

Record of Cabinet decisions

Tuesday, 16 December 2025

7.00pm to 9.07pm

Date of publication: 19 December 2025

**Subject to call-in these decisions will be effective from 2 January 2026
The record of decisions is subject to approval at the next meeting of the Cabinet**

Present:	Councillor Vince Maple Councillor Tracy Coombs Councillor Simon Curry Councillor Nina Gurung Councillor Harinder Mahil Councillor Alex Paterson Councillor Louwella Prenter Councillor Adam Price Councillor Zoë Van Dyke	Leader of the Council Portfolio Holder for Education Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (including statutory responsibility) Portfolio Holder for Business Management
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In Attendance:	Richard Hicks, Chief Executive Adam Bryan, Director of Place Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer
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Leader's Announcements

The Leader commented on the recent events that had taken place at a Swale Borough Council meeting. He said that these scenes had been disgraceful and that acts of violence, intimidation and thuggery had no place in politics. The Leader had reached out to the Leader and Chief Executive of Swale to send a message of solidarity and the matter had been raised by the MP for Sittingbourne and Shepway,

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Kevin McKenna. The events had highlighted a need to look at the safety and security of Council meetings.

The Leader announced that Medway Council would be submitting its draft new Local Plan on 17 December 2025, for examination by the Planning Inspector. It was pleasing to have reached this point in the replacement of Medway's current Local Plan that dated from 2003. The Members and Council officers involved in the development of the Local Plan were thanked for their work.

Congratulations were offered to Balvinder Sopal, the Eastenders actress, who was from Chatham, on having reached the last four of TV show, Strictly Come Dancing.

Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Murray.

Record of decisions

The record of the meeting held on 18 November 2025 was agreed by the Cabinet and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

Questions to the Cabinet

5 public questions and 6 Member questions had been received and were taken as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Responses

It was noted that all question responses would be reported for information at the next meeting.

Article Four Direction - Houses of Multiple Occupation

Background:

This report presented the recommendations for the imposition of Article 4 Directions within seven Wards within Medway. These wards were Chatham Central and Brompton, Fort Pitt, Gillingham North, Gillingham South, Luton, Strood North and Frindsbury and Watling.

The report was accompanied by an evidence base that had considered the existing level of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within Medway, and the impacts that these had on the existing residents. The report showed that there was a clear correlation between the proliferation of HMOs and anti-social behaviour, as well as the poor standard of accommodation.

A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken and was attached at Appendix 5 to the report.

Decision number:

179/2025 **The Cabinet approved the making of seven immediate Article 4 Directions to be brought into effect immediately. This would remove permitted development rights for the change of use from Use Class C3 dwelling houses to Use Class C4 small houses in Multiple Occupation for the following Wards:**

- i) Chatham Central and Brompton.**
- ii) Fort Pitt.**
- iii) Gillingham North.**
- iv) Gillingham South.**
- v) Luton.**
- vi) Strood North and Frindsbury.**
- vii) Watling.**

180/2025 **The Cabinet authorised the Assistant Director, Legal and Governance to issue the relevant Direction and Notices to support the Immediate Article 4 Directions.**

The Cabinet noted the content of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Review and Evidence Paper, as appended to the report at Appendix 4, that had been prepared to support the proposed making of the Immediate Article 4 Directions.

181/2025 **The Cabinet authorised the Director of Place to consider comments received to the Notice and to thereafter confirm the Immediate Article 4 Directions.**

Reasons:

The Council is responsible for ensuring that all residents have a satisfactory standard of accommodation and for the delivery of all types of housing to be of a high quality, while protecting the residential amenities of an area and the existing residents within it, to ensure both existing and future residents' needs are met.

There is sufficient evidence as set out in the appendices to this report, to suggest that the unregulated nature of HMOs within Medway within the relevant Wards is resulting in a poor standard of living, with subsequent and linked issues in terms of anti-social behaviour and detrimental impact on existing residential amenity.

Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement

Background:

This report concerned monitoring information prepared by the Planning Service to meet statutory requirements for publishing data on development and infrastructure. It presented the annual Authority Monitoring Report, which provided an assessment of development trends and wider social, economic and environmental indicators, together with progress on the preparation of the new Medway Local Plan.

A key monitoring measure was the annual level of housebuilding, which in 2024/25, fell from the highs of the last few years to 634, a fall which was consistent with elsewhere both, regionally and nationally.

The report also presented the Infrastructure Funding Statement, which set out details of funding agreed, received and spent through developer contributions, and proposed spend on infrastructure.

Decision Decision:

number:

182/2025 The Cabinet approved publication of the Authority Monitoring Report 2024/25, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

183/2025 The Cabinet approved publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024/25, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

Reasons:

To comply with the duty to compile and publish a planning monitoring report.

To satisfy the requirement to annually publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Property Review: Operational Properties: Results of Consultations

Background:

This report presented the outcome of the consultations in respect of two public toilet facilities namely, those at Cooling and High Halstow and requested that Cabinet made decisions in respect of their future.

It was noted that any decision taken that could result in the closure of public toilets would not be welcome for local residents. With specific reference to Cooling, there was still the opportunity for the parish council or other local organisation to step in to enable the toilets to remain open.

An Exempt Appendix to the report set out financial information in respect of the two public toilets.

Decision number:

184/2025 **The Cabinet agreed to declare surplus, the public toilets at Cooling, and unless Cooling Parish Council (CPC), Cooling Village Hall Committee (CVHC) (the owner of the toilets) or a third party was prepared to run the toilets, so that they could be passed over to the relevant party using the Head of Valuation & Asset Management's delegated powers, as set out in the Constitution, then Medway Council would close the toilets during 2026.**

185/2025 **The Cabinet agreed to declare surplus, the leasehold public toilet block at High Halstow, so unless High Halstow Parish Council (HHPC) was prepared to run the toilets, and the lease of the toilets could be surrendered back to HHPC using the Head of Valuation & Asset Management's delegated powers, as set out in the Constitution, then Medway Council would close the toilets during 2026.**

186/2025 **The Cabinet agreed to authorise the Council's legal department to conclude the resultant contractual documents.**

Reasons:

To act on the recommendations which the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) made in its report dated January 2024.

To generate revenue savings for the Council, whilst avoiding future capital expenditure on properties, for example on required maintenance. This will help the Council to be more financially sustainable.

To give local partners the opportunity to manage local assets.

Transfer of Greenspace Functions from Medway Norse

Background:

This report sought Cabinet approval for the transfer of a range of greenspace functions currently operated by Medway Norse, as part of the joint venture agreement, to Medway Council, with effect from 1 April 2026. There would be a consequential reduction in annual payment to Medway Norse. This would be allocated to the sport, greenspaces and climate response service to operate these functions.

The report set out that the joint venture between Medway Council and Medway Norse began operating in 2013. Over the following years, a range of greenspace services and associated staff had been transferred into the joint venture. Since 2017 it had also included the client management function. This made Medway Norse both the organisation responsible for delivering the programme of works, and the organisation with management responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the works was in accordance with Medway Council requirements.

This approach had given Medway Council less clarity in understanding how the budget was being spent, how works were being prioritised, and how standards were being maintained.

Decision number:

187/2025	The Cabinet agreed to transfer the greenspaces client management function to Medway Council, reducing the 2026-27 payment to Medway Norse, with the attributed budget to be used by the Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response service to fund in-house client management function.
188/2025	The Cabinet agreed to transfer the urban ranger function to Medway Council, including TUPE of relevant staff, and remove the discrete funding paid to Medway Norse for the operation of this function, with the attributed budget to be used by the Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response service to fund in-house urban ranger function.
189/2025	The Cabinet agreed to transfer the operation of Medway's country parks, including TUPE of relevant staff, and remove the discrete funding paid to Medway Norse for this function, with the attributed budget to be used by the Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response service to fund in-house country parks function. (This did not include the operation of the cafes at Capstone and Riverside Country Parks which formed part of a separate lease agreement).
190/2025	The Cabinet agreed to transfer the allotments function to Medway Council, including TUPE of relevant staff, and remove the discrete budget paid to Medway Norse for this function, with the

attributed budget to be used by the Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response service to fund in-house allotments function.

191/2025 The Cabinet agreed to transfer the trees function to Medway Council, including TUPE of relevant staff, and reduce the 2026-27 funding payment to Medway Norse, with the attributed budget to be used by the Sport, Greenspaces and Climate Response service to fund in-house trees team function.

Reasons:

Transferring the client management function to the Council will give greater oversight of the greenspaces work remaining in the joint venture, improving accountability and responsibility and enabling improved financial monitoring.

Transferring the country parks, urban rangers, allotments and trees teams to Medway Council will improve operational effectiveness, ensuring increased priority and greater responsiveness is given to the needs of residents.

Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy

Background:

This report sought the Cabinet's approval of a proposal to formulate a new Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy, setting out a range of site-specific opportunities for family and friends to commemorate departed loved ones.

There were currently a number of differing procedures in place, therefore, it was important to formulate a new consolidated Policy to ensure the Council took a consistent approach on this matter.

This report had previously been considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 October 2025, the minutes of which were set out at section 9 of the report.

**Decision Decision:
number:**

The Cabinet noted the comments and recommendations made by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 October 2025, as set out at section 9 of the report.

192/2025 The Cabinet approved a proposal to formulate a new Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy 2026-2028 Quarter 1, as set out in Option 5 at section 5 of the report, to include:

i) Introduction of a scheme enabling memorial plaques to be placed on existing parkland trees.

- ii) **Implementation of a memorial tree-planting programme in designated positions in Medway parks.**
- iii) **Enabling memorial plaques to be placed on existing benches.**
- iv) **Continuation of the existing bereavement memorial policy operated in Medway's cemeteries and crematoriums.**
- v) **Introduction of a ten-year time limit on memorial plaques, ensuring consistency with existing policy in Medway's cemeteries and crematorium.**
- vi) **Establishment of a community working group to advise on the effectiveness of the new bereavement memorial policy, and to provide recommendations for consideration when the plan is updated in Quarter 1 2028.**

Reasons:

Implementing a Council-wide policy, developed with specialist knowledge from relevant external organisations, will bring clarity, consistency and transparency for Medway families.

Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2025/26

Background:

This report provided an overview of treasury management activity since 1 April 2025 and presented a review of the Treasury Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025.

The report included an economic update for the first half of 2025/26 and reviews of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy; the Council's borrowing strategy for 2025/26; any debt rescheduling undertaken and compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2025/26.

The report had previously been considered by the Audit Committee on 30 October 2025, the minutes of which were set out at section 11 of the report and would also be considered by Full Council on 22 January 2026.

**Decision Decision:
number:**

The Cabinet noted the comments of the Audit Committee set out at section 11 of the report.

The Cabinet considered the report, noted its contents and noted that the report would also be referred to Full Council.

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193/2025 The Cabinet agreed that the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, would write to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to request clarification of how decisions were taken in relation to the setting of interest rates.

Reasons:

In accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management, there should be a review of the strategy at least half yearly.

Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2025

Background:

This report asked the Cabinet to recommend the proposed Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy to Full Council for approval.

The report explained that the Strategy set out the Council's approach to combating of fraud and corruption and was designed to ensure the risk of such activity would be reduced to its lowest possible levels.

The Strategy was reviewed annually to ensure it remained fit for purpose and reflected the latest best practice and legislative requirements.

The report had previously been considered by the Audit Committee on 11 September 2025 and by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 October 2025, the minutes of which were set out at sections 7 and 8 of the report respectively.

Decision number:

The Cabinet noted the comments made by the Audit Committee on 11 September 2025 and by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in sections 7 and 8 of the report.

194/2025 The Cabinet considered the Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy document presented at Appendix 1 to the report and recommended approval by Full Council.

195/2025 The Cabinet agreed to recommend that Full Council agree that a briefing, for all Members of the Council, be arranged in relation to the new Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy.

Reasons:

The Council agreeing a Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy helps to ensure the risk of fraud and corruption activity is reduced to its lowest possible levels.

Visitor Economy and Inward Investment Services

Background:

This report provided an update on partnership work undertaken by officers around visitor economy and inward investment since the closure of both Visit Kent and Locate in Kent in September 2025. It sought Cabinet approval to proceed with a joint delivery model that safeguarded regional competitiveness, retained key assets and prepared the ground for future devolution.

Medway Council was working with Kent County Council on the urgent reinstatement of a Visitor Economy and Inward Investment service to cover the whole Kent and Medway area.

The recommended approach was to establish a new, partnership-led, in-house team that would deliver essential services to support tourism and attract business investment across the area.

The proposed service would focus on destination marketing, sector coordination, market intelligence and investor engagement. It aimed to maintain Kent and Medway's competitiveness in this area and could offer a blueprint for the delivery of similar services in any future devolution arrangements.

Decision number:

196/2025 The Cabinet agreed, subject to agreement of the required budget by Full Council, as set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report, the proposed approach to supporting visitor economy and inward investment activities, in partnership with Kent County Council.

197/2025 The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Leisure and Culture and the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, to proceed with this partnership arrangement and ensure that appropriate measures would be established to secure positive results for Medway.

Reasons:

Our work on visitor economy and inward services has been supplemented by activities led by Visit Kent and Locate in Kent since the Council's inception. There is an opportunity to continue good work in partnership with Kent County Council and to work together to retain some of the important assets previously held by both organisations.

The establishment of an in-house team has been determined as the most expeditious and effective way forward for the period up to March 2027. The team will have a footprint in Medway and our engagement will necessitate a £21,000 supplement to the budget which has previously been allocated to this area of work.

Project Commencement/Options Appraisal - Gateway 1 Report: Advocacy Service for Parents with Children in or on the Edge of Care

Background:

This report sought permission to commence the procurement of the Advocacy for Parent/s of Children in or on the Edge of Care Contract.

The report set out that the Council had committed to prioritising work to strengthen families, and the Advocacy service was a key element of this work. The Council believed, that where safe and appropriate to do so, keeping children in the family home, delivered better outcomes for those children. In addition, reducing the number of children coming into care contributed to significant cost avoidance for the Council.

The current service provision was due to end on 31 March 2026, so it was imperative to procure this service as soon as possible to minimise any disruption to service users.

An Exempt Appendix to the report set out financial analysis in relation to the procurement.

Decision number:

198/2025 The Cabinet agreed to pursue the procurement of an Advocacy service for parents that would work in a multi-disciplinary way to support families on the edge of care and those with children already in care to build their strength and emotional resilience.

Reasons:

Medway Council believes that where appropriate and safe to do so, every effort should be made to support families to keep their children with their family setting. This service seeks to build on the experience of the original Advocacy service for mother's contact which ends in March 2026. This service will work in similar multi-disciplinary way to support families on the edge of care and those with children already in care to build their strength and emotional resilience. Giving them the confidence to access support and services to ensure they can safely keep their children in their care.

This multi-disciplinary approach to supporting mothers directly contributed to keeping 29 children out of care in the last 4 years, allowing them to safely and appropriately remain with their birth families. In addition to the benefits for a child in remaining with their birth family, based on a conservative estimated cost of £65000 per year, the cost avoidance over 4 years is circa £7million.

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Leader's Concluding Remarks

The Leader thanked Members, the Corporate Management Team and staff at Medway Council for their work, particularly those who would be working over the Christmas period to deliver services. Press colleagues were also thanked for their fair reporting on meetings, which was valued.

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Leader of the Council

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Date

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