

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

**Thursday, 14 August 2025**

**6.30pm to 9.27pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Present:** Councillors: Field (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Campbell, Doe, Lawrence, Myton, Peake and Williams

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Shokar (Substitute for Nestorov)  
Kemp (Substitute for Etheridge)  
Bowen (Substitute for Hamilton)

**In Attendance:** Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration  
Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture and Community  
Steve Dickens, Democratic Services Officer  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services and Deputy Director of Place  
Andy McNally-Johnson, Head of Corporate Accounts  
David Reynolds, Head of Revenue Accounts  
Dan Stone, Facilities Management and Capital Projects Head of Service  
Rebecca Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer

**212 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Etheridge, Filmer, Hamilton and Nestorov.

**213 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 12 June 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

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

There were none.

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

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**216 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration**

**Discussion:**

Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration introduced the report and thanked officers for their help in its completion.

The following issues were discussed:

**Local Plan** – in response to a question about how the Portfolio Holder reconciled the proposed allocation of sites on Captone Valley with the need to preserve greenspaces. The Portfolio Holder stated that balancing the need to build additional housing whilst keeping greenspaces was a fundamental issue for the Council. There was a recognised need for 24,500 additional homes in Medway, and the Council was obliged to allocate land for them. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that this required some compromise and difficult decisions had to be made, however allocations were proposed following assessments and without an up to date Local Plan Council decisions had been overturned by public enquiries.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council had held detailed negotiations with Maidstone Borough Council regarding development at Lidsing and would work with landowners. The public consultation in relation to the local plan showed strong support for additional housing balanced across the different parts of Medway. Previous Local Plan proposals had allocated the majority of housing in a single area which in the view of the Portfolio Holder would have been unsustainable.

**Impact of development** – It was asked what measures the administration had taken to mitigate the impact of large scale development in existing communities such as Hempstead where not all s106 contributions had been received locally. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the estimated growth in population would require additional infrastructure to be developed, the Council was working on an infrastructure plan but it also required the support of central

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government, health agencies and private companies. The Portfolio Holder undertook to provide further information regarding s106 contributions in the Hemptstead area to the ward councillors following the meeting.

**Regulation 19 consultation** – in response to a question regarding the progress of the regulation 19 consultation the Portfolio Holder explained that a smaller response had been received than during the regulation 18 consultation, this reflected the additional consultation and large number of responses received at regulation 18 stage.

**Local Government Reform** – the Portfolio Holder was asked for his views regarding the Local Plan and Local Government Reform. He stated that it was the responsibility of the Council to put in place a local plan fit for Medway now. When the local plan was agreed, it would be the legal document for the subsequent authority in this area until any new local plan was developed by a successor authority. He added that other authorities in Kent had recently undertaken or were consulting on a local plan and it would be several years before a successor authority would be in a position to agree a local plan, it would in his view be wrong to not put a plan into place.

**Planning Enforcement** - in response to a question whether the Portfolio Holder felt the planning enforcement team was adequately resourced, the Portfolio Holder stated that he would always prefer additional resources, however, the Council finances were constrained, and officers did an excellent job in managing the service.

**Transport** - the Portfolio Holder was asked when he expected bus passenger numbers to return to pre covid levels. The Portfolio Holder stated that the numbers of car journeys was unsustainable prior to the expected growth in population with Junction 1 of the A2/M2 at capacity and junction 3 and 4 nearing capacity. It was an issue for the entire region and the only viable solution was improved public transport. The Council was considering a new Local Transport Plan and a local bus service plan was in place. The area had already benefited from additional government funding and the Council held regular and productive meetings with the local bus service providers. In the future Local Government Reform would provide opportunities for local authorities for further investment in public transport

A Member questioned whether Medway had the infrastructure required to service a significantly upgraded public transport, the Portfolio Holder stated that there were a number of opportunities to improve the bus network such as a new Strood bus station and a regular low emission service to the Hoo peninsula.

A Member commented that Arriva had been provided with funds to increase bus services at the weekend but had now reduced the 190 service during the week, he asked what action the Portfolio Holder was taking with regards to this. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged it was disappointing that Arriva were reducing some services, however it was a matter for the company and Arriva continued to invest in Medway. The free bus weekend which the Council had

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funded saw a 32% increase in passenger numbers on the same time last year and there was a clear target to achieve passenger numbers of 9m per annum by 2028.

**Greenspaces** – a Member commented that the area was in a poor condition and there had been a significant cut in the greenspaces budget, he asked if the Portfolio Holder was satisfied with the budget for the service. The Portfolio Holder stated that he did not recognise the description of Medway, whilst there was always more that could be done the administration had coalesced a fragmented provision into one server which had improved provision and increased bio diversity in the area.

**Waste Management** – a Member commented that they believed greater provision of bins in the borough and on high streets and more regular emptying of bins would be helpful. The Portfolio Holder agreed that he would like to see more public bins, however there was a cost to emptying the bins so the Council had to be mindful of the resource restraints. He added that he would like to see legacy bins from previous authorities replaced with the dual litter and dog waste bins which the Council favoured. The Deputy Director undertook to provide the costs of litter bins outside of the meeting

**Maidstone Road cemetery** – in response to a question whether the partially collapsed wall at Maidstone Road cemetery could be repaired, the Portfolio Holder undertook to review the situation and respond to the Member outside of the meeting. He added that cemeteries provided a positive greenspace and a place for reflection. Greenspaces was now managed under a single service and management plans would be developed for each site including cemeteries.

**Net Zero** - a Member asked what progress had been made towards achieving net zero, the Portfolio Holder stated that Cabinet would consider a new climate action plan in the next few weeks. The new plan was split into two parts, the first to ensure that the Council reduced its emissions through policies such as the new waste fleet and using solar power at Cozenton Park, the second part was to promote knowledge and engagement in the wider community.

**Waste Fleet** – it was asked whether there was an ambition for the waste fleet to be all electric in the future. The Portfolio Holder stated that this remained the ambition, however, it would require a new depot to enable charging and this was not possible at the current time. In the future Local Government Reform may provide additional opportunities to revisit this. The administration had procured a new fleet which had significantly reduced emissions associated with waste collection and could be converted to run on biofuel when that became economically viable.

The Committee discussed where waste due for landfill disposal was taken to and what was the associated cost to the Council. The Deputy Director Place undertook to provide an answer to this outside the meeting, she added that the level of waste going to landfill was low and the team strived to minimise landfill use wherever possible. A Member commented that waste going to landfill was

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around 13% and one of the lowest in the country of which Medway should be proud.

**Planning Enforcement** – A Member commented that he believed there was a difference in expectations of the public of enforcement and what the local authority was unable to provide within its resources, he requested clearer service standards be published to manage public expectations. The Portfolio Holder stated that moving to a single service enabled greenspaces service to provide a more consistent service. He added that the Council also had to ensure it received value for money in its contracts with providers such as Norse. It was asked that the officers provide a briefing note on enforcement standards.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the report.
- b) The Portfolio Holder to provide additional information regarding what actions had been undertaken to mitigate the impact of building on existing communities.
- c) The Committee requested further information to clarify the costs related to maintenance of public bins.
- d) The Committee requested further information on landfill sites cost and costs to the Council.
- e) The Committee requested a briefing note setting out planning enforcement standards with particular reference to trees.

### 217 Housing Allocations Policy Review 2025

#### Discussion:

The Chief Housing Officer introduced the report, she highlighted the principal changes proposed in the policy which had previously been agreed in 2019. The new policy proposed changes in the eligibility criteria raising the financial cap to £63,000 pa and to increase the residency criteria to three years alongside other changes which were detailed in the report.

The following issues were discussed:

**Vulnerable groups** – in response to a question whether changes in eligibility could negatively affect those fleeing domestic abuse, the Chief Housing Officer stated that those cases were dealt with under the homelessness criteria and would therefore be unaffected by any changes. She added that Care Leavers would also be unaffected as they were the responsibility of the placing local authority.

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**Banding** – the Committee discussed the housing allocations banding criteria, the Chief Housing Officer explained that band A, the highest priority was a small cohort with medical needs or other specific criteria. She added that most residents were placed in bands B or C. Those in Band D would be a lower priority need so it was to be expected that those families to take longer to be rehoused. Another factor which affected how long people remained on the waiting list was applicant preference, for example if an applicant only applied for properties in a particular area, their choice of properties was reduced and it would consequently take longer to be placed in a suitable property.

**Community Contribution** – further information was requested in relation to the community contribution by applicants, the Chief Housing Officer stated that it was proposed that the community contribution required be increased to three years to secure eligibility, this contribution could take many forms such as employment, voluntary work or caring responsibilities.

It was asked whether the increase in residency would affect vulnerable groups, the Chief Housing Officer stated the consultation responses had included many requests for residency criteria to be raised to five years, however, officers felt three years was the right balance and noted a commitment to Medway. The Assistant Director Community and Culture added that proposals were based on good practice and legislative requirements, and housing allocation was always based on need. The scope of the policy allowed for some flexibility in decision making to reflect exceptional cases and if Members felt any group had been excluded or disadvantaged this could be reviewed.

**Eligibility** – a Member commented that a resident had informed him they were deemed ineligible by the service because housing was provided to asylum seekers, the Chief Housing Officer stated that whilst she could not comment on individual cases, this was not the case, to be eligible for housing applicants needed to have settled status and recourse to public funds. She undertook to discuss the case with the Member outside of the meeting.

**Band X** – the Committee discussed the removal of band X from the register. The Chief Housing Officer stated that band X referred to ineligible applicants whose details had been kept on file. Under the proposals they would be contacted and if the circumstances of these applicants changed then their case would be reconsidered.

**Unreasonable behaviour** - in response to a question regarding how unreasonable behaviour was assessed, the Chief Housing Officer stated that application forms included questions about criminality and the information provided was checked prior to the offer stage. Any Anti-Social Behaviour in the tenants property or in the vicinity would be flagged.

**Income eligibility** – a Member welcomed the changes to income criteria and asked if there were plans to look at income criteria more regularly than the previous six year review. The Chief Housing Officer stated that a significant piece of work had to been undertaken to review how other authorities had calculated income criteria, in particular the percentage of household income

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related of housing costs. It was proposed that an annual review be undertaken in relation to financial criteria to ensure it remained at an appropriate level.

**Local Government Reform** – Members discussed whether the policy would be affected by Local Government Reform. The Assistant Director Community and Culture stated that there would be some commonality with policies in neighbouring authorities due to legislation and best practice. The policy was based on current needs in Medway and any successor authority would need to undertake a review in due course.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the proposed Housing Allocations Policy and submitted comments to Cabinet.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note providing further information on the band criteria and the residents in band B and Band C

## **218 Capital Budget Monitoring - Round 1 2025/26**

### **Discussion:**

The Head of Corporate Accounts introduced the report. The Capital Budget reported an underspend of £846,000 in round one of monitoring for the year with an underspend of £639,000 in relation to schemes under the remit of the Committee.

The following issues were discussed:

**Gun Wharf improvement works** – in response to a question regarding the cost the Gun Wharf Improvements Scheme the Head of Facilities Management and Capital Projects explained that the projected costs of RAAC repairs had reduced as the roof no longer required replacement, however, the initial improvement costs were greater than initially estimated. He undertook to provide a briefing note on the current planned works and costings to the Committee.

**Hook Meadow works** - a Member asked if ward councillors could be involved in future discussions regarding the ongoing works at Hook Meadow. The Assistant Director, Community and Culture agreed and added that the Council continued to consider innovative solutions for the Community Hubs and this would include opportunities within the Medway 2.0 transformation scheme but finances remained constrained.

**Cozenton Park** – in response to a Member question whether the underspend in round one would be reallocated, the Head of Corporate Accounts stated that the scheme was currently underspent, however, those monies were scheduled to be reallocated in round two monitoring to other schemes.



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### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note setting out planned works and costs of the Gun Wharf Improvement Works
- c) The Committee noted the request that ward Councillors be consulted in relation to the ongoing works at Hook Meadow

## **219 Revenue Budget Monitoring - Round 1 2025/26**

### **Discussion:**

The Head of Revenue Accounts introduced the report, he highlighted the round one monitoring forecast which projected £10.9m overspend for the financial year, with an overspend of £723,000 of areas within the remit of this Committee.

The following issues were discussed:

**Parking fines** - a Member requested further information regarding the projected overspend of £1.6m in relation to parking services. The Head of Revenue Accounts stated that there had been lower than expected income in relation to penalty notices and additional costs in relation to servicing those penalty notices. This was however an early projection based on round one monitoring and further projections would be made at the end of round two monitoring. The Member requested a briefing note in relation to penalty charges notices and debts to the Council.

**Vacancies** – it was asked whether vacancies in the department had impacted service delivery and whether vacancies were deliberately not filled to ease financial pressures, the Deputy Director of Place stated that recruitment was being undertaken however, the vacant roles were in specialist areas and recruitment had proved a challenge.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note to provide additional detail regarding PCN fines and parking services.
- c) The Committee requested a briefing note in relation to bad debts.



## **220 Petitions Report**

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the petition responses and officer actions as set out in the report.

## **221 Work programme**

The following issues were discussed:

A Member commented that there had been recent discussions regarding the possibility of the Committee receiving a report in October on economic activity in the area, the relevant officer was not at the meeting, and it was agreed this would be discussed with the officers following the meeting.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report and agreed the work programme as set out at Appendix A to the report.
- b) The Committee noted the action log as set out in appendix B to the report.

## **Chairperson**

### **Date:**

**Steve Dickens, Democratic Services Officer**

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