

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 17 July 2025
7.00pm to 9.59pm

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

In Attendance: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Vicky Nutley, Head of Legal Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

149 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Animashaun, Browne and Doe.

150 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Councillor Shokar declared an interest in Agenda item No.13 (Review of the Constitution) as he works for Medway Voluntary Action. Councillor Shokar did not participate in discussion and voting on the item.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

151 Record of meeting

The records of the Full Council meetings held on 24 April, 14 May and 26 June 2025 were approved and signed by Worshipful the Mayor as correct.

152 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway announced that Councillor Bowen's mother had recently passed away. The Mayor offered his condolences on behalf of the Council to Councillor Bowen and her family.

The Mayor announced some forthcoming events in support of his chosen charities, Caring Hands and Slide Away.

In October, there would be a charity dinner at Spice Fusion and on 29 November there would be a theatrical production of Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' at Eastgate House.

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 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 – 1

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

153 Leader's announcements

The Leader sent his best wishes to the England women's football team, who were playing a match against Sweden, in the European Championships, later in the evening.

154 Petitions

Public:

A petition was submitted on behalf residents of Fort Horsted, in relation to Extending Fort Horsted's bus route and expanding Aviation Business Park.

Member:

A petition was submitted by Councillor Pearce on behalf of Stoke Parish Council. The petition was entitled, 'Help Save the Lower Stoke Car Park'. The petition called on the Council to either reverse the decision to declare Lower Stoke Business Park surplus to requirements and to dispose of the property or to donate and transfer the freehold of the car park at minimal cost to Stoke Parish Council.

A petition was submitted by Councillor Spalding on behalf of residents of Allhallows. The petition was entitled 'The Allhallows Road Safety Petition'. The petition called on Medway Council to make roads in the area safe.

A petition was submitted by Councillor Peake on behalf of residents of Snodhurst House, Wayfield Road, Chatham. The petition called on Medway Council to provide a safe place to cross the busy Wayfield Road to enable pedestrians to access the bus stop opposite. The petition further called on the Council to review existing signage and to install additional signage as necessary.

155 Public questions

Question A – Vivienne Parker, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

"As you may be aware a planning application has been lodged to build 500 homes on the site of the old gas works in the Strand, but unfortunately the ground survey has revealed the presence of cyanide and asbestos amongst other hydrocarbon type pollutants.

Can the Council confirm this site is on the highly polluted sites register."

In response, Councillor Curry said that the site was not currently recorded on a register. More detailed information on this location could be obtained by following the process on the Council's website and Councillor Curry would ask the Council's Democratic Services team to contact the questioner with the specific weblink.

The site owner recognised the contamination issues on site and had experience of dealing with similar former gas holder sites elsewhere in Kent. In these cases, where planning permission had been granted, the contamination issue had been dealt with appropriately and the developments had successfully been delivered.

Councillor Curry had met with the developer and they had provided reassurance of their expertise in this field. Medway had a long history of redeveloping contaminated sites and he drew attention to Rochester Riverside, which was one example. The Medway Local Plan, which was currently in the

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Regulation 19 consultation stage, had identified that approximately 40% of development for new homes would be on brownfield sites.

Vivienne Parker asked the following supplementary question:

“Can the Council assure me that the local residents and people living near by will be kept safe from the escape of pollution from this site during the remediation process?”

Councillor Curry said that he could give this assurance. The company was very experienced at this kind of work, all of which took place in fairly dense urban areas and they had a very good track record of keeping pollution under tight control and making sure that contamination was not released.

Question B – Nicholas Chan, of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Very often infrastructure comes after development. Right now, there are business opportunities and a new care home planned at Medway's Innovation Centre. Also, it is widely reported that Medway Council sat on unused s106 money.

Will Councillors use these opportunities to improve transportation choices for Chatham residents such as extending bus route 185 to the future developments across Fort Horsted?”

In response, Councillor Curry said that it would be incorrect to say that Medway had sat on S106 money. The Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement, the next one of which would be in December 2025 was a point in time and set out what agreements have been made, what money had come in, what money had been spent and the further infrastructure planned.

Contributions were being received every week, relevant schemes were being funded and delivered and that meant there was regular turnover of S106 funding. A big scheme was sometimes necessary, such as a new school, and that may be funded from a number of contributions. As a result, the Council would hold on to early contributions until all the funding had been received. That was quite normal and was not the Council sitting on funding. The Council was committed to delivering the infrastructure necessary to mitigate development using the S106 contributions.

In relation to public transport, this was a vital part of a sustainable future. The Council was in regular discussions with bus operators to improve services, making them more efficient, accessible, and environmentally friendly. In some cases, such as the recent improvements to services to Cliffe Woods and Cliffe, these upgrades had been supported by Section 106 funding.

In relation to bus route 185 and the developments at Fort Horsted, the Council recognised the growing demand for better transport links in this area. While

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there were no confirmed plans to extend this route at present, work was taking place with Arriva and other bus operators to explore the feasibility of service enhancements that reflected local needs. Councillor Curry also noted that Arriva 101 and 176 services already operated nearby.

Where appropriate, the Council would seek to use Section 106 contributions to support improvements, in line with the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Local Bus Infrastructure Plan. Medway was committed to ensuring that public transport kept pace with development and offered residents a real alternative to car use.

Nicholas Chan asked the following supplementary question:

“In relation to Section 106 money, will the Council be able to assure me and residents that with the Local Plan in place, the Section 106 money will be used wisely and within public trust to be used appropriately within short duration?”

Councillor Curry said that he could confirm this. The Section 106 money would come as part of the developments that would take place once the Local Plan had gone through its final approval from the Secretary of State and the Council would ensure that S106 fundings were a key part of delivery. The provision of better bus services in Medway was a high priority for Councillor Curry.

156 Motions

Motion A – Proposed by Councillor Finch and supported by Councillor Vye:

“This Council recognises the urgent need for fairer access to mobility support for residents facing serious but time-limited health conditions, such as cancer treatment or recovery from major injury, who currently fall outside the eligibility criteria of the national Blue Badge scheme.

We note the growing support for the KentOnline “Blue Badge Battle” campaign, including cross-party backing from all 18 Kent MPs, who have called for a temporary Blue Badge concession scheme to support those in genuine need.

This Council further notes that:

- The Department for Transport’s current guidance restricts eligibility to conditions expected to last at least three years, which excludes many residents enduring serious but non-permanent impairments.
- Medway Council already follows national guidance but is now, appropriately, in active discussions about the potential for a local scheme, as confirmed by Council officers.
- Introducing a carefully designed temporary concession scheme could offer vital short-term support while reinforcing Medway’s reputation as a compassionate, resident-focused authority.

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This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1) Support, in principle, the creation of a Medway-based temporary parking concession scheme for residents with significant mobility impairments arising from serious but time-limited conditions.
- 2) Request that officers continue to work with Parking Services and other departments to develop a viable, clearly communicated local framework, with suitable eligibility criteria and enforcement guidance.
- 3) Urge the administration to bring forward proposals for this scheme via the appropriate governance routes, with an update to Full Council no later than January 2026.
- 4) Call on Medway's MPs to raise this issue in Parliament and press for a national legislative amendment to embed such flexibility in the statutory Blue Badge scheme."

Councillor Maple, supported by Councillor Murray, proposed the following amendment:

"This Council recognises the urgent need for fairer access to mobility support for residents facing serious but time-limited health conditions, such as cancer treatment or recovery from major injury, who currently fall outside the eligibility criteria of the national Blue Badge scheme.

We note the growing support for the Kent Online "Blue Badge Battle" campaign, including cross-party backing from all 18 Kent MPs, who have called for a temporary Blue Badge concession scheme to support those in genuine need.

This Council further notes that:

- The Department for Transport's current guidance restricts eligibility to conditions expected to last at least three years, which excludes many residents enduring serious but non-permanent impairments;
- Medway Council already follows national guidance but is now, appropriately, in active discussions about the potential for a local scheme, as confirmed by Council officers;
- Introducing a carefully designed temporary concession scheme could offer vital short-term support while reinforcing Medway's reputation as a compassionate, resident-focused authority.
- **The Council currently has a system in place in those circumstances where individuals have received an SR1 form because their condition is moving towards an end-of-life situation. In those circumstances a blue badge in the existing system is normally dispatched within a few days.**

This Council welcomes:

- The letter from the Leader of the Council to the 18 MPs of Kent and Medway and the Leader of Kent County Council proposing a meeting to explore the practical issues of the proposed scheme. In the letter it is suggested with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon there is consideration for a cohesive approach across both upper tier authorities in the region.
- The positive cross party Westminster Hall Debate on 16th July secured by Helen Grant MP which included contributions from Tris Osborne MP alongside other MPs from both the Region of Kent & Medway and beyond.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1) Support, in principle, the creation of a Medway-based temporary parking concession scheme for residents with significant mobility impairments arising from serious but time-limited conditions. This scheme should be a cohesive system alongside Kent County Council recognising Local Government Reorganisation is on the horizon.
- 2) Request that officers continue to work with Parking Services and other departments to develop a viable, clearly communicated ~~local framework~~ scheme, with suitable eligibility criteria and enforcement guidance.
- 3) ~~Urge the administration to bring forward proposals for this scheme via the appropriate governance routes, with an update to Full Council no later than January 2026.~~ Welcome the administration's commitment to the principle of this local scheme and that they will bring forward proposals as soon as practicably possible including relevant pre decision scrutiny.
- 4) ~~Call on Medway's MPs to raise this issue in Parliament and press for a national legislative amendment to embed such flexibility in the statutory Blue Badge scheme~~ Welcome the support of Medway's three MPs alongside the 15 other MPs from our region and the shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Gareth Bacon MP, with the campaign being led on a cross party basis by Helen Grant MP, Tris Osborne MP and Mike Martin MP.
- 5) Welcome the positive contribution by Minister Lilian Greenwood at the July 16th Westminster Hall Debate on behalf of the government recognising work is being done and consideration for cross department work required to consider next steps.
- 6) Thank all hard working council officers who are responsible for ensuring that this vital provision is made available to those who need it."

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Amended Recommendation reads:

“This Council recognises the urgent need for fairer access to mobility support for residents facing serious but time-limited health conditions, such as cancer treatment or recovery from major injury, who currently fall outside the eligibility criteria of the national Blue Badge scheme.

We note the growing support for the Kent Online “Blue Badge Battle” campaign, including cross-party backing from all 18 Kent MPs, who have called for a temporary Blue Badge concession scheme to support those in genuine need.

This Council further notes that:

- The Department for Transport’s current guidance restricts eligibility to conditions expected to last at least three years, which excludes many residents enduring serious but non-permanent impairments;
- Medway Council already follows national guidance but is now, appropriately, in active discussions about the potential for a local scheme, as confirmed by Council officers;
- Introducing a carefully designed temporary concession scheme could offer vital short-term support while reinforcing Medway’s reputation as a compassionate, resident-focused authority.
- The Council currently has a system in place in those circumstances where individuals have received an SR1 form because their condition is moving towards an end-of-life situation. In those circumstances a blue badge in the existing system is normally dispatched within a few days.

This Council welcomes:

- The letter from the Leader of the Council to the 18 MPs of Kent and Medway and the Leader of Kent County Council proposing a meeting to explore the practical issues of the proposed scheme. In the letter it is suggested with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon there is consideration for a cohesive approach across both upper tier authorities in the region.
- The positive cross party Westminster Hall Debate on 16th July secured by Helen Grant MP which included contributions from Tris Osborne MP alongside other MPs from both the Region of Kent & Medway and beyond.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1) Support, in principle, the creation of a Medway-based temporary parking concession scheme for residents with significant mobility impairments arising from serious but time-limited conditions. This scheme should be a

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cohesive system alongside Kent County Council recognising Local Government Reorganisation is on the horizon.

- 2) Request that officers continue to work with Parking Services and other departments to develop a viable, clearly communicated scheme, with suitable eligibility criteria and enforcement guidance.
- 3) Welcome the administration's commitment to the principle of this local scheme and that they will bring forward proposals as soon as practicably possible including relevant pre decision scrutiny.
- 4) Welcome the support of Medway's three MPs alongside the 15 other MPs from our region and the shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Gareth Bacon MP, with the campaign being led on a cross party basis by Helen Grant MP, Tris Osborne MP and Mike Martin MP.
- 5) Welcome the positive contribution by Minister Lilian Greenwood at the July 16th Westminster Hall Debate on behalf of the government recognising work is being done and consideration for cross department work required to consider next steps.
- 6) Thank all hard working council officers who are responsible for ensuring that this vital provision is made available to those who need it."

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried:

This Council recognises the urgent need for fairer access to mobility support for residents facing serious but time-limited health conditions, such as cancer treatment or recovery from major injury, who currently fall outside the eligibility criteria of the national Blue Badge scheme.

We note the growing support for the Kent Online "Blue Badge Battle" campaign, including cross-party backing from all 18 Kent MPs, who have called for a temporary Blue Badge concession scheme to support those in genuine need.

This Council further notes that:

- The Department for Transport's current guidance restricts eligibility to conditions expected to last at least three years, which excludes many residents enduring serious but non-permanent impairments;
- Medway Council already follows national guidance but is now, appropriately, in active discussions about the potential for a local scheme, as confirmed by Council officers;

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- Introducing a carefully designed temporary concession scheme could offer vital short-term support while reinforcing Medway's reputation as a compassionate, resident-focused authority.
- The council currently has a system in place in those circumstances where individuals have received an SR1 form because their condition is moving towards an end-of-life situation. In those circumstances a blue badge in the existing system is normally dispatched within a few days.

This Council welcomes:

- The letter from the Leader of the Council to the 18 MPs of Kent and Medway and the Leader of Kent County Council proposing a meeting to explore the practical issues of the proposed scheme. In the letter it is suggested with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon there is consideration for a cohesive approach across both upper tier authorities in the region.
- The positive cross party Westminster Hall Debate on 16th July secured by Helen Grant MP which included contributions from Tris Osborne MP alongside other MPs from both the Region of Kent & Medway and beyond.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1) Support, in principle, the creation of a Medway-based temporary parking concession scheme for residents with significant mobility impairments arising from serious but time-limited conditions. This scheme should be a cohesive system alongside Kent County Council recognising Local Government Reorganisation is on the horizon.
- 2) Request that officers continue to work with Parking Services and other departments to develop a viable, clearly communicated scheme, with suitable eligibility criteria and enforcement guidance.
- 3) Welcome the administration's commitment to the principle of this local scheme and that they will bring forward proposals as soon as practicably possible including relevant pre decision scrutiny.
- 4) Welcome the support of Medway's three MPs alongside the 15 other MPs from our region and the shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Gareth Bacon MP, with the campaign being led on a cross party basis by Helen Grant MP, Tris Osborne MP and Mike Martin MP.
- 5) Welcome the positive contribution by Minister Lilian Greenwood at the July 16th Westminster Hall Debate on behalf of the government recognising work is being done and consideration for cross department work required to consider next steps.

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- 6) Thank all hard working council officers who are responsible for ensuring that this vital provision is made available to those who need it.

Motion B – Proposed by Councillor Joy and supported by Councillor Lawrence:

“The Council welcomes the announcement that the Government has made to bring in further free school meals to the most disadvantaged children in Medway. The Council notes the positive reception from the administration over the increased £2.3bn worth of funding to education across the country. The Council notes that the Shadow Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Education has undertaken research on the issue of funding for schools through a survey of all local schools and academies with over thirty schools responding. This showed that the level of funding on offer is putting the future of our children at risk due to decisions made by the Government.

The Council notes the outcomes of this research, which highlights the following concerns:

- 1) The increase in employer national insurance, that the Government stated would be fully funded for schools: the reality is very stark, with the goal posts being moved to a rate per pupil. This is acceptable for schools with a full roll and a low average length of service of staff members, however with a lot of Medway schools, this is not the case, some with spaces in their year groups, others with long time experienced teachers which is causing shortfalls of up to £37,000 per year in funding.
- 2) General annual grant (GAG) funding showing discrepancies of actual cuts to below inflation increases, ranging from cuts of 1.9% to increases of 2.0%, which is well below the inflation rate of 3.2%: this in reality is a cut of 5% of schools’ budgets, while still being expected to meet the challenges of an increase in required SEND provision across all schools.
- 3) The reality of the welcomed 4% increase for teacher’s pay, with schools having to find 1% of this from already stretched budgets: this will force the primary sector to cut support staff to make budgets fit, which will result in less support for the most vulnerable in our schools and the secondary sector having to increase class size, which is proven to limit the chances of progress for our children. Money has been cut from renewing educational resources and deferring building maintenance as a result of this.
- 4) Kent and Medway being some of the worst funded areas for children’s education: our schools have already been pushed to the brink and have been very lean with regards to finances, leaving little room for manoeuvre.

The Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask that the Government honours the original commitment to fully fund all employer national insurance increases to all Medway schools, fully fund the teacher pay

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award of 4% and request an urgent review of funding, ensuring that all children are treated fairly.

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, Etheridge, 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, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Field, Gurung, Hamindishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Jackson, Jones, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Skokar, Stamp and Van Dyke. (29)

Abstain: None.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion C – Proposed by Councillor Spalding and supported by Councillor Lawrence:

“Executives from Southern Water recently presented to and answered questions from an Overview and Scrutiny committee. While the planned investment in certain areas in Medway is welcomed, it does not appear to be sufficient nor coming online soon enough to meet current needs let alone future demand.

Not a week goes by without complaint from residents about low water pressure, sewage and wastewater disposal or burst pipes causing supply interruption as well as traffic disruption from the resulting repairs.

Now the Local Plan has been published, Southern Water, and all utility and service providers, should, in my opinion be reviewing their short and long terms plans so areas in immediate desperate need of improvement such as the villages within All Saints ward can receive the attention they require, while plans are made to cope with future development.

This Council requests the Chief Executive of the Council and Leader of the Council to jointly write to the Chief Executive of Southern Water to request Southern Water carries out an urgent review of its future plans for Medway and implements a strategy whereby current problems are addressed, and provision is made to satisfy future demand.”

Decision:

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

157 Leader's Report

Discussion:

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

- Local Government reorganisation progress and the strong cross party working taking place across Kent and Medway.
- The recent Special Council meeting which had approved publication of the Pre-Submission Draft Medway Local Plan. Residents and other local stakeholders were encouraged to share their view up until the deadline of 11 August.
- The change to enable 16 and 17 year olds to vote at future elections which had just been confirmed by the Government.
- Concern about the number of children in Medway who were currently in temporary accommodation and the importance of the Local Plan in addressing this.
- Recent parliamentary meetings including a regional meeting of MPs that had been chaired by Councillor Maple and an event hosted by Visit Kent.
- The success of Victory in Europe (VE) Day commemorations in Medway.
- Armed Forces Day and the creation of the Medway Armed Forces Partnership Board.
- The refresh of the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan.
- The refresh of tennis courts and the Splash Pad at the Strand.
- Regeneration of St John's Church.
- Opening of two new buildings at Victory Academy.
- The creation of the North Kent Downs and Woods National Nature Reserve.
- Hosting of the Medway Live staff engagement events at the Central Theatre by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive.
- The introduction of public and Member questions at Cabinet meetings and changes trailed at Council meetings that aimed to reduce meeting length.
- Retention of eight Green Flags for Medway parks and open spaces and the aim for Deangate to also achieve Green Flag status.
- The variety of flags flown outside Gun Wharf in recent months to represent the whole Medway community.
- The restructuring and rightsizing of Adult Social Care.
- The free classes being provided by Public Health to support people to maintain their health and wellbeing.
- The opening of the James Williams Healthy Living Centre at the Pentagon Centre and the wrap around services that this would provide.

158 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Hamilton asked the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, the following:

“Have our HR policies ever allowed elected Members — under any administration — to unilaterally override staff contracts or working conditions outside proper processes?”

In response, Councillor Van Dyke said that the Medway Pay Policy Statement was reviewed annually by the Employment Matters Committee and Full Council, and any other policy changes that may impact working conditions would be subject to consultation with Trade Union colleagues and through the Employment Matters Committee.

It was not possible for Members to make changes to these matters outside of these processes.

As the General Secretary of Unison had said in standing up for the rights of working people, who had been unacceptably threatened, it was disappointing but not unexpected that Nigel Farage thought he could immediately threaten local government workers in the councils Reform UK now controlled. Councillor Van Dyke concluded that the UK had laws that protected workers and strong unions that would stand up for their Members.

Question B – Councillor Jackson asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Can the Leader confirm whether it would be legal for this Council to pass a budget which would deny young people with support like driving lessons or education access based on their immigration status or background, as Reform UK have recently suggested, on the basis that Medway Council has a statutory duty of care to young people who are in our care until the age of 25?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that Medway Council, like all local authorities in England with care responsibilities, had clear and binding statutory responsibilities towards all children and young people in its care, including care leavers up to the age of 25. These responsibilities were underpinned by several key pieces of legislation and statutory guidance.

This duty was the foundation of the Council’s role as a corporate parent, which required the Council to act in the best interests of all Children in Care and Care leavers, as any good parent would. This included access to education, training, employment, and life skills such as driving lessons, where appropriate.

It would not be lawful for the Council to pass a budget that denied support to Children in Care or care leavers based on their immigration status or background. Such a policy would be incompatible the Council’s statutory duties, the legal framework governing care, and its role as a corporate parent.

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Councillor Maple said that Zia Yusuf had demonstrated, when discussing this issue on BBC Radio Kent, that he and his party did not understand the statutory responsibilities that they had taken on.

Medway Council was committed to upholding the rights and welfare of all young people in its care and was pleased to pass a cross party motion in 2024 recognising that people with care experience had a protected characteristic. The Council would ensure that they were supported equally and fairly, and that all children continued to matter in Medway.

Question C – Councillor Myton asked the Chairperson of the Employment Matters Committee, Councillor Mark Prenter, the following:

“If Medway Council attempted to give different pay awards to staff based on whether they are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme — as Reform UK have suggested — would that be legal under UK employment law?”

In response, Councillor Prenter said that all roles went through a job evaluation process to ensure that employees were fairly paid for the work they undertook.

Differentiating pay awards for the same role on inappropriate grounds could potentially make the authority liable for equal pay claims.

Councillor Prenter said that this would be an awful thing to put on working people in Medway. Far from achieving government efficiency, it would cost the Council more and use officer time to resolve unnecessary disputes. Council staff had suffered more than a decade of real terms pay cuts. He said that the first thing Reform UK did when they achieved power was to attack the low paid workers that kept the country moving.

Question D – Councillor Nestorov asked the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, the following:

“If Medway followed Reform UK’s dogmatic position and ended all working from home — what would be the operational and legal consequences for our workforce?”

In response, Councillor Van Dyke said that this would put a strain on Medway’s estates and its current strategy of property rationalisation, which formed part of the wider financial sustainability ambition. It would also make recruitment and retention difficult as many people had changed their work patterns and lifestyles to adjust to a new way of working and many other organisations offered this flexible approach.

Ending working from home would also necessitate changing employment contracts for all effective staff, which would require consultation and could come at a significant cost.

Councillor Van Dyke considered that organisations worked best when they were agile and flexible and could respond to the needs of their staff, whether

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that was by agreeing a programme of work to modernise facilities, as Medway Council was doing at Gun Wharf, or allowing hybrid working, which enabled staff to be more productive. She suggested that Reform UK agreed with this approach as they had been advertising for numerous party roles that included working from home, instead of investing in facilities for staff.

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

“If Medway Councillors promised residents that we would ban staff from working from home, would we be breaching employment law?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that employment contracts generally set out the work style and location that was applicable to a role. Whilst not all contracts in Medway would be the same, most would state that the work style is hybrid, in line with the Council’s Our Ways of Working policy.

Amending a contract term without formal consultation and other procedures being correctly followed would likely be overturned at an Employment Tribunal Hearing.

Councillor Maple said that Nigel Farage telling the BBC that there would be no more working from home was not something he could deliver and would not deliver the productivity he thought it would. There were people across all industries who did not have the opportunity to work from home due to the nature of their work but to block those that could was the ‘politics of envy’.

Question F – Councillor Howcroft-Scott asked the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, the following:

“If a Medway “DOGE team” tried to demand HR files or attempted to discipline officers without following policy, would that be lawful?”

In response, Councillor Van Dyke said that access to Human Resources files could only be given in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and regulations, as the files contained personal data about employees and in some cases, their families. Individuals could request access to their own files via a Subject Access Request but there were very limited circumstances where a Subject Access Request for an individual file could be accepted from someone other than the individual concerned.

Any disciplinary action could only be taken in line with the Council’s disciplinary policies and processes. These did not allow for actions to be taken by someone outside the authority, although an independent investigator could be appointed in limited circumstances.

Councillor Van Dyke said that the successful running of a Council was dependent on mutual respect between the Leader, Cabinet and senior management team. She considered that putting a letter into the public domain

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via social media, threatening staff to comply with party demands, before sharing it with the Executive, to be completely unacceptable.

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

“Would you ever co-sign a letter with the Leader and Chair of the Labour Party – threatening Medway Council staff if they didn’t hand over sensitive information to the Labour Party Chair and other prominent Labour Party donors, particularly, if these hypothetical Labour Party donors had already in the past been fined over £100k by the Information Commissioner’s Office for illegally sharing and using data for political campaigning?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that the answer was no.

Question H – Councillor Stamp asked the Chairperson of the Audit Committee, Councillor Browne, the following:

“Has Medway’s Audit Committee ever received advice or evidence suggesting that politicising audit, as Reform UK proposes, could improve governance or protect taxpayers?”

Responding on behalf of Councillor Browne, Councillor Maple said that the answer was no.

Question I – Councillor Campbell asked the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Murray, the following:

“Reform UK Councillor Linden Kemkaran recently said of the possibility of replacing classes in adult education centres up and down the county that are teaching English as a second language with the Duolingo app, ‘If I don’t think that’s value for money, it’s going. Simple as that.’”

Can the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm whether the health benefits of helping residents learn English, for example, improving health outcomes, as well as social and economic benefits such as getting into work and improving community cohesion represents good value for money?”

In response, Councillor Murray said that she had had the pleasure of attending one of Medway’s ESOL classes run by Medway Adult Education. The benefits and impact of learning English at centres and outreach community venues was well documented, valued and recognised nationally.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) – classes supported community cohesion, integration, and mental health alongside opportunities to improve life, work and education prospects.

Some learners had limited support networks, which increased the risk of social isolation. ESOL classes could be a way for people to develop new relationships and help signposting to other support agencies. Those at the class Councillor

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Murray observed had already started taking part in other activities at the Salvation Army Centre.

Councillor Murray considered ESOL to be about so much more than just learning a language. Learning via an app such as Duolingo did provide opportunities for learning basic vocabulary, but progress was often slow and attention to grammar not integral to the lessons and the methods of supporting pronunciation were imperfect.

ESOL classes embedded opportunities to gain recognised national accredited qualifications and the necessary grammar and pronunciation to aid communication and ensure progress. Practical life skills with topics including healthy eating, financial literacy and wellbeing were integrated into the curriculum to educate the learners holistically, as well as academically. Many learners reported increased confidence with their language skills and stated it had helped them to communicate and engage more effectively in their daily lives with their GP or with their child's school.

Meeting and learning together could provide support networks that were unparalleled. In classes, students learned to keep themselves and their families safe from digital harm and exploitation. This preventative action reduced the risk of harm and further cost to society and they also became familiar with the diverse culture of the UK and British values.

Students learned how to apply for work and develop interview skills to prepare them for life in modern Britain. This in turn supported increased productivity, benefitting the local economy. Some learners went to class straight from shifts in their work clothing, often juggling the challenges of learning and working with family commitments. Others were not ready to enter the job market, but got involved with volunteering and community engagement. Others worked to use and transfer existing skills and expertise to develop their own businesses that could support themselves and contribute to the economy.

These protective and empowering factors were hard to quantify but ESOL classes were about more than just learning a language. They provided a foundation for creating valued, stronger and more connected communities.

Question J – Councillor Jones asked Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“If Medway Council followed Reform UK’s advice and tried to opt out of the Local Government Pension Scheme – what would happen legally and what bill might we face?”

In response, Councillor Maple said that one of the benefits which was particularly important to the Council’s staff and a key offer which improved recruitment and retention was membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

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Withdrawal from that scheme would have a negative effect on both recruitment and retention, which would increase the reliance on temporary and agency staff, which would come at an increased cost.

The Council was legally obliged to provide a pension scheme for its employees so withdrawal from the Local Government Scheme would necessitate providing an alternative pension scheme, which would also come at a significant cost.

Rather than increasing efficiency, withdrawal from the Local Government Pension Scheme would make matters far worse, while punishing hard working local people.

Question K – Councillor Peake asked the Chairperson of the Audit Committee, Councillor Browne, the following:

“If Medway attempted to side line our external auditors and replace them with Reform UK’s version of DOGE, what risks would we be exposed to?”

Responding on behalf of Councillor Browne, Councillor Maple said that any version of DOGE was designed to identify inefficiencies in delivery of Council services, while the role of external audit was to provide an opinion on the accuracy of the Council’s statutory statement of accounts, and in so doing provide an opinion on the Council’s value for money.

Local councils were legally required to comply with external audit obligations under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Statutory audits ensured compliance with financial regulations, provided assurance to taxpayers and central government, and were conducted by qualified, regulated professionals.

DOGE functions were not statutory bodies and had no legal mandate under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. They were often politically affiliated, compromising their independence, which was a core component of statutory audits. They could not replace the Council’s external auditors, and the Council would still be legally required to appoint independent external auditors through Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) or other approved routes.

While there were no direct financial implications for failing to have external audit, failure to do so would leave the Council exposed to reputational and procedural consequences for non-compliance with its legal obligations.

Question L – Councillor Finch asked the Leader of Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Given that the Leader of the Council attended a meeting with Peel L&P and ArcelorMittal Kent Wire in January 2024, where Peel L&P reportedly stated they were not minded to sell Chatham Docks, why does the Leader continue to imply that ArcelorMittal could resolve the issue simply by acquiring the site risking misleading the public and stakeholders about the realistic prospects for securing the future of the working docks?”

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In response, Councillor Maple said that he was very pleased to have convened a meeting on 23 January 2024 when the suggestion of the sale had been put forward. Peel L&P had reiterated that they were happy to receive any such proposals. A letter, dated 25 November 2022, to the Council's previous administration had stated that ArcelorMittal Kent Wire were prepared to purchase the docks from Peel L&P and was assembling a bid to do so. That bid had never come forward. In 2022, there had been correspondence between ArcelorMittal and Peel L&P on the issue of the freehold and it was asked whether Peel would sell the freehold. Peel said they had not considered selling the site but Arcelor Mittal were welcome to put forward a proposal at any time.

Councillor Maple stated that for a number of years Arcelor Mittal had the opportunity to put forward a bid to the land owner. They had failed to do so and it was bizarre for anyone else to be blamed for this.

Question M – Councillor Vye submitted the following to Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Murray:

“Can the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board confirm the full financial cost, including any committed or anticipated expenditure, associated with Medway's participation in the Marmot Place initiative to date, specifying what concrete, measurable health outcomes or cost-benefit assessments have been recorded to demonstrate value for money for residents?”

Note: The Mayor stated that since the time allocation for Member questions had been exhausted, a written response would be provided to question 10M.

159 MedPay Review: Outline of the Approach to Senior Officer Progression of Pay

Background:

This report focused on introducing the MedPay Review principles for senior managers. It sought to align senior officer pay scales with the rest of the organisation, to enable progression through the pay ranges, based on a career progression framework, which would be developed by service areas, as was the case for all other ranges.

A competency framework had been agreed at the Employment Matters Committee meeting held on 29 January 2025. However this did not enable progression through pay grades and further work was now needed to take place to build the progression frameworks for senior managers.

The report had previously been considered by the Employment Matters Committee on 1 May 2025, the minutes of which were set out at section 6 of the report.

The report explained that the Employment Matters Committee had agreed to recommend pay scale Option B to Council for approval, which contained four

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pay progression points, rather Option A, which contained three pay progression points and had been preferred by officers. The report, therefore, requested Council to approve Option B, as recommended by the Committee.

The Chairperson of the Employment Matters Committee, Councillor Mark Prenter, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Hackwell, supported by Councillor Fearn, proposed the following amendment:

- 1) "The Council is asked to note the progress and preferred direction for senior officers' pay and performance management and the option recommended by officers, being Option A.
- 2) The Council is asked to note the comments made by the Employment Matters Committee with regard to recommending Option B rather than Option A, as set out at section 6 of the report and the comments in response to Option B of the Chief Organisational Culture Officer, as set out at section 7 to the report.
- 3) The Council **takes due regard to the views of the Employment Matters Committee's recommendation of** ~~is asked by Employment Matters Committee to agree~~ Option B (as set out in Appendix A to the report), **however agrees with the recommendation from the Chief Organisational Culture Officer and the Corporate Management Team that Option A be agreed** so work can commence on building the professional frameworks for each area.
- 4) The Council is requested to note that the development of a Career Progression Framework and salary scales for Assistant Directors and Deputy Directors shall be undertaken concurrently but implemented subsequently by the Head of Paid Service."

Amended Recommendation reads:

- 1) "The Council is asked to note the progress and preferred direction for senior officers' pay and performance management and the option recommended by officers, being Option A.
- 2) The Council is asked to note the comments made by the Employment Matters Committee with regard to recommending Option B rather than Option A, as set out at section 6 of the report and the comments in response to Option B of the Chief Organisational Culture Officer, as set out at section 7 to the report.
- 3) The Council takes due regard to the views of the Employment Matters Committee's recommendation of Option B (as set out in Appendix A to the report), however agrees with the recommendation from the Chief Organisational Culture Officer and the Corporate Management Team

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that Option A be agreed so work can commence on building the professional frameworks for each area.

- 4) The Council is requested to note that the development of a Career Progression Framework and salary scales for Assistant Directors and Deputy Directors shall be undertaken concurrently but implemented subsequently by the Head of Paid Service.”

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

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations set out in the report were agreed.

- a) The Council noted the progress and preferred direction for senior officers’ pay and performance management and the option recommended by officers, being Option A.
- b) The Council noted the comments made by the Employment Matters Committee with regard to recommending Option B rather than Option A, as set out at section 6 of the report and the comments in response to Option B of the Chief Organisational Culture Officer, as set out at section 7 to the report.
- c) The Council, as asked by Employment Matters Committee, agreed Option B (as set out in Appendix A to the report) so work could commence on building the professional frameworks for each area.
- d) The Council noted that the development of a Career Progression Framework and salary scales for Assistant Directors and Deputy Directors would be undertaken concurrently but implemented subsequently by the Head of Paid Service.

160 Amendments to the Capital Programme

Background:

This report requested Council approval for amendments to the Capital Programme as recommended by Cabinet on 3 June 2025. These changes related to Innovation Park Medway / Pentagon Future Capital Works and the flexible use of Capital Receipts.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, Councillor Mahil, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

- a) The Council agreed the removal of £34.170million from the Innovation Park Medway Scheme as set out in section 4.1 of the report, in line with Cabinet decision number 45/2025, dated 11 March 2025.
- b) The Council agreed that £2.400million of the underspend on the Pentagon Future Capital Works scheme be used to fund a new scheme to deliver further improvements to the Pentagon, as set out in section 4.1 of the report including:
 - Replacement of a section of roof (R14).
 - Refurbishment of 205 high street.
 - Upgrades to fire exits and windows to the bus lane.
 - Repair and resurfacing of the service road.
 - Repairs and resurfacing to the car park.
- c) The Council agreed to remove the remaining unspent balance of £431,000 from the Pentagon Future Capital Works scheme, as set out in section 4.2 of the report.
- d) The Council agreed to transfer back to General Capital Receipts the unspent balance on the amounts earmarked through the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, as set out in Section 5 of the report:
 - £544,706 originally earmarked for Children's Social Care improvement.
 - £148,709 originally earmarked for Adults Social Care Improvement.
 - £165,230 originally earmarked to support the wider transformation programme.

161 Review of the Constitution

Background:

The report set out that a number of measures to reduce the length of full Council meetings had been trialled since the Council elections held in May 2023. These had included motions being debated earlier on the agenda, a limited number of speakers on motions and questions by the public and Members on executive functions to be considered at Cabinet meetings.

The report recommended that those measures that had been trialled be made permanent by changes to the Council procedure rules and that further options, considered at the cross-party governance meetings be adopted too.

The report also asked the Council to agree a change of Membership to the Health and Wellbeing Board to add Voluntary and Community Sector representation.

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

Decision:

- 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. (Note: Following having been proposed and seconded, this recommendation was taken forward without discussion for debate at the next ordinary meeting of the Council, as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report).
- b) The Council approved the appointment of a representative of Medway Voluntary Action to the Health and Wellbeing Board, as a non-voting Member.

162 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 24 April 2025.

Some of the topics discussed included:

- Pre-decision scrutiny of the Taxi Tariff Review Policy and Action Plans in relation to the Air Quality and Climate Change Action Plans.
- A Committee request made for officers to investigate amending the Council's Petitions Scheme to enable e-petitions to be more widely accepted.
- Committee discussion of the leadership arrangements and the Care Quality Commission inspection at Medway Maritime Hospital.
- An update provided to Committee on the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board's Community Services Engagement Programme.
- Requests made by two Committees for training for Members to be investigated in relation to how to use the information contained in performance monitoring reports to maximise effective scrutiny.
- Scrutiny undertaken of Southern Water including raising concerns about senior management payments and dividends. The misreporting of sewage was also highlighted.
- The scrutiny of Care Leaver accommodation and the development of inspections of this accommodation by young people.
- The Medway Youth Council Annual Report and Conference, which had been inclusive and engaging.

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

Decision:

The Council noted the report.

163 The Disposal of Unit 1, Cherry Trees Court, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

Background:

This report advised the Council of the sale of Unit 1, Cherry Trees Court, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. This followed inclusion of the property on a list of non-operational properties declared surplus by the Cabinet on 29 October 2024.

The report had been submitted to Council for information in line with constitutional requirements.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, supported by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decision:

The Council noted the sale of Unit 1, Cherry Trees Court, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

164 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 Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, 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

Date:

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