

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

Thursday, 9 October 2025

6.30pm to 9.11pm

Record of the meeting

Present: Councillors: Field (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Campbell, Filmer, Hamilton, Lawrence, Nestorov, Peake, Vye and Williams

Substitutes: Councillors:
Bowen
Kemp

In Attendance: Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture and Community
Pat Cooper, Lead Petitioner
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer
Bob Dimond, Head of Sport, Leisure, Tourism & Heritage
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services and Deputy Director of Place
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking
Ian Gilmore, Head of Regulatory and Environmental Services
Nick Phillips, on behalf of Lead Petitioner
Daniel Ratcliff, Head of Skills, Employment and Adult Education
Adam Studniarzthring, Senior Engineer, Tunnels, Structures and Drainage
Karen Tamsett, Highway Management Engineer

334 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doe, Etheridge and Myton.

335 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 14 August 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

336 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

337 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillors Cook and Peake both informed the Committee that Wayfield Road was in their ward and whilst they had looked at the site and indicated some support, they were coming to the petitions debate with an open mind and would listen to all parties before reaching a decision.

338 Petitions Report

Discussion:

Members considered a report which advised the Committee of petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of the Committee, including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organisers by officers.

Two petitions had been referred to the Committee for consideration.

The first petition related to opposition to the removal of a wall at Lordswood Lane, Chatham. Nick Phillips attended on behalf of the Lead Petitioner and was invited to speak to explain why the Council's response to the petition had been referred to the Committee.

Mr Phillips informed the Committee that residents of Slade Close were opposed to the removal of the wall. He explained that children play on the greenspace outside the houses and if the wall were removed it would be unsafe for the children and could lead to a fatality from a vehicle.

Officers informed the Committee that this issue had been looked at for almost two and a half years to find a solution. It was explained that the wall was built as part of the original housing development, was open ended with a public footpath next to it, there was no record as to the purpose it served and MHS Homes had not accepted responsibility for the wall.

Officers had carried out an inspection of the wall due to deterioration and risk of harm to passing members of the public. The Committee were informed it was not a vehicle restraint system and the costs of demolishing the wall and rebuilding it were summarised.

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Members commented on the importance of the protection of the local children from road users, were sympathetic to the residents' concerns and queried what solutions had already been explored.

Officers explained that following a risk assessment and due to the 30mph speed limit and signage it had been categorised as a low priority. In 2023/24 officers had offered to remove the wall and put a vehicle restraint system in place but it was refused by the residents as they felt it was not tall enough and children would still go under or over it.

Members queried why the existing wall needed to be removed. Officers confirmed that it had been reported as leaning to one side and following an inspection of the 180m wall, there was a lot of brickwork degradation and if not removed it would eventually fall down.

The second petition related to road safety signage at Wayfield Road, Chatham. Pat Cooper, the lead Petitioner was invited to speak to explain why the Council's response to the petition had been referred to the Committee.

Pat Cooper explained that she was speaking on behalf of residents of Snodhurst house and with the support of MHS homes.

Residents were concerned for their safety when crossing the road to access the bus stop and there had been some near miss accidents when elderly residents were crossing the road. Parked cars impaired Pedestrians vision when crossing the road, there were no designated crossing points, road signs had not been updated, and the 'Slow' road markings were inadequate.

Residents were requesting support for some kind of road safety measures to allow them to access the bus stop safely.

Officers explained that a site visit had taken place and acknowledged that facilities for pedestrians were not as good as officers would like. The challenges including on street parking, buses, blue badge parking, a bend in the road and minimum carriageway width were noted by the Committee.

Officers confirmed they would be exploring all options for road safety measures at this location and that this would be added to the work programme for 2026/27.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
- b) The Committee considered the petition referrals requested at section 6 of the report and the Deputy Director of Place's response.
- c) The Committee agreed that, regarding the removal of the wall at Lordswood Lane, officers were requested to investigate the viability of

further options including fencing and planting and to work in conjunction with MHS and wider partners.

- d) The Committee agreed, regarding road safety in Wayfield Road, Chatham, officer proposals to add Wayfield Road to the work programme for 2026/27 and options for improving road safety be supported.

339 Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy

Discussion:

Officers introduced the report and explained that the views of the Committee were being sought prior to formulating the policy. Current arrangements operated under a number of different policies and this was an opportunity to bring all relevant services under one policy and to ensure consistency. It was also proposed to establish a stakeholder working group to better understand the needs of service users, how needs evolve over time and how the policy could be adapted to meet these changing needs.

Members supported a consistent approach to services and the creation of a working group which they felt should be cross party and reach out to all religious groups and hard to reach communities.

Members were concerned about the cost of using only approved stonemasons for work in cemeteries and requested that the costs be checked to ensure service users would not be charged a premium compared to the open market.

Decision:

- a) The Committee submitted comments to Cabinet on a proposal to formulate a new Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy 2026-2028, as set out in Option 5, to include the proposals set out in sections 1.2 to 1.7 of the report, and as set out above.
- b) The Committee requested that the new Community Working Group be cross party.
- c) The Committee requested that the costings for the approved stonemasons working in cemeteries be checked to ensure this does not require service users to pay a premium compared to the open market.

340 Task Group - Air Quality, Public Transport and Active Travel

Discussion:

The report set out the work and recommendations of the Task Group on air quality, public transport and active travel and the process and next steps were summarised for the Committee.

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Members raised the following issues:

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) – Members were concerned that LTNs would not improve poor air quality which was improving anyway as diesel cars improved. The issue was caused by public service vehicles, heavy haulage and volumes of traffic on local roads when there were problems on the M2.

The role of public transport and low levels of usage – Members stated that bus usage had still not returned to pre-Covid 19 levels and the introduction of LTNs would cause more congestion for public transport and not encourage residents to use public transport. Members acknowledged the importance of improving public transport services and would like to see this recognised in the recommendations.

Limited impact of the proposed recommendations – Members were concerned that the recommendations would have limited impact on air quality and that to improve air quality it would be necessary to ban the most polluting vehicles from driving through central Medway.

Officers acknowledged the impact improved vehicle euro ratings was having on air quality and how challenging it was to attribute specific actions to the improvement of air quality. Officers informed the Committee that when LTNs were considered by the Task Group negative feedback was considered as well as positive feedback on schemes elsewhere.

Officers informed the Committee that improving public transport relied on partnership working and the Bus Service Improvement Plan was now in place and there were close working relationships with the bus operators. Officers explained that the role the Council had to play was in resolving bus issues caused by traffic congestion and plans were being developed to address traffic congestion.

Decision:

- a) The Committee considered the report as set out at Appendix 1 and provided comments as set out above.
- b) The Committee approved the content and recommendations of the report that fall within the remit of the Committee and referred it for consideration by Cabinet on 18 November 2025.
- c) The Committee requested that an additional recommendation be added to the report stating that officers would continue to work with public transport operators to improve public transport services.

Note:

Councillor Lawrence requested that his vote against the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods recommendations under section 17.4 of the Air Quality, Public Transport and Active Travel report be recorded in accordance with Council rule 12.6.

341 Get Kent and Medway Working Plan

Discussion:

Officers presented the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan, focusing on increasing economic activity and achieving an 80% employment rate. The Committee were informed that approximately 35,000 people in Medway were economically inactive, including carers, long term sick and the unemployed. The strategy outlined key challenges and opportunities, supported by rich data and an action plan. The Connect to Work Scheme was highlighted as this had a good uptake in Medway.

Members shared insights from a church-run job club, noting that peripheral issues such as transport, clothing and caring roles were significant barriers.

Members discussed the need to support carers and small employers and concerns were raised about reinforcing stereotypes by associating caring roles primarily with women, the lack of reference to young carers and the need for inclusive employment practices. Officers confirmed that carers and women were separate target groups and acknowledged the importance of reframing language to make this clear.

With regards to governance arrangements, officers clarified that the plan had already been signed off by stakeholders and the Labour Force Survey would be used to measure progress.

Members discussed child poverty and its impact on education and employment, the selective education system and its influence on employment outcomes and the need for schools to better prepare young people for work.

Officers reported that the Connect to Work scheme focused on 18-24 year olds and the Kent and Medway Careers Hub support young people whilst the Business and Skills Summit addressed the generational skills gap. Officers acknowledged that the selective system was not recognised in the report, but this can follow in the work that follows.

Members raised concerns about the decline in provision for non-academic young people and the need to expand apprenticeships. Officers informed the Committee that apprenticeship numbers had stabilised post-Covid but needed growth and that a task force was working to improve apprenticeship accessibility and completion rates.

Members discussed the importance of mapping opportunities and engaging community groups, receiving updates on the progress of the plan and ensuring inclusive and practical support for all target groups.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the report and the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan.
- b) The Committee requested that progress against the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan was reported to the Committee in future.
- c) The Committee requested that there be a focus on the impact of selective system in the next stages of implementation.
- d) The Committee asked officers to ensure that the distinction between carers and women was made clear in the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan.

342 One Medway Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary - Quarter 1 2025/06

Discussion:

The Committee considered the Quarter 1 monitoring report and strategic risk summary.

Decision:

- a) The Committee considered the Quarter 1 2025/26 progress of the performance indicators used to monitor progress of the Council's priorities, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) The Committee noted the Strategic Risk Summary, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

343 Work programme

Discussion:

The Committee considered the work programme.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the report and changes set out in section 4.2 of 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 at Appendix B to the report.

**Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 9
October 2025**

Chairperson

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