

## **Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**23 October 2025**

### **Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

#### **Summary**

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. **Recommendations**
  - 1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.
2. **Budget and policy framework**
  - 2.1. The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, as set out in the Council's constitution are:
    - Digital Services (including Medway 2.0)
    - Licensing (Executive Functions Only).
3. **Background**
  - 3.1. I am proud to have Portfolio Holder responsibility for Digital Services and Licensing; two demanding, multifaceted services which have both undergone and been responsible for delivering significant positive transformation in recent years, whilst continuing to deliver key services at the highest of standards. I continue to be impressed by the dedication and forward-thinking attitude within the various teams under my Portfolio.
  - 3.2. I would like to thank all staff and partners for their commitment to delivering the Medway 2.0 vision. As Portfolio Holder, I have championed a culture of openness, innovation, and collaboration, ensuring that our digital transformation delivers real benefits for residents and the Council alike.

3.3. The Medway 2.0 Delivery Plan directly supports the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan, agreed by Cabinet in May 2025. Through dedicated service design and improvement, we are streamlining operations, particularly in customer-facing and support services, to deliver savings and better value for money.

3.4. The Licensing Team have been part of the Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Service since 2019. They are responsible for discharging Medway Council's licensing functions in terms of administering and regulating the licensing regimes in respect of:

- Premises licences, Club Premises Certificates, Personal licences and Temporary Event Notices under the Licensing Act 2003
- Taxi and Private Hire driver, vehicle and private hire operator licences
- Gambling licences, registrations and permits
- Sex establishment licences
- Scrap metal licences
- Charitable collection permits
- Pavement Licences
- Street trading consents

3.5. The team works collaboratively with internal departments such as Environmental Health, Public Health and Trading Standards and external partners including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and Home Office Immigration to ensure effective consultations and joined-up interventions.

3.6. Licensing has a Service Level Agreement in place with Medway's Environmental Enforcement Team, who carry out the compliance checks and enforcement in relation Scrap Metal and Street Trading. The SLA has, just this year, been renewed, which confirms how well the collaborative team works together. They work extremely hard to ensure that correct advice is given to enquirers, and the appropriate enforcement is carried out against those not adhering to the law, their conditions and any policy requirements.

3.7. The team also liaise closely with other professionals across the council and other Kent authorities through attendance at such groups as the Safety Advisory Group and Kent & Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group.

3.8. Officers ensure that licensable activities are appropriately licensed and compliance with licence conditions, through pro-active inspections and reactive inspections following receipt of complaints; taking appropriate action when issues are identified.

3.9. The team continue to do a fantastic job of ensuring that licence applications are processed quickly and reliably, with 100% of applications often being issued within the targeted periods as reflected in their Key Performance statistics.

3.10. The team have carried out a several enforcement operations over the past year to ensure the safety of the public. These have included: visits to schools where our licensed drivers pick up and drop off our students to ensure they

are appropriately licensed and are abiding by their conditions, stopping licensed vehicles as they travel around the borough checking they are abiding by their conditions and visits to our alcohol licensed premises to promote the good practice of 'Ask for Angela'.

#### 4. Providing political leadership and challenge

- 4.1. I have provided strategic oversight and challenge through active participation in the Medway 2.0 programme and regular engagements with the teams delivering transformation across the Council.
- 4.2. I have championed the integration of services and breaking down silos to deliver joined-up support for residents, as seen in the successful redesign of Housing and Homelessness services by joining them up with our benefits teams to provide direct, and sometimes instant, support to residents in need.
- 4.3. I have ensured robust governance and performance monitoring, supporting the delivery of key projects such as the Integrated Hubs programme and the implementation of AI-driven tools across Adult Social Care, HR, and Finance.
- 4.4. I have led on budgetary oversight, ensuring that transformation projects deliver both immediate and long-term savings, while maintaining a focus on quality and service user outcomes.
- 4.5. I have ensured that the teams have engaged with external partners, including technology suppliers and local community groups, to ensure our digital solutions are innovative, accessible, and fit for purpose.
- 4.6. I am pleased to confirm that work on the new CCTV control centre has proceeded at pace as part of the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme, with completion expected by January 2026.
- 4.7. I have bi-monthly meetings with the Licensing Manager, Emily Lane-Blackwell and the Head of Community Protection, Mark Lees, to discuss any new developments within the department, updates on policy reviews, enforcement activity and the status of the performance of the team. I have found these meetings to be very informative, and I have been able to provide political leadership and support in relation to the activities they are carrying out.

#### 5. Championing the Interests of Medway residents

- 5.1. I have prioritised the voices of residents, ensuring that service redesign is informed by real-life scenarios and user feedback.
- 5.2. The new Housing "front door" model that is being developed for Kingsley House has already undergone some extensive discovery work over the last few weeks, including consultation with users of the service. This will inform the service redesign work that is now underway, which will make

improvements to the service offered at Kingsley house in the short-term and inform our long-term design of the Integrated Hubs programme.

- 5.3. The launch of new, scenario-based homelessness web content has doubled engagement and improved access to vital information and support.
- 5.4. The award-winning “report it” digital service has transformed the resident experience, enabling faster, more transparent reporting and resolution of issues across nearly 70 council processes.
- 5.5. I mention “award winning”, because I am very proud to report that the team have recently won the “Excellence In Business Transformation Award 2025”. This is a fantastic achievement, especially as this is a European award, including both the public and private sectors, so we have truly put Medway on the international map as a leader in service design and the implementation of new technologies to support residents.
- 5.6. I have championed digital inclusion, supporting the rollout of AI-powered tools like JADU Agent-EX:Search and InterpretersLive! to make council services accessible to all, regardless of language or ability.
- 5.7. JADU Agent-EX:Search is a new AI powered search engine that will be introduced onto our website over the coming months, which supports 70 languages, automatically detecting the language used to interact with it and replying in the same language – via text or speech.
- 5.8. This will dramatically improve access to Council services and information for the 7% of Medway residents whose main language is not English. It will also complement our recently launched “InterpretersLive! system, which provides on-demand British Sign Language interpreting via a video call, making the Council more accessible to residents.

#### **5.9. Current Licensing figures**

- 5.10. The Licensing team currently look after some 2355 licences for Medway, as broken down in the table below:

	<b>Currently issued</b>	<b>Currently suspended</b>
Premises Licences	763	61
Club Premises Certificates	49	1
Gambling Premises Licences	41	0
Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permit	20	0
Club Machine Permit	29	0
Club Gaming Permit	0	0
Notification of 2 or less machines	56	0
Hackey or Private Hire Driver Licence	567	21

Hackney or Private Hire Vehicle Licence	562	19
Private Hire Operator Licence	52	0
Pavement Licence	6	0
Scrap Metal Site Licence	8	0
Scrap Metal Collector Licence	15	0
Street Trading Consent	20	0
Small Society Lottery Registration	64	0
Sexual Entertainment Licence	1	0

- 5.11. The impressive scale of these figures goes some way to demonstrate the significant amount of processing, compliance and enforcement activity that Licensing undertake.
- 5.12. Premises licence and Club Premises Certificate suspensions are issued following non-payment of annual maintenance fees, and the suspensions are lifted only once the debt is cleared. Chasing payment of outstanding fees is a necessary, ongoing and time-consuming task.
- 5.13. Licensing receive weekly reports which show licensees that have failed to provide a document that is required to continue to stay licensed. These reports are processed and suspensions issued where required.
  - 5.13.1. Driver licence suspensions are issued for a variety of reasons including non-compliance with policy requirements such as failure to provide: a medical, valid Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate and valid DVLA driving licence.
  - 5.13.2. Vehicle licence suspensions are usually issued for non-compliance with vehicle specifications often due to damage incurred following an accident, failure to obtain an MOT and failure to provide a valid insurance certificate.
  - 5.13.3. Private hire operator suspensions are usually issued for failure to submit public liability insurance.
- 5.14. This list is not exhaustive.

**6. Support for key service areas**

- 6.1. **Housing and Homelessness:** Led the co-design of integrated, data-driven support models, resulting in earlier interventions and improved outcomes for residents.
- 6.2. **Customer Services:** Oversaw the automation of high-demand processes, reducing manual interventions and freeing up staff to focus on complex cases.
- 6.3. **Adult Social Care:** Supported the rollout of AI tools like Magic Notes, delivering significant time savings and improved quality in case management.

- 6.4. Finance and Procurement: Championed the adoption of AI-driven document processing and the procurement of a new Income Management and Payment Platform, ensuring robust financial controls and cost savings.
- 6.5. Frontline Services: Supported the implementation of Route Reports and service design in Waste Services, driving efficiency and better outcomes for residents.
- 6.6. Data and Digital Infrastructure: Led the modernisation of the data infrastructure, enabling intelligence-led decision making and improved data governance across the Council.
- 6.7. CCTV: Worked in partnership with Kyndi, where our CCTV was used in conjunction with a GPS geo-fencing alarm to help track the whereabouts of a residential client and guide the carers to their location whilst monitoring personal safety.
- 6.8. **Licensing**
- 6.9. Licensing were tasked with drafting a Taxi Tariff Review Policy. Following consultation, the policy was approved by Cabinet in July 2025. This policy sets out the frequency of the review and the consultation methodology for the tariff.
- 6.10. Since the implementation of the Taxi Tariff Review Policy, the first review has begun. The reason for this was two-fold, one to ensure that the Christmas and New Year tariffs became a permanent aspect of the tariff and two, in line with the policy, to have the bi-annual review of the tariff. The consultation has taken place, and the results will be presented to Cabinet this month.
- 6.11. A review of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy has begun. This is a five year policy, and the current one will expire on 30 April 2026. I shall be bringing a report to Cabinet in November with a draft policy, prior to the consultation.
- 6.12. In the coming year the Cumulative Impact Assessment is due for review. This is in relation to the Licensing Act 2003 and whether there is an accumulation of issues located in areas with multiple premises with the sale of alcohol. The consultation will begin mid-year 2026 and the implementation, if approved, in May 2027.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. I remain fully committed to supporting the ongoing transformation of Medway Council. Despite challenging circumstances, we have delivered measurable improvements, driven innovation, and laid the foundations for sustainable, long-term success. I will continue to champion the interests of residents and staff, ensuring that Medway remains a place we can all be proud of.

- 7.2. Having continued to observe the energy, passion, expertise, and dedication from the teams providing these invaluable services, I have every confidence that we will provide the transformation Medway Council needs to make it fit for the future.
- 7.3. I will continue to ensure that Licensing Enforcement remains a key priority in my portfolio which will help Medway to be an even greater place to live, work, learn and visit for years to come.
- 7.4. I continue to be fully supportive of the service and work which is being undertaken in challenging circumstances and am committed to supporting continued progress.

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## Appendices

None

## Background papers

None