

Public Questions and responses from the meeting of Cabinet on 3 June 2025

Question A – Elizabeth McVeigh of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement , Councillor Paterson, the following:

“Considering the proximity of St Andrew’s School and St Margaret’s at Troy Town School to The King’s School, to what extent was the health and safety of pupils attending these schools taken into consideration in the development of the King’s Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery Street Scheme proposals?”

In response, Councillor Paterson stated that the health and safety of all pupils across Medway was a key priority in the development of any School Street Scheme. Whilst the initial focus of the King’s School proposal was to address specific concerns around road safety and congestion directly outside the school, careful consideration was also being given to the wider implications, including potential traffic displacement and its effect on surrounding roads and nearby schools.

As part of the commitment to creating safer, healthier streets, the Council had introduced School Streets at seven locations, with nine more currently in development. These schemes were designed not only to improve safety but also to encourage more sustainable travel choices for families and the wider community.

To support this, a School Streets road safety lesson had recently been introduced as part of a broader road safety education offering to schools. This new lesson complemented ongoing efforts to promote active travel, including regular dialogue with schools to support effective school travel planning and the delivery of targeted road safety interventions.

Council officers continued to work closely with all schools in the area, including St. Margaret’s and St. Andrew’s, to ensure that any changes to local traffic patterns were managed in a way that maintained pupil safety and supported shared goals of reducing congestion, encouraging active travel and improving air quality.

Elizabeth McVeigh asked the following supplementary question:

“I think the worry we have is it seems the head teachers of the schools involved have not been consulted. It seems all three head teachers, including Kings, don’t really approve of the scheme as it’s proposed.”

Councillor Paterson stated there had been consultation between officers and senior leadership teams at all schools, and that the King’s proposal had been prompted by a direct request for assistance from the school itself. It was something that had been engaged on and there had been many opportunities to speak to Council officers and put forward alternative proposals, suggestions, or improvements and this would continue.

Question B – Lawrence McVeigh of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“In the Cabinet Notes for 19 November 2024, the reason for changing the original proposals for the King’s Pre-Prep and Nursey School Street Scheme was to allay concerns of Roebuck Road residents about traffic displacement.

As traffic displacement is raised as a concern, can Cllr. Paterson explain how the traffic displaced by the proposed scheme will affect two other nearby primary schools, St. Margaret’s at Troytown and St. Andrew’s, which are approximately 200 metres distant from King Edward Road in which the King’s Schools are situated.”

In response, Councillor Paterson stated that as with any changes to the highway network, it was important to acknowledge that new schemes, particularly School Streets, could result in some level of traffic displacement, especially in the short term as travel behaviours adjusted.

He advised that he was aware of the Cabinet report referred to, and that unfortunately the wording was slightly misleading. In his view, it was never about displacement, but the fact that there was a direct pedestrian access point to the school entrance, which the original scheme (which had only included King Edward Road and Lockington Grove) sought to tackle. It was therefore an omission which officers had been immediately alerted to and had certainly been raised in the feedback in the initial consultation. Therefore it was not so much about displacement as recognising the nature of Roebuck as a street with a school on it, albeit indirectly through a pedestrian access route.

Councillor Paterson stated that the primary objective of a School Street was to enhance safety for vulnerable road users, particularly children, and that by reducing vehicle movements directly outside school gates during peak times this not only improved safety and air quality but also encouraged more families to choose active options such as walking, cycling, or scooting to school. Evidence from other School Street schemes, including St Peters Infant School and Holcomb Road, had shown that when roads were made safer and more welcoming, there was a measurable increase in active travel. This contributed to healthier lifestyles for children and families, reduced congestion, and supported broader environmental goals. He added that to date, feedback from Tranche 1 School Street schemes had not indicated any significant or sustained issues in traffic displacement affecting nearby areas.

A statutory consultation on the proposed scheme for the King’s School had concluded in late April and the Council was currently reviewing all responses carefully. If the scheme proceeded, a post-implementation monitoring period would be undertaken to assess its impact, including any effects on surrounding roads and nearby schools such as St. Margaret’s and St. Andrew’s.

Councillor Paterson advised that the Council remained committed to ensuring that any unintended consequences were identified and addressed appropriately, whilst continuing to promote safer, healthier, and more sustainable travel choices for school communities.

Lawrence McVeigh asked the following supplementary question:

"Your reference to the St Peters School Street I think is, unusual for want of a better word. St Peters is a dead end, as you know, as your children went there. It's about 300 yards long. It's not a group of interconnected streets. There are no schools near it. You haven't really addressed the problem of parking and parents safety at St Andrews and St Margarets. Then the problem that parents who are displaced by the school street from parking and dropping their school children off there having to cross Mason Road, which as we know is busy at the best of times, even busier during school drop off and pick up times. You mentioned your consultation, well from your own minutes the question is 'do you agree with the proposal to introduce School Street Schemes' strongly agree and agree 76, 11 are indifferent and 144 are against it. Where does that leave your consultation?"

In response, Councillor Paterson stated that, again, there was an unfortunate use of words and that it would be more helpful if the initial consultation had described it differently in terms of the design stage and an opportunity for feedback. It was not a referendum on the issue, it was a school safety and road safety matter which would be taken based on road safety considerations rather than the preferences of individual schools mentioned. St Andrews Preparatory School, quite independently of the King's school proposal, in his view caused unacceptable traffic chaos due to parents choosing to drop off outside the school. This was not a satisfactory school transport plan, and in his opinion, it was unacceptable in 2025 and with the number of cars on the roads, that chauffeuring able bodied pupils by able bodied parents directly to the door of the school was appropriate regardless of the inconvenience it caused residents and the danger it posed to pedestrians.

He had previously mentioned St Peters Infants because, along with Mr. McVeigh, he had a particular affection for the school, but he stated that he could easily have mentioned any of the other six sites which included, in some cases, school street zones. This had been put into action in seven locations with minimal concern or issue and held support amongst the parent and teacher bodies of those schools.

It was of note that consultation responses and feedback were important, however Councillor Paterson stated that as the school streets scheme was advantageous for school safety (demonstrated not just in Medway but around the country), decisions would be based on safety and all available facts.

Question C – Bryan Fowler of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

"At a recent O&S meeting a Councillor stated he lacked information about use of the Brook Car Park. More recently, a Cabinet decision about disposing of the Upper Mount car park was made without published information about use of this car park. This car park has now been closed.

Is there a strategic approach to car parking in Chatham especially given the amount of residential accommodation being built and the stress on retail?"

In response, Councillor Paterson stated that the Council did take a strategic approach to the management of car parking. He further advised that at the Regeneration, Culture & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on

26 February 2025, the future of various operational properties had been considered which had included the Brook Multistorey Car Park (MSCP) and the Upper Mount Car Park in Chatham, and at its meeting on 11 March 2025, the Cabinet had declared the Brook MSCP and the Upper Mount Car Park as surplus.

At each meeting, Members had been made aware that: the net income (after all costs) from the Upper Mount car park was less than £13,000pa, which was less than £124 per space per annum; that the net income from the Brook MSCP (after all costs) had been under £25,000pa, which was less than £47 per space per annum; and that the MSCP needed £3.895M spent on it over the next 10 years. Both of the car parks were not well used and more recently, levels 4 and 5 of the Brook MSCP had been taken out of use.

Councillor Paterson advised that modelling of car park use in Chatham had demonstrated that the closure of the Brook MSCP, Union Place, the Upper Mount Car Park, Union Place and the Market Hall car parks (the latter two had already closed), would create the demand for an extra 102 spaces in Chatham and these would be accommodated at all but peak days at Christmas within the Pentagon Centre (which had 433 spaces) and at the Riverside car park (which had 113 spaces) and that this would bring in additional income for these car parks.

At present there were 102 disabled parking spaces in Chatham and 2,116 standard spaces. The loss of the two car parks represented a loss of 1.96% of these disabled spaces and 30.67% of the standard spaces. New developments were required to provide the appropriate amount of parking that was needed to serve them. For example, the old Bus Station would be brought into use for parking to serve the development of Mountbatten House and the Waterfront.

Bryan Fowler asked the following supplementary question:

“My supplementary question is, what do you think of the notion that the local authority should take steps to actively increase the use of its own and perhaps other car parks? Including by carefully monitoring it and measuring it, and of course use of the car parks could be made by residents and by shoppers. So why not actively promote the car parks that we have got rather than just use them as an opportunity to become a Brownfield site and build upon?”

In response, Councillor Paterson stated that more customers using the car parks would be welcomed as the goal was to increase the generation of income rather than cut vital services. Suggestions were welcomed as to how the promotion of the car parks could be improved upon and he would welcome a conversation outside of the meeting.