

Public Questions and responses from the meeting of Cabinet on 21 October 2025

Question A – Nancy Paulding, of Gillingham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Alex Paterson, the following:

“As a resident of Jeffery Street, Gillingham, I wish to raise a concern about the lack of evening parking availability in our area. Due to limited on-street availability and increasing residential demand, it is often extremely difficult to find a space after 6pm, despite holding a valid residents’ G permit and contributing to local parking schemes.

While searching for parking in the evenings, I regularly observe that both the Littlewoods Car Park and the Jeffery Street Car Park remain almost entirely empty. This seems a missed opportunity to support local residents who already contribute to parking schemes. Both car parks display signage stating that charges apply between 7am and 1am, yet observations suggest that very few tickets are purchased after 6pm.

I understand that Britton Farm Car Park, just up the road, operates chargeable hours only until 6pm, which better reflects actual usage patterns. However, it is barrier locked overnight, meaning vehicles parked there cannot be accessed until 7am the following morning. This makes it unsuitable for many residents who may need to retrieve their cars earlier.

I understand that under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and associated statutory guidance, councils are encouraged to review parking policies regularly to ensure they reflect local needs and make effective use of public assets. Given the low evening usage of the Littlewoods and Jeffery Street Car Parks, and the increasing difficulty residents face in finding parking, I believe this is an ideal opportunity to apply those principles.

Would the Cabinet consider reviewing the evening policy for the Littlewoods and Jeffery Street car parks, with a view to allowing resident permit holders to park free of charge after 6pm, without overnight access restrictions? This change would make better use of existing infrastructure, improve resident satisfaction, and likely have minimal impact on council revenue.”

Councillor Paterson thanked the questioner for raising a very practical concern that affected many residents in Gillingham. He advised that the Council recognised the challenges faced by residents in areas like Jeffery Street when trying to find parking in the evenings, even with a valid permit. The observations about the low evening usage of nearby car parks such as Littlewoods and Jeffery Street were noted and appreciated.

Councillor Paterson advised that a strategic parking review had recently been commissioned which included a detailed assessment of how the car parks were being used throughout the day and evening. This review was specifically looking at underutilised car parks and considering whether changes to operational hours or access arrangements could help improve availability, and better support local needs.

The suggestion to allow resident permit holders to use these car parks free of charge after 6pm, without overnight access restrictions, was a practical one and would be fed into the review process, which was designed to ensure the parking infrastructure was used effectively and reflected the needs of the communities it served.

Nancy Paulding asked the following supplementary question:

“Could you advise what process the Council uses to assess and amend the car parking operating hours and how we can stay informed and contribute to the review process?”

Councillor Paterson advised that the process for reviewing operating hours and evening access policies for Council-managed car parks was currently being undertaken as part of a wider strategic parking review commissioned by Medway Council. This review included a detailed assessment of how the car parks were used throughout the day and evening, with particular attention to locations that appeared underutilised during certain periods.

He further advised that as part of this work, consultants were conducting site audits, analysing occupancy data, and gathering feedback from residents and stakeholders. The aim was to ensure that the parking infrastructure was being used effectively and that operational arrangements, such as access times and restrictions, were aligned with local needs.

The parking review commissioned included:

- a comprehensive audit of car park usage and revenue.
- identification of underutilised car parks and recommendations to improve their use.
- feasibility studies into new tariff banding based on demand and location.
- consideration of differential pricing, including discounted permits and evening usage.

The review would also assess operational periods of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and car parks to ensure they met current needs. The review aligned with statutory guidance under the Traffic Management Act 2004, which encouraged councils to regularly assess parking policies to reflect local needs and make effective use of public assets.

Question B – Daniel Broom, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Simon Curry, the following:

“My name is Daniel Broom from the Q-Ship Society. We have expressed an interest in a plot of waste land in which current planning permission expires in 2026; one site, known as Collier Wharf, is part of the 2nd phase of development of Chatham Docks and is mostly disused.

Dating back to 1874, many historic features exist at the site such as a World War One Admiralty Pattern Pill Box, original mooring bollards and mooring fittings, flood walls, and branch line spur, of which all are of significant historic importance to the area. Most importantly, underneath the concrete are the remains of Gillingham Fort,

a historic listed monument; with this in mind and the backing of local residents and Heritage England listing in progress, the Q-Ship Society are appealing the decision to build on this site, and kindly request the consideration for the Q-Ship Society to be granted care of the site to protect its entirety, and preserve as a potential future home for the vessel we are aiming to save (HMS Saxifrage), currently stranded in a legal battle within Chatham Docks.

Our hopes are for this to be considered in the regeneration of Gillingham Pier as a Heritage Harbour.”

In response Councillor Curry stated that the area of land referred to was part of the site granted outline planning permission under MC/11/2756, for the redevelopment of the wider Chatham Waters site, part of which had come forward over for development the intervening years. The outline permission remained in place and a reserved matters application for the area in question was expected in the near future. The Council did not hold any ownership interest or control in this land with which to influence any future development proposals, but he advised that Mr Broom should contact Peel as the landowner and applicant to discuss any potential uses.

Councillor Curry advised that the future role of the wider location was being considered in the new Medway Local Plan. The Council was working with landowners and stakeholders, such as Historic England, in planning for this area, which included recognising the contribution of heritage to new development. The Planning Inspectorate would carry out an independent examination of the plan and confirm details of policies and site allocations.

Councillor Curry added that the Council was also in the process of finalising its River Strategy for Medway. In that Strategy, there was a great deal of information about heritage and the importance of it as well. He assured Mr Broom that it was being taken very seriously from that perspective as well.

Daniel Broom asked the following supplementary question:

“With local support and support from further afield, we feel like this could become a popular heritage site that could increase the local tourism trade for both local businesses and local tourist attractions, which in turn could lead to events for local groups such as cadets, scouts and youth groups amongst many others. We would also like to include youth groups, tech schools and universities to help with the restoration and fabrication of components for the vessels and the branch line spur.”

In response, Councillor Curry stated that these factors could be taken into consideration. The publication of the Council's River Strategy would cover a lot of that in detail. The draft Strategy contained a proposal for a Riverside walk for the whole length of that side of the river, which was an aspiration many had wanted for a long time. He was sure Peel and the developers were very keen to play a part in that role all the way through the Gillingham area and into Chatham. It would be important to engage with any consultation. With that planning application the reserved matters were coming forward and there would be further opportunity to comment to the Planning Committee on how that was dealt with and how it might look.

Question C – Onyx Rist, of Rainham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Simon Curry, the following:

“While the new bus service running to and from Otterham Park, the 3A and 3C's are welcome, residents found the bus service really useful when it was extended to 5.30pm in the Summer Holidays and residents will find it useful, having a bus service at weekends too. Is there any chance of extending the times on a permanent basis and having a bus service during the weekends, using Section 106 Money to do this?”

In response Councillor Curry appreciated the question highlighting the importance of the 3A/3C bus service to residents in and around Otterham Park. He was pleased to hear that the extended hours during the summer holidays were well received and stated that the Council recognised the value that local communities placed on having reliable and accessible public transport, particularly later in the day and at weekends.

He advised that the 3A/3C service, which operated Monday to Friday and was supported by the Council, recorded 2,245 passenger journeys in September, averaging 102 passengers per day. This level of usage demonstrated the positive impact the service was having. Councillor Curry advised that the Council would be engaging with Nu-Venture to explore the feasibility of extending the service to provide later journeys during the week and a service at the weekends. Any potential changes would need to be considered in the context of available funding, including the possibility of using Section 106 contributions where appropriate and permissible.

Councillor Curry stated that the Council remained committed to improving public transport options across Medway and would continue to work with operators and stakeholders to ensure services met the needs of residents.

Onyx Rist asked the following supplementary question:

“Do you know the time scale of when those conversations will happen?”

Councillor Curry advised that he could not give an exact time scale, however he could advise that the relationship with local bus services was particularly good. He met with them on a monthly basis at different levels and with council officers on a monthly basis to discuss services. One of the aspirations of the Council was to increase bus trip numbers on an average per year up to 9 million. Levels of bus usage and trip numbers had risen to 7.8 million a year for the year 2024-25, and it was fantastic to see that increase since COVID times. The 2028 target was ambitious and would take a lot of engagement with the bus companies. It also required a lot of funding, and the government had been supportive.

Question D – Vivienne Parker, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, the following:

“Do the tower blocks on Chatham Riverside have their approval from the Buildings Safety Regulator that they are safe to live in so they can now be got ready for occupation?”

In response Councillor Louwella Prenter gave assurance that all the Council occupied buildings had been registered with the Building Safety Regulator and had their own unique High-Rise Building reference number. Each block on Chatham Riverside also had a Fire Strategy Report that outlined the fire safety protocols under the relevant building regulations to which the development was built. A Managing

Agent was employed to undertake the statutory health and safety checks to the life safety systems. The scheme was also provided with sprinklers throughout and an onsite caretaker who also undertook fire safety checks as part of his duties.

Vivienne Parker asked the following supplementary question:

“What measures are the Council going to undertake to ensure that all tower blocks being built in Medway will receive the relevant approval from the Building Safety regulator?”

Councillor Louwella Prenter advised that tower blocks had to have that approval. Building control gave approval for people to occupy those blocks. In terms of the Council blocks, she gave assurance that the sign off had been given for all those occupied buildings.

Member Question and response from the meeting of Cabinet on 21 October 2025

Question E – Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin, had submitted the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Alex Paterson, the following:

“The recent Rochester High Street traffic improvement consultation proposed to introduce ‘no vehicle’ restrictions on Sundays and bank holidays, operating between 10am to 4pm, repeating what is already in place on Saturdays.

For the majority of time these restrictions have been in place, a chain has been used to physically stop drivers from passing through. Most people will not deliberately ignore restrictions, but will just miss signs, especially when they already know the area and are instead concentrating on actually driving safely!

If this is truly about safety can the Portfolio Holder explain why a physical restriction has been removed and replaced with a money making camera, which now allows motorists to unintentionally drive through and get fined?”

In the absence of the questioner, the question was taken as read.

In response Councillor Paterson stated that he challenged and would correct a number of assertions made in the question.

He stated that for more than 20 years, a soft closure had been in force on Saturdays between 10.00a.m. and 4.00p.m. at Rochester High Street. This was not a pedestrian zone, as a hard closure involving a physical barrier like those on event days would be, but a closure which aimed to reduce the number of vehicles on the High Street to those authorised using the exemption criteria. He was aware of genuinely held concerns by some residents about the removal of the chain, and whilst he did not necessarily expect them to agree, he hoped this response would comprehensively explain the rationale behind that decision and why he would not be reversing it.

The consultation in question was not a referendum on the enforcement of moving traffic offences, but simply a consultation on extending the same scheme to Sundays as well as Saturdays. The chain, which had been previously in place, was there because the Council at that time had no powers to enforce the restriction which was

no longer the case. Motorists regularly removed the chains to enter the High Street, allowing easy contravention of the restriction, as he had explained to Councillor Turpin in previous correspondence on the issue. He asserted that those breaking the rules had no difficulty in brazenly removing the chain with impunity when some of his elderly constituents lacked the same strength or dexterity to achieve the same result for entirely lawful purposes. The chain was also less efficient for the emergency services and was not always consistently deployed. The ANPR camera enforcement system which was now in place ensured that time limited restriction was fairly and consistently applied whilst still allowing for authorised access when needed. It also allowed for the consistent enforcement of the long standing 24/7, clearly signposted, no right or left turn restriction northbound from Boley Hill onto the High Street. A rule which was routinely ignored by motorists well aware that to be punished they had to be spotted making the manoeuvre by a police officer.

Councillor Paterson stated that the chain was not coming back. He stated that traffic enforcement schemes, including red routes, had been instigated by the previous administration and was something he thought they had got right. He did not remember the Member voicing her opposition. The claim that most people would not deliberately ignore restrictions and just miss signs, especially when they already knew the area and were instead concentrating on driving safely, was as dangerous as it was disingenuous.

Observing road signs was a basic part of driving, and drivers who were not, were clearly not concentrating on driving safely. The suggestion that a sign confirming what had been the case for more than two decades might be especially confusing for someone who already knew the area and had never been able to drive there, was equally ridiculous. Signage at this location had been reviewed and updated to ensure it was clear and visible to all road users. Enforcement through cameras was not intended to generate income, but to support compliance with traffic regulations that protected public safety. Any revenue was reinvested in Medway's roads and other road safety schemes. If Councillor Turpin genuinely believed physical enforcement was required for the implementation of moving traffic offences, he queried why she had not campaigned for similar chains to be introduced on school streets which were indicated to motorists by identical signage to that on Northgate.