several schemes in recent years, had targeted problems in Rochester East and Warren Wood.

In the last year, works in the ward had included full resurfacing of the Cut as well as resurfacing of Delce Road at its junction with Star Hill. In the following week, resurfacing would take place between the City Way roundabout and High Street, Rochester.

Question E – Councillor Perfect asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Can the Leader of the Council confirm whether he will be undertaking a public consultation with regards to the specific question of whether this Council will be

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proposing in November three or four councils for the region of Kent as part of the Local Government reorganisation process?"

In response, Councillor Maple said he was pleased that there would be a phase where the public of Medway and of the wider Kent region would have the opportunity to have the conversation about what the future of local government should look like. He agreed that in the short term it was right that the process had been led by council leaders and chief executives as timescales had been very tight. There would now be an opportunity for 1.9 million people, including 285,000 Medway residents to have their say, in relation to the number of councils that should be formed and other aspects, such as what powers could sit with a Mayoral combined authority. The opportunity to ask that question would be taken to be clear on the process and how it would look and feel.

Councillor Maple had appreciated cross party working against the backdrop of short deadlines. A really positive session had been hosted at the St George's Centre where more than 40 Councillors on a cross party basis had engaged. That had led to questions being answered and sensible suggestions being made. Councillor Maple said his view on how many unitary authorities should be created was well documented. That would be part of the conversation as public engagement took place.

All existing tools of communication would be used for the engagement along with some additional elements. The process of recruiting the team that would assist with this work had been started and this team would be involved in other work. They would be undertaking policy work, which was an area in which other councils had a bigger workforce. Strategy would be important as this work progressed.

Councillor Maple looked forward to hearing the view of all Medway Councillors and most importantly, he looked forward to hearing the views of the people of Medway as the November 2025 decision deadline approached.

Question F – Councillor Hackwell asked the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Mahil, the following:

"With the increase in the National Living Wage and the lowering of the employers' national insurance contributions from £9,100 to the lower threshold of £5,000, that came into effect this month due to the Labour government's budget, many small businesses in Medway are starting to struggle.

Can the Portfolio Holder outline what measures are being taken to support local businesses in helping to create jobs in Medway and attract investment to improve the local economy?"

Councillor Maple answered the question on behalf of Councillor Mahil. He said that the administration and the Portfolio Holder were taking a number of different routes to support local businesses.

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The Partners for Growth and Green Growth Grants that were being awarded for up to £2,500, would soon double to £5,000. The Kent and Medway Business Fund offered 0% interest loans of up to £600,000 for businesses looking to move forward.

1 to 1 business support advice began in Summer 2024 and was being delivered from fantastic ascend co-working space. It was planned to expand this service from Summer 2025.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund had helped to increase footfall in town centres by tens of thousands of visitors. Submissions were now being received for Year 4 of the Fund. As well as important feasibility funding, there was also a specific summer programme fund. This had allowed organisations external to Medway Council to deliver positive events across Medway.

Local supply chain and networking opportunities were being strengthened, including the upcoming Medway Business Meet Up and Medway Business Skills Showcase, which would take place for a second time.

Medway Council would be working with the owners of major employment sites in the area and with the inward investment agency, Locate in Kent, to attract further investment and new local jobs.

The Council had signed the Federation of Small Business Local Leadership Pledge within the first 100 days of the current administration and was making sure that it delivered for businesses.

Question G – Councillor Tejan asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Could the Portfolio Holder provide an assessment of how the recent changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are expected to impact individuals with neurological conditions in Medway, given that we trust that the Council will support these individuals in navigating and mitigating any challenges arising from these changes?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that it was not yet known what the final outcomes would be for the proposed changes. He had supported residents with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals and had an over 90% success rate, which he considered demonstrated that the previous and current system was not fit for purpose, with people waiting for more than two years for their appeals, with appeals often heard in court, an intimidating environment.

Councillor Maple said that the current system was broken and needed fixing. It was important that people with relevant lived experience to be able to share their views. The Motion that had been put forward by the Labour and Co-Operative Group to be discussed at this Council meeting had needed to be withdrawn following advice from the Monitoring Officer that Councillors who shared relevant lived experience at the meeting would be regarded as having a

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disclosable interest. Relevant engagement would therefore be undertaken through key stakeholders, such as the Medway Neurological Network.

The current Council administration had stepped in when the Government had made changes to winter fuel payments, to make sure that around 1,600 residents who had just missed out on receiving these payments, received additional support. A number of residents who were entitled to Pension Credit and were not claiming it, were supported to do so, this work continued through the relevant Council team.

Councillor Maple considered that the Green Paper gave some opportunities for improvements but there were risks and the Council needed to ensure that it heard from residents affected, in view of the current system being not fit for purpose, possibly in relation to some intermittent conditions, such as some neurological conditions. He concluded that there would be opportunities for Councillors to have these conversations as the process moved forward.

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, written responses would be provided to questions 10H to 10O.

Question H – Councillor Wildey submitted the following to the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray:

“Medway NHS Foundation Trust has recently appointed a new Interim Chief Executive, following the departure of Jayne Black. Can the Deputy Leader please update the Council on engagement she has had with the new Interim Chief Executive, particularly around the outcomes of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report?”

Question I – Councillor Lawrence submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

“Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that the Prime Minister should apologise for breaking his promise not to increase Council Tax?”

Question J – Councillor Joy submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs:

“This administration has risen to praise the breakfast club for all at primary schools, with disturbing news that some of the piloting schools have dropped out due to funding not covering the cost. With other schools in Medway looking at what is funded (the food element, but just for one item and a drink), there has been no consideration of the required facilities to implement the clubs for the government target of 75% to be achieved, of the required staffing to deliver (meeting required ratios) and also the lost revenue to schools that currently have a chargeable service (providing food choices that does not limit what they can have).

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With several schools maintained by the Council, what is the financial impact on delivering it, presuming that an area within Education and/or Children's Services will be cut to fund it?"

Question K – Councillor Gulvin submitted the following to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

"Can the Leader of the Council tell the people of Medway if the £40M of borrowing he and his administration have undertaken to balance the first two budgets is going to be reimbursed through increases in government funding or through increases in Council Tax?"

Question L – Councillor Etheridge submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke:

"Procurement Policy Note 009, 'Tackling modern slavery in Government supply chains', provides guidance, which applies to all central government departments and their executive agencies. Modern slavery is often a hidden crime involving one person denying another person their freedom. It includes slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the Modern Slavery Act) was introduced.

Therefore, will the Portfolio Holder guarantee, that the Government's £200 million purchase of solar panels from the Chinese Solar Power industry using forced labour - which is rife in the solar supply chain - will not be used on any Medway Council owned building, by including this within your annual report at the appropriate scrutiny committees and using Medway's influence to help ensure that no other neighbouring authorities also use these solar panels?"

Question M – Councillor Spring submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry:

"China released 11.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions in 2023, making it by far the world's largest polluter that year. While most countries experienced dramatic emission reductions in 2020 due to COVID-19, China was one of only a handful of countries where emissions increased. They are still building coal, oil and gas power plants at an expanding rate.

Shipping goods from China to the UK is highly energy-intensive, as a single trip by a container vessel here can emit up to 900 metric tons of CO₂.

Meanwhile, Britain, which puts out just one per cent of emissions, is using China to build our clean energy so we can pretend to be clean.

As Medway's Green Champion, will you guarantee that by using your influence in Kent and neighbouring authorities, that our green initiatives and associated procurement is initially UK based?"

Question N – Councillor Anang submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways, and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson:

“As the Councillor for Rainham North ward and a parent, I have been contacted by several concerned parents regarding road safety in and around Rainham Mark Grammar School. This follows a recent incident where a student was hit by a car near the school. Parents have indicated that this is not the first occurrence, and the school has stated that they have previously contacted the Council regarding the matter but have seen no action taken.

Given the severity of the issue and the continued risks to students, it is probable that the Council may have received communications from Rainham Mark Grammar School regarding this. Could the Portfolio Holder please confirm what steps, if any, are being considered or planned to address these concerns, such as the provision of a zebra crossing or other traffic calming measures?”

Question O – Councillor Cook submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson:

“In addition to School Streets, what is the Council doing to keep children safe from traffic outside their schools?”

859 Establishment of Committees, Appointments and Schedule of Meetings 2025/2026

Background:

This report asked the Council to make a number of recommendations to the Annual meeting of the Council on 14 May 2025 regarding the committees and other bodies to be appointed for 2025/2026 and also set out the proposed programme of meetings.

On 23 January 2025, the Council had agreed a draft schedule of meetings for 2025/2026. As reported to Cabinet on 11 March 2025, when it received a report on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution, it was necessary to add a special Council meeting on Thursday 13 November 2025 to the meetings schedule for the purpose of submitting comments to Cabinet on 21 November 2025 regarding the proposed final submission to Government on LGR, ahead of the deadline of 28 November 2025.

It was noted that Councillors Hubbard and Shokar had re-joined the Labour and Co-operative Group since publication of the Council Agenda, a review of political balance would therefore have to be undertaken in advance of the Annual Council meeting on 14 May.

Councillor Peake, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed the recommendations set out in the report, noting that the recommendations at paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 [decisions a and b below] would be subject to the

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outcome of a review of the allocation of seats following the increase in size of the Labour and Co-operative Group from 29 members to 31 members.

Decisions:

The Council agreed to recommend to Annual Council on 14 May 2025:

- a) The establishment of committees, sub committees and task groups, their size and the allocation of seats to political groups as set out in Appendices A and B to the report, together with terms of reference as set out in the Council's constitution.
- b) That appointments should be made to Joint Committees, outside bodies and other bodies as set out in Appendix C to the report (with nominees to be reported at the Annual Council meeting).
- c) The timetable of meetings for the 2025/2026 municipal year as set out in Appendix D to the report.
- d) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Whips, to vary the schedule of meetings during the 2025/2026 municipal year as required, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.

860 Review of the Constitution

Background:

This report set out a review of the changes as to how full Council meetings were conducted and proposed to make some permanent changes, following initial consideration at the January 2025 full Council meeting. The report also confirmed the proposal to trial some further changes with regards to public and Member questions at Council meetings.

This report also recommended changes to the Constitution with regards to the Employee Scheme of Delegation and to the Kent and Medway NHS Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee terms of reference.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Perfect, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council approved the changes to the Council Rules, as set out in Appendix A to the report, in respect of changes to the arrangements for conducting full Council meetings.
- b) The Council approved the revised terms of reference for the Kent and Medway NHS Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Appendix B to the report.
- c) The Council approved changes to the Employee Scheme of Delegation, as set out in Appendix C to the report.

861 Report on Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Background:

This report provided a summary of the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees since the last report to Council on 23 January 2025.

Councillor Tejan, supported by McDonald, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

The reports considered by the Council's four Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the previous three months were highlighted. The Committees were thanked for their work over the previous year including:

- Holding health partners to account, pressing for action in relation to GP shortages, access to dental services and pharmacy services.
- The issue of underused space in the Healthy Living Centres was raised.
- Raising concerns about the funding pressures facing nurseries and pushing for fairer local allocations.
- Welcoming progress on Family Hubs and Start for Life.
- Considering a Call-In of a Cabinet decision in relation to the School Streets Scheme.
- Monitoring the Council's finances in a challenging climate.
- Development of a more robust process for scrutiny reviews through a new Task Group Protocol.

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

862 Contract Letting - Exceptional Circumstances

Background:

This report provided details of one contract awarded during the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, in accordance with the provisions of section 12 of the Contract Procedure Rules.

The report stated that exemptions to Contract Procedure Rules to deal with the letting of contracts in exceptional circumstances, where it was in the best interests of the Council to do so, could be approved by the Monitoring Officer, provided that the exemption did not breach any UK Directive, Statute or Regulation.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Browne, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the contents of the report.

863 Use of Urgency Provisions

Background:

This report provided details of recent usage of urgency provisions contained within the Constitution.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Education, Councillor Coombs, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the use of urgency provisions as set out in section 4 of the report.

Mayor

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