

Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Medway 2.0 Update

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Summary

This report provides an update to the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan and highlights the key projects that are targeting savings for the 2026/27 budget.

1 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan.

1.2 Members are invited to comment on the currently prioritised workstreams.

2 Budget and policy framework

2.1 The One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan was agreed by Cabinet on 30 April 2024, with the 2025/26 agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 6 May 2025.

2.2 The Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan directly supports the implementation of the FIT Plan's targets by providing dedicated service design and improvement capability, which will enable services to streamline and improve their operations, in particular customer-facing and support service activity.

3 Background

3.1 BSD O&S was provided with an update on the Medway 2.0 Roadmap on 20 June 2024, and Cabinet received an update on 6 May 2025. Feedback was positive and progress was noted for the workstreams presented in the report.

3.2 It was agreed at this meeting that the Integrated Hubs programme would now form part of the wider Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan.

4 Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan

4.1 The Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan has been developed by identifying the areas where it would have the biggest impact based on the following criteria:

- High demand (especially in telephony),

- High volume of duplication,
- Extensive reach (relating to impact on large numbers of residents),
- High volume of rework/rejections (revisiting the case),
- Covers a range of service patterns (report it, apply for it etc.),
- Identified as a priority for and by services,
- Potential for significant savings.

4.2 Previous reports have highlighted the journey from identifying the 41 candidate processes (shown in Appendix 1) and how they have been collated and categorised into the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan, which focusses on the following workstreams:

- Housing and Homelessness
- External/Resident Facing Processes
- Internal/Back Office Processes
- Frontline Services
- Data

4.3 The following sections provide an overview of these programmes and workstreams, with relevant updates and planned activity.

5 Medway 2.0 Programmes and Workstreams

5.1 **Housing and Homelessness**

A service design workshop was held with the Housing service on 3 December 2024 to review the discovery / Business Analysis (BA) work that had been carried out by the Data and Design team. It was an extremely positive and productive session, with several opportunities identified that will be co-produced with the service.

5.2 Key findings and requirements from the session were:

- The service needs better access to data for decision making,
- Data held within different systems needs to be “joined up” to allow the service to provide more holistic support and earlier interventions,
- An improved Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system would support the ability to produce a “single view of the resident”,
- A redesign of the “front door” service would allow us to “open the doors” to those in need, whilst maintaining digital channels for those that are able to use them.

5.3 A follow up workshop was held on 27 February 2025 to start designing what a new Housing service could look like, balancing accessibility, efficiency, and sustainability.

5.4 A workshop was held on 24 March 2025, which was focused on designing the new “front door” process, which links with the Integrated Hubs project. During this workshop, we focused on fostering a culture of openness and collaboration through co-creation sessions and breaking down departmental silos to design more integrated and effective services for residents.

- 5.5 Currently, most of the necessary data points to identify residents at risk are held across various systems and managed by different departments, creating silos that push issues downstream and put pressure on social care services.
- 5.6 To address this, we mapped out the digital pre-prevention business process to explore integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot functionality for both external users and internal staff, aimed at identifying those at risk earlier. We also engaged additional stakeholders, inviting officers to discuss integrating welfare, debt advice data, and Macmillan referrals.
- 5.7 As part of this project, services worked together to change the access arrangements at Kingsley House for walk in support. This was achieved and Kingsley House re-opened with the new service model on 23 June 2025.
- 5.8 We are already seeing the early benefits from linking up services for residents in this way. Here are 3 separate examples:
- A 92-year-old lady recently visited Kingsley House and one of her issues was an unexpected £900 water bill. Housing and Welfare worked together **there and then** to resolve this water bill issue and delivered an immediate outcome for the resident.
 - Through joint working, the Housing and Benefits Teams managed to stop an eviction of someone who utilised the front door. This was achieved by information and knowledge sharing, which provided an immediate resolution to the situation.
 - An elderly customer walked into Kingsley House in the days after her husband died. A member of the Benefits team was able to save Housing resource through dealing with the enquiry and supporting the resident to notify the correct organisations regarding the death.
- 5.9 These examples would simply not have happened if the services were not “joined up” in this way.
- 5.10 The service design work being carried out as part of the Integrated Hubs project will identify many more opportunities to implement these improvements for residents, which will also save money for the Council by increasing prevention and early interventions across services.
- 5.11 Alongside the service redesign, work on creating new website content for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, has been carried out, which went live on 24 April 2025. The new webpages are based on different real-life scenarios to help people understand their rights and the support available to them.
- 5.12 We are clear about how people can get in touch with the homelessness team if they need to, and we signpost to other Council and external services. The aim is to help people get assistance as early as possible.
- 5.13 In less than 3 months (24 April to 13 July 2025) our [homelessness homepage](#) has had 540 views. The most viewed webpages have been about our processes, including who can apply for help, how they can apply, what support may be given, what happens after they have applied and our homelessness assessments.

- 5.14 Just these 5 pages have had a total of 2,807 views between them. This is an increase on our previous page for homelessness advice, which had 1,313 views for the same 3-month period in 2024. This page contained limited and outdated information, so it wasn't very helpful to anyone who read it.
- 5.15 We will regularly review and update our new content to ensure it reflects the latest realities, especially as causes of homelessness and prevention strategies change over time.

6 External / Resident Facing Processes

- 6.1 **Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) booking improvements**
The online HWRC form is one of the most used digital channels for the Council, yet it still generates 2,934 telephone calls into the contact centre per year.
- 6.2 Improvements have already been made to this process, and it is now possible to book and cancel a visit with no manual interventions from staff.
- 6.3 However, the process is still very “clunky” for residents, so, as it is our most used online form, we will be making improvements to the process and utilising the Customer Account functionality on the website to make it as simple as possible for residents.
- 6.4 A fully automated process will relieve the “back office” burden on CABS and within the service.
- 6.5 **Report it service pattern**
This is one of the key workstreams of the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan that has provided a significant step change in the resident experience, provided the foundation for the “warden in my pocket” concept, and reduced costs.
- 6.6 The first Medway 2.0 customer facing “report it” process for Nuisance Vehicles was successfully launched in October 2024 and has been covered in previous reports.
- 6.7 The improvements made led to Medway Council winning the European Excellence In Business Transformation Award 2025, with the judging panel publishing an article titled: [“From Siloed Processes to Seamless Service”](#).
- 6.8 Developing this “report it” service pattern has unlocked the ability to replicate this award winning experience across nearly 70 Council processes at pace. There are currently 12 forms live, covering areas such as reporting surface flooding, gully issues, food complaints, problems with recycling points, and infectious disease reports.
- 6.9 All of the other forms, and associated workflows, have been built and are being rolled out on a schedule of 3 new forms per week, so that the content and website links can be checked and updated.
- 6.10 The full list of forms that have been redesigned can be found at Appendix 2.
- 6.11 This project has not only been delivered at pace, but it has enabled us to “lift and shift” forms out of the legacy CRM system, which will allow us to not only remove this costly system, but we will also be able to remove the previous e-forms

package and our current automation software, which will be replaced with Microsoft Power Platform developments.

6.12 Anticipated savings for the 2026/27 budget are:

CRM System	£60,000	
e-forms package	£10,000	
Automation software	£47,500	(part year 26/27)

6.13 **Macmillan Cancer support**

Although not identified as an original candidate process for the Medway 2.0 project, the Service Design team were approached to provide a solution for the team processing Macmillan referrals.

6.14 The Macmillan team were struggling with no case management system, previously relying on shared spreadsheets and scattered communications. Our solution includes a self-serve online referral form which will be available via the Macmillan website as well as our own, and a workflow with audit trails and automated email notifications.

6.15 This approach will streamline the process and provide valuable data points for the Housing and Homelessness Team as this was an area identified in the workshops as a potential trigger point for support. Collecting and holding this data within the case management system facilitates cross-departmental information sharing, enabling early intervention and a smoother user journey.

6.16 This process has now been fully built and tested and is currently being transferred to the live system ensuring significant efficiencies and reduced stress for those residents receiving cancer support.

6.17 **The Rochester Corn Exchange: CaterSOFT**

The Rochester Corn Exchange team has collaborated with Service Design to explore opportunities to streamline their digital operations and enhance the commercial visibility of this venue. The CaterSOFT system serves as their central booking and operational management system.

6.18 The team identified several areas for improvement to enrich the customer journey and experience, the most notable of these is the implementation of professional event proposals. These are auto populated with event and client data via the booking system. What was once a manual task of transferring booking information from an Outlook email is now automated within one system, generating a personalised and commercially centric proposal for prospective clients.

6.19 The system upgrade presented a strategic opportunity to enhance operational efficiencies, reduce errors, and increase revenue generation. It has addressed clear business challenges from the length of time it takes for manual proposal generation, inconsistent booking accuracy, and delayed response times to booking and pricing queries; all of which hinder the service's competitiveness in a fast-paced industry.

6.20 The service anticipate that the improvements made will generate an estimated £40,000-£50,000 annually. Monitoring and control systems are being introduced to accurately capture this data to ensure the system process remains effective and identifies any further changes management require.

6.21 The Rochester Corn Exchange: In-house Event System

During the work on the CaterSOFT project, the team identified an opportunity to develop an in-house system to manage large event bookings, such as Christmas parties at the Corn Exchange.

6.22 The service currently uses a 3rd party service to manage these events, but this company takes a commission of 35% of the income due to the complexities in managing the event and the invoicing.

6.23 The Service Design team worked with the staff at the Corn Exchange, and we developed our own in-house system for no additional cost as we utilised the JADU system. This will provide an instant 35% increase for Christmas party income at the Corn Exchange, which is estimated to be worth around £26,000.

6.24 JADU Agent-EX:Search

Due to our ongoing and successful relationship with JADU, we have been selected to be an early adopter for their latest cutting edge innovation called Agent-EX:Search, which delivers AI-powered, accessible answers to search queries and questions.

6.25 By leveraging AI content indexing, Agent-Ex: Search will provide Medway residents with responses that are accurate, accessible, and compliant, while giving us full control over the content and tone of the AI-generated answers.

6.26 This technology has the potential to be an absolute game changer for making it easier for residents to get the Council information they need. would even be as bold to say that this technology could actually *replace* website homepages in the future.

6.27 We will update the search facility on the Medway.gov.uk homepage, and every page of the website, so residents can interact with the search box via type or voice and ask it any question about Medway services in natural language – and receive a response in natural language (via text or voice) with the information requested, along with any links for forms or further information.

6.28 We are also in the process of creating a prototype “Ask Medway” webpage that will have a similar look and feel to the Google homepage, where all there will be is the Council branding and a “search box”, offering the functionality described above.

6.29 Although the same functionality will be available on every webpage, the “Ask Medway” page will be an opportunity to try a new, clean, minimalist, approach to getting information from the Council.

6.30 We know that 73.1% of residents interacted with our website via a mobile device between April 2025 and June 2025. This would be an amazing experience on a smartphone – residents would just go to the “Ask Medway” page, click a button, and talk to the Medway Council website to get the information they need.

6.31 JADU Agent-EX:Search supports 70 languages, automatically detecting the language used to interact with it and replying in the same language. This would dramatically improve access to Council services and information for the 7% of Medway residents whose main language is not English. The most common

languages in Medway other than English are Romanian, Polish, Panjabi, Bulgarian, and Lithuanian.

- 6.32 It would also complement our recent “InterpretersLive! System, proving on-demand British Sign Language interpreting, making our website accessible to all.
- 6.33 We anticipate having JADU Agent-EX:Search implemented, tested, and live during Q3 2025/26, which should reduce telephony and face-to-face contact across CABS and all Council services. JADU Agent-EX:Search would also be a key element of our Integrated Hubs programme to make our services more accessible.
- 6.34 **Revenues and Benefits**
Revenues and Benefits continue to be a driver of significant telephone calls into the contact centre. Discovery work has been carried out with the service to manage demand and reduce failure demand calls (e.g. residents calling into the Council for updates), leading to content and service redesign.
- 6.35 The Medway Council Tax Online (MCTO) project, which launched in January 2023, allows residents to sign up for an online account to self-serve for common questions that used to require a telephone call into the Council, such as checking account balances. Residents can also sign up for e-billing, which reduces paper, postage and administration costs.
- 6.36 We currently have 23% of rateable properties in Medway signed up to an account, with 18% also signed up to e-billing, which is delivering savings on print and post.
- 6.37 A key outcome of the discovery work we have done with the service has been the identification of the need to “build in” access to information relating to welfare support within the processes of core services such as Housing/Homelessness and Adult Social Care, which is a key principle of the Integrated Hubs workstream.
- 6.38 The recent MedPay review regraded CABS officers to the same range as Welfare Officers, so there is an opportunity to remove silos and investigate the creation of a combined Welfare, Benefits, and Housing team that can jointly handle calls and resolve resident issues.

6.39 **Integrated Hubs**

The Integrated Hubs project has now incorporated into the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan, with Phil Watts as Senior Responsible Officer. A new Strategic Group has been established to provide oversight of this important programme, which is made up of:

Cllr Alex Paterson	Cabinet Lead & Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement
Cllr Louwella Prenter	Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness
Cllr Harinder Mahil	Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration

Cllr Nina Gurung	and Inward Investment
Phil Watts	Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure
Mark Breathwick	Senior Responsible Owner & Chief Operating Officer
Sunny Ee	Assistant Director Culture and Community
Paul Boyd	Assistant Director Regeneration
	Programme Manager & Chief Information Officer

- 6.40 This group met on 11 June 2025 to discuss the options for an integrated hub and reviewed a range of locations and approaches. Evaluation of these, and any other, options is currently taking place and will be presented to Corporate Landlord Board in September 2025. It is then proposed to have a follow up meeting with the Strategic Group in October 2025 and then formulate options before the end of calendar year.
- 6.41 In parallel with the evaluation of the location and buildings, a large piece of “service redesign” work is being carried out. A meeting with the services involved in the Integrated Hubs project was held on 4 July 2025, where there was universal agreement to proceed with redesigning, and reimagining, how we deliver services to residents. This will also involve direct engagement with residents to ensure that any designs are carried out from the resident’s point of view and ignores current Council structures and silos. We will redesign Council services to wrap them around resident need.
- 6.42 Community Safety will also be designed into the Integrated Hubs model. Discussions are ongoing with the Police and the data we get from the new online “report it” processes will empower community wardens to have oversight of activity within their Wards, which will also be rolled out to Ward Members.
- 6.43 As part of the current regeneration work that is underway as part of the “Love Gillingham” initiative, the Gillingham Community Panel are creating a community-led vision and action plan for the future of Gillingham Town Centre. The draft document identifies a community panel priority project to transform the Marlborough Road annexe building into a multi-purpose space, supporting park activities and community services, co-located with a wellness garden. Further work will be undertaken to build the links between the Integrated Hubs project and the community panel.
- 6.44 There is a renewed excitement and energy around this project, and services are fully engaged. Savings from this project are likely to come from property rationalisation and efficiencies from redesigning services.

7 Internal / Back Office Processes

7.1 Adult Social Care – AI Case Note Generation

In October 2024, Adult Social Care teams commenced a pilot programme to evaluate the effectiveness of Magic Notes. This AI-powered tool is designed to streamline documentation processes by recording, transcribing, and summarising meetings, thereby reducing administrative burdens and enhancing the quality of work. The primary objectives were to assess the impact of the tool on administrative time, work quality, and user experience.

- 7.2 The Magic Notes pilot demonstrated significant benefits in terms of time savings, quality improvements, and positive user sentiment.

Pilot Goal	Findings
Time savings	Assessment write-up reduced by 63%, saving an average of 2.5 hours per assessment
	Administration time reduced by 32% per week, saving 5 hours weekly
	Time taken to submit assessment to Mosaic reduced by 80%, from 12 days to 2.3 days
Quality (identified through case audits and user feedback)	Improved detail captured in assessments
	Improved interactions with service users
	Improved consistency in assessments
User sentiment	Feedback from internal staff positive
	Feedback from service users mostly positive, with the majority giving consent to be recorded, and a number reporting improved engagement and rapport

- 7.3 Magic Notes has proven to be a valuable tool for social workers. The positive feedback from both social workers and service users further underscores its effectiveness.
- 7.4 Following the successful pilot, Magic Notes is in the process of being rolled out to all Adult Social Care staff in two stages. A continuous review and evaluation process has been implemented to monitor usage, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments, ensuring ongoing success and effectiveness. This process includes regular performance metric analysis, impact assessments, and technical enhancements to meet the evolving needs of practitioners.
- 7.5 Customisable templates for different types of documentation have been developed, aligned with Mosaic form design. These templates allow practitioners to tailor the tool to their specific needs, in line with current processes and procedures, ensuring consistency and completeness in their records.
- 7.6 For service users who do not consent to being recorded, social workers reverted to using handwritten notes to document meetings and interactions.
- 7.7 In such cases, a script has been developed to explain the purpose of Magic Notes to clients, ensuring transparency, clarify the benefits of the tool, how it works, and the measures in place to protect their privacy and data.
- 7.8 ICT is supporting the Head of ASC Transformation and Improvement with the trial. We will use the experience and intelligence gathered to inform in-house developments and the innovation and collaboration work that Microsoft is leading with range other local authorities to develop a similar product. The Access Group (Mosaic) are also developing their own solution, which will initially have basic functionality and integrations.
- 7.9 This approach will maximise the initial benefits but not prevent us from looking at other long-term solutions in this emerging market.

- 7.10 **Wellbeing AI Agent:** The new Wellbeing AI Assistant was launched during Mental Health Awareness Week in May 2025. This tool is a pioneering example of how technology can be used to enhance the employee experience and promote a culture of care. It uses natural language processing to understand staff queries and responds by only using trusted, Council-approved sources. These include Medway Council’s intranet resources, the Employee Assistance Programme (Care First), and the NHS “Live Well” platform. This ensures that staff receive accurate, relevant, and safe advice—without the risks associated with open internet searches.
- 7.11 Since its launch in May 2025, the assistant has been used nearly 3,000 times, delivering close to 10,000 responses in the first 2 months of use. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with staff, Trade Unions, and Members praising its accessibility and usefulness. Analysis shows that around a third of responses (32%) have been provided from the Council’s Wellbeing Toolkit, and 16% from the NHS “Livewell” website, and 10% from content on the Council’s intranet (MedSpace), demonstrating that the assistant is effectively connecting staff with the right support at the right time.
- 7.12 **HR Advice – AI Agent:** Implement a CoPilot Agent Chatbot to allow Council staff to ask HR related questions and request advice using natural language. The Chatbot has been locked down to only check Medway content (Intranet and HR Policies) to provide natural language answers, which will automate the first line HR Advice process. This project is also likely to require a review of the content and where the data is stored, which overlaps with other projects (e.g. the Share Point project) so effective coordination of dependencies across projects and workstreams is vital.
- 7.13 A prototype has already been built by our in-house ICT Development team and was demonstrated to the whole of the HR service at their away day on 18 December 2024. The feedback from the team was overwhelmingly positive, so a trial version for HR staff to use was launched in January 2025. Final testing is currently being carried out before launching it for internal use across the organisation.
- 7.14 Next phases will see integrations into our HR system, MyView, to enable it to perform more complex functions such as retrieving reports on leave requests and booking leave.
- 7.15 **Purchase To Pay**
The internal ICT development team have built an AI driven Document Processing solution specifically tailored for invoice processing for exchequer agencies and general invoice processing. We are leveraging the very latest Microsoft technology available and have created a robust and scalable solution which can be quickly tailored and modified for any type of email and document processing.
- 7.16 Using Power Platform components and Microsoft Azure Services we are using Azure OpenAI cognitive services to ‘read’ and extract information from documents. The information from the invoice is automatically checked and if verification is complete the invoice is marked as ready to be processed into the back-office system. However, if the checks fail and information is missing or does not validate, an email is automatically created, the invoice is attached and returned requesting for the correct information to be provided.

- 7.17 These are all tasks that had to be manually carried out by our staff.
- 7.18 The solution was launched in mid-July 2025 with the exchequer agency team where we will maintain a “human in the loop” for initial use and then move to a more automated solution when the service have confidence in the technology.
- 7.19 The Content Design Team has also been working with colleagues from Finance to create online content around our purchase order and invoicing processes, which is currently missing from the website. This will help to set expectations for suppliers and ensure we receive invoices with the required information the first-time they are sent, reducing the number of invalid invoices that need to be returned. This content is due to be published by the end of July 2025.
- 7.20 **Income Management and Payment Platform Solution**
This is a discrete project to avoid the high costs to renew the current income management software contract in 2026. Requirements have been gathered from the service and the procurement commenced in May 2025. Following the completion of the evaluation process, we have now finalised the scoring of all supplier submissions for the Income Management and Payment Platform Solution (IM & PPS) procurement. The council intends to proceed with awarding the contract to the successful supplier.
- 7.21 This decision marks a key milestone in the project, which aims to replace the existing system with a modern, scalable, and efficient solution. The procurement was conducted via the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) G-Cloud 14 framework, ensuring compliance with public sector procurement standards and enabling a streamlined route to market.
- 7.22 It is anticipated that savings against the original costs will be delivered in Year 2 of this project, following the implementation of the new solution, and savings on the transactional charges will also be delivered. These figures are currently being reviewed.
- 7.23 **SpeechScribe**
We are developing a tool using the Power Platform that can utilise AI to record, transcribe, and summarise meetings, reducing the need for CABS staff, and other administrative staff, to manually do this. Audit and Counter Fraud has been used as a pilot as we have already developed an AI solution that they are using to transcribe investigation meetings.
- 7.24 The original ‘SpeechScribe’ solution is now in redevelopment where we are building an organisation wide robust and scalable solution. The original SpeechScribe was using Power Platform components and using the technology available to us at that time. Due to the changing technology, and further advancements, we are building a council-wide solution to leverage Azure OpenAI cognitive services such as Azure AI Speech, Azure AI Language, and Azure Bot Service.
- 7.25 **SEND Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) automation**
A pilot of an AI solution is being arranged to use AI to assist with the completion of EHCPs and to support the specialist staff in this area.
- 7.26 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been completed and submitted to the Information Governance team to ensure that adequate controls are in place

to protect sensitive data to ensure that all required information, data, and cyber security controls are in place. We have been liaising closely with the supplier in the completion of the DPIA and the pilot is expected to commence in Q2 2025.

7.27 **Develop an Audit Management System using the Power Platform**

The Audit team does not have any software systems and is currently managing audits and workloads with Word documents and network folders. However, the updated audit standards refer to making use of technology, so a system will be required in the future - with estimates at around £15,000 - £20,000 per year.

7.28 A bespoke system built on the Power Platform is being developed in-house and will achieve efficiencies in processes with the introduction of the system, which should also reduce the level of resources dedicated to certain elements. Savings will therefore be achieved through the cost avoidance of purchasing a new system and process efficiencies.

7.29 The goal is to consolidate all files and audit related information into one place as they are currently working from Word documents and using shared drives, whereas this new system will provide consistency and further efficiency. The new platform has been built and was moved into User Acceptance Testing (UAT) in July 2025.

8 Frontline Services

8.1 **Route Reports**

This is a project to install cameras on vehicles that are travelling around Medway to identify and monitor potholes, road markings, and potentially capture condition data of the road network, which we currently pay a third party to do for us.

8.2 The project also has the potential to make savings in the Highways Inspection team, and the vehicles they currently use. Other benefits include reducing the cyclical road marking as the system will identify faded markings, reduce unnecessary repairs, identify the priority for repairs, and check repairs have been carried out by the contractor before payment is made. The system also benefits from identifying skips on the highway, so we can ensure those without a permit are appropriately charged the necessary fee.

8.3 A Network Hierarchy Review has been carried out as part of this project to ensure the appropriate level of priority is given to Medway's highways. The outcome of this review will be finalised in Q2.

8.4 Camera installation onto the vehicles is now complete. Integration with the Confirm system is now being implemented. Training for Route Reports is planned for July, and a review of implementation is scheduled for October to potentially change business model for highway inspections to produce additional savings, which are captured in the Frontline Services budget savings.

8.5 **Waste Service Redesign**

Adopting a service design approach at Medway Council has enabled us to make measurable improvements in how we deliver services, creating more efficient, scalable, transparent and familiar processes for residents and staff alike. By involving service teams, ICT, data analysts and residents from the start, we have been able to reimagine how services are delivered, aligning digital tools with operational needs and improving outcomes across the board.

- 8.6 Service design plays a vital role as the connective tissue between user experience, technology, data, and operational delivery. It helps us move away from siloed working and design services that are not only simpler and more structured, but also meet real needs, providing value to residents while supporting staff to deliver more consistent, high-quality services.
- 8.7 Looking ahead, we'll be applying this approach to the Waste Services project - an area identified through the Medway 2.0 and FIT programmes.
- 8.8 This project will involve collaboration with our partner organisation, Medway Norse, and internal teams to improve the way services are delivered, ensuring residents experience a seamless, consistent journey - whether they engage with us online, by phone, or in person.
- 8.9 Service design will help ensure the process is co-owned, evidence led and ultimately delivers better outcomes for everyone involved.
- 8.10 We are currently in the early stages of planning and will begin the discovery phase over the summer, with the aim of completing this by the end of October 2025.
- 8.11 During this phase, we will run a series of discovery workshops to map current processes, identify pain points, and gather technical and operational requirements across all relevant service areas, including frontline staff, ICT, and the contact centre. Alongside this, we'll carry out user research and testing to better understand resident needs and behaviours.
- 8.12 From November, we will move into the co-design phase. This will involve further research and collaborative design sessions with staff, our delivery partner, and residents. The focus here will be on developing and testing new processes, content, and tools that are not only more efficient to deliver but also clearer, simpler, and more valuable for the people using them.
- 8.13 Service design will help ensure this project is structured, transparent, and evidence-led; bringing together the right voices at the right time to shape a service that works for everyone and is more efficient and effective.
- 8.14 **Data**
Implementation of a modern data infrastructure for Medway Council
This is a key project for both short and long-term savings for Medway Council as access to good data and insights is vital to everything that we do.
- 8.15 The Council has recognised data as a strategic asset and a key enabler for achieving its vision of Medway as a place that people are proud of, and recognised as a great place to live, work, learn and visit. However, the current data and analytics capabilities are not sufficient to meet its current and future needs, and there is a necessity to modernise the data infrastructure, processes, and culture at Medway Council.
- 8.16 A key driver for this change in approach is the recognition that Medway holds vast amounts of data within separate systems. Whilst there are some areas of excellence within the Council, we do not consistently transform this data into valuable intelligence. To achieve this, a single corporate data platform is

recommended so that data can be joined up across systems to support intelligence led decision making.

- 8.17 There has been much talk about the implementation of Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, and automation within different services across the Council. To ensure that this technology is effective, it is vital that the data and content is in a fit state for use, has the right governance and security, and any biases within the data are considered before it is used for supporting decisions.
- 8.18 A report was approved by CMT on 2 October 2024, which outlined the proposed roadmap for implementing a modern data infrastructure for Medway Council, using the Microsoft Azure cloud platform and the Microsoft Fabric solution, to support the achievement of the Council's data and analytics ambitions.
- 8.19 The procurement process has now been completed, and Simpson Associates have been appointed as our strategic partner to help deliver both the platform and products. Simpsons have arranged a series of 9-workshops and sessions covering a range of different topics that will support effective delivery. These are:
1. Project Success
 2. Big Picture and Strategic Goals
 3. Data Maturity Assessment
 4. Current As-Is Architecture
 5. Data Workflow Requirements
 6. Processes, Skills, Capability
 7. Infrastructure & Platform Design
 8. Support Service Design
 9. Playback of Discovery & Feedback
- 8.20 The first workshop was held on 23 June 2025, with the others planned for Q2. Appropriate use cases will be developed during the workshops, but it is anticipated that joining up data to obtain a "single view of a child" and combining financial, debt, and property information will be early uses for the platform, based on successes in other Local Authorities.
- 8.21 **SharePoint Migration**
Whilst the modern data infrastructure project described above deals with data held in systems, the SharePoint migration project is focused on addressing the data issues with internal data, specifically all the various "shared drives" Council staff use.
- 8.22 The project aims to provide a robust structure for data with clear ownership. Files will be shared between teams to stop the exponential growth of low value or junk data. Good governance and classification of data will allow the automatic application of data retention policies.
- 8.23 We have successfully completed the migration of the ICT team to SharePoint, with old, shared drives now only accessible as read-only. Additionally, the Facilities Management team has been provided with their new SharePoint site and the data migration process has commenced.
- 8.24 The SharePoint migration team is currently engaged with several business areas and are just awaiting the agreement of site structures for Finance, HR, CABS, Democratic Services, and Libraries. We have also started engagement with the Children and Adults area, which has complex requirements and will be broken

down into different phases for migration. The next phases are being planned as we progress.

9 Other Corporate Programmes

9.1 There are several other programmes and projects that are being directly supported by the Business Change Programme Management Office.

9.2 **Medway Norse Improvement Programme**

When the new Administration came into power, there was a desire to scrutinise the Medway Norse Joint Venture (JV) activities and to interrogate some of the operating methods and outputs.

9.3 The 'Medway Norse Improvement Programme', a strategic initiative, was signed off by the Medway Norse Cabinet Sub-Committee. The consensus was that although the Waste Service and SEND Transport aspects of the JV were operating well, areas like Greenspaces and Facilities Management (FM) should undergo a more comprehensive review.

9.4 This work has progressed and is on course for the end of July. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), Deputy Director of Place and Lead Client Officer for the Medway Norse JV, will be providing leadership and accountability for the delivery of the programme and benefits. The Programme Management Office (PMO) function from the Business Change Team will oversee the execution of the programme, ensuring that delivery is effectively managed.

9.5 There will be four key working groups—Waste/Street Cleansing, Facilities Management, Grounds Maintenance/Greenspaces, and SEND Transport—each led by a Strategic Project Lead. The Leads will be tasked with delivering specific outcomes such as contract redesign, service realignment, and procurement transition.

9.6 The Facilities Management (FM) team anticipate savings will be achieved from the decommissioning of FM functions from the joint venture and transitioning to a new hybrid delivery model for FM. The true extent of savings will not be known until the procurement activity has been completed and a Gateway 3 Procurement Paper has been approved by Cabinet in early 2026, ready for potential mobilisation at the start of the new financial year in April 2026.

9.7 **Gun Wharf Improvement Programme**

The Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) has made substantial progress since its inception in September 2024, evolving from a reactive remediation effort into a transformative initiative aimed at modernising Medway Council's headquarters. Initially triggered by the discovery of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the roof structure, the programme has expanded to encompass a full refurbishment and cultural reset of the building.

9.8 The overarching goal is to create a safe, inclusive, and future-ready workspace that reflects the Council's values and supports its ambition to be an "Employer of Choice."

9.9 A key function of the PMO has been to support the governance structure of the programme. The GWIP Board, which drives operational delivery, reports into the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB). The PMO ensures that programme milestones,

risks, and dependencies are tracked and escalated appropriately through this governance pathway. This includes maintaining oversight of procurement and governance processes, which are identified as potential risks to timely delivery. The PMO is specifically tasked with flagging risks early and ensuring alignment of key milestones with decision-making forums

9.10 The PMO function is intended to oversee the execution of the programme, ensuring that delivery is effectively managed. The PMO is currently supporting with:

- Budget monitoring
- Ensuring that lessons learned from comparable programmes (e.g. in Camden and Canterbury site visits in early 2025) are incorporated into delivery planning
- Managing the transition from RIBA Stage 2 (concept design) to RIBA Stage 3 (spatial coordination)
- Supporting the FM Team and Design Consultancy, Bailey Partnership, in preparing for the tendering of construction works in Autumn 2025.

10 Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Division does not/cannot recruit to the required posts promptly.	Delivery of existing transformation is currently being constrained by available capacity and capability	Job profiles have been developed. Recruitment would be carried out at pace with secondment opportunities offered.	CII
Lack of availability of services involved in the mapping process.	A lack of capacity within services may mean that subject matter experts are not available to participate in service mapping and redesign.	The scheduling of processes and services to be reviewed will take account of imperatives, seasonal demands, and where necessary, will escalate to CMT for direction.	CIII
The transformation roadmap focusses solely on in-year savings.	There is a risk that if we target immediate/short-term savings by “salami slicing” or applying arbitrary savings targets, we will miss the opportunity to deliver longer-term sustainability and resilience.	The proposed roadmap has built in a discovery phase to identify, and quantify, long-term savings, which can be planned and agreed with services, cutting across financial years.	CII
Prioritisation of processes	Criteria and rationale for selection of areas to be reviewed and redesigned may not be clear.	A robust definition of the criteria and thresholds for selecting candidate business flows for further development has been agreed.	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

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

11 Consultation

- 11.1 Formal consultation is not required at this stage. However, any services undergoing service redesign will be informed, involved, and consulted with at all stages, as they are considered the subject matter experts.
- 11.2 Consultation with residents and users will be carried out where appropriate depending on the scale of the potential change.
- 11.3 Staff and residents will be invited to participate in user testing where appropriate.
- 11.4 The new cross-party “Member User Testing Group” will allow Councillors to experience the service design process and beta-test new services and solutions that have been developed.

12 Climate change implications

- 12.1 [The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019](#) and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 12.2 The declaration fits into the Council Plan priority of making Medway a place to be proud of; the main outcome being a clean and green environment.
- 12.3 A Climate Change action plan has been developed (www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan), informed by the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, to ensure Medway is on a pathway to achieve its net zero carbon ambitions.
- 12.4 The action plan is shaped by 11 priority areas including Priority 6 – Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity.
- 12.5 Digital connectivity has a vital role to play in reducing emissions from travel. The technologies developed as part of the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan can help us to better manage energy usage and minimise our environmental impact. Specific processes have been identified to utilise technology to reduce the amount of printing and paper usage throughout the Council, which will be built into any service redesign.

13 Financial implications

- 13.1 The 2025/26 budget build includes a provision of £1m for Council-wide transformation work, including Medway 2.0.
- 13.2 A draft proposal of how Medway 2.0 funding should be allocated was presented to CMT on 15 May 2024 and it was agreed that CMT would approve the spend from this budget to ensure that it addresses corporate priorities.
- 13.3 The 2025/26 budget build does not include any specific, separate, savings targets related to transformation, rather the activity reflected in the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan will support the organisation to deliver the millions of pounds of savings underpinning the revenue budget. Whilst a programme of projects could be developed that focuses on achieving immediate savings to meet such a target, there is a danger that this could result in "salami slicing" or uncoordinated vacancy/staff reductions, rather than long-term, sustainable, transformation that could yield further savings over a number of years.

- 13.4 The Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan and approach described in this report is designed to mitigate this risk and break the cycle of focusing on immediate in-year savings and takes a longer-term sustainable approach which will increase our resilience both financially and with regard to resources.
- 13.5 Savings identified from the redesign of services will be added to draft budget build for 2026/27, and beyond, when services are comfortable to reflect them in our Medium Term Financial Outlook (MTFO) figures. This approach will ensure that arbitrary savings targets are not applied, and projects to deliver the savings are carried out by working in collaboration with services.

14 Legal implications

- 14.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.
- 14.2 Any legal implications arising from redesigning services will be raised with legal where appropriate throughout the duration of the delivery plan.

15 Conclusions

- 15.1 This report highlights the wide range of projects being covered within the Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan, and the potential for savings, efficiencies, and improvements across the whole Council.
- 15.2 Work will continue with all directorates to ensure savings are captured in the appropriate budgets for the 2026/27 budget build and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Candidate Processes for Discovery and Mapping

Appendix 2: Appendix 2: Report It and “Legacy CRM Lift and Shift” Forms