

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 13 November 2025
7.00pm to 8.47pm

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), Councillors Anang, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Doe, Etheridge, Field, Filmer, Finch, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell BEM, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Sands, Shokar, Spalding, Stamp, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke, Vye, Wildey and Williams

In Attendance: Richard Hicks, Chief Executive
Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance
Wayne Hemingway, Head of Democratic Services
Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

427 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Animashaun, Barrett, Fearn, Gilbourne, Howcroft-Scott, Lawrence, Price and Spring.

428 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.

429 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway reminded the Council about the next two Mayoral events taking place to help fundraise for the Mayor's nominated charities, Caring Hands and Slide Away. These were a theatrical production of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, on 29 November, at Eastgate House and a pantomime production of Robin Hood, at Oasthouse Theatre in Rainham, on 29 January. Tickets for these events were available from the Mayor's office.

Decision:

The Council agreed to suspend the usual time limits on speeches in relation to agenda item 5 (Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution - 4D Business Case), to allow the following:

- a) The Proposer to speak for up to 10 minutes when introducing the report and moving the recommendations.
- b) The Supporter of the proposal to speak for up to 5 minutes when supporting the proposal.
- c) Proposers and Supporters of any amendments may speak for up to 10 and 5 minutes respectively OR a Group Leader or their nominee may speak for up to 10 minutes where a Political Group was not moving an amendment.
- d) The normal time limits would then apply for all other speakers, i.e. 3 minutes.
- e) Any amendments would be taken in order of group size, with the largest group first and amendments need not be in writing if they specifically related to one of the options set out in recommendation 1.1 on page 9 of the main agenda.

430 Leader's announcements

The Leader thanked the community and Members of the Council who had been involved in Remembrance events across Medway or who had represented Medway at events held elsewhere. He highlighted an event hosted by Chatham Town Football Club that the Mayor and he had attended.

431 Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution - 4D Business Case

Background:

The report set out that following publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, all councils in Kent and Medway had been invited in February 2025, by the Secretary of State (SoS) to submit proposals for local government reorganisation (LGR) for the region of Kent by 28 November 2025.

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The decision on the submission of a proposal to the SoS was an executive decision and would be made by the Cabinet on 18 November 2025. Attached at Appendix A to the Council report was the final report to Cabinet which presented all the business cases developed across Kent.

All the business cases proposed replacing the existing two-tier system in other parts of Kent, by establishing differing numbers of Unitary Authorities. These could then create the foundation for a Kent and Medway Combined County Authority (CCA) to deliver devolution, enabling greater local control over transport, housing, skills, and climate change programmes.

The report was presented to Council to provide an opportunity for all Members to engage in the consideration of the business cases appended, debate the options and provide a non-binding steer to Cabinet in advance of their consideration on 18 November 2025.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, proposed that Council agree to provide the following steer to Cabinet, namely that Medway Council submit option 4D, for the establishment of four unitary authorities, as set out at Appendix 4 of the report to Cabinet, to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), for Local Government Reorganisation across the region of Kent and Medway.

Councillor Perfect, supported by Councillor Tejan, proposed the following amendment:

That Council agree to provide the following steer to Cabinet, namely that Medway Council submit option 3A, for the establishment of three unitary authorities, as set out at Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report, to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), for Local Government Reorganisation across the region of Kent and Medway.

In accordance with Rule 12.4 of the Council Rules, a recorded vote on the amendment was taken:

For: Councillors Anang, Brake, Clarke, Doe, Etheridge, Filmer, Gulvin, Hackwell, Hyne, Joy, Kemp, Perfect, Spalding, Tejan and Wildey. (15)

Against: Councillors Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Field, Finch, Gurung, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Hubbard, Jackson, Jones, Lammes, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Myton, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Sands, Shokar, Stamp, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke, Vye and Williams. (36)

Abstain: None.

The amendment was lost.

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Councillor Finch, supported by Councillor Lammas, proposed the following amendment:

'Council notes:

- That tonight's debate is expressly to provide a non-binding steer to Cabinet ahead of its decision on Tuesday 18 November 2025, with the submission to the Secretary of State due by 28 November 2025.
- That Kent Leaders initially worked collectively to narrow options, selecting 3A and 4B for joint work, but later multiple councils pursued separate, self-funded cases (KCC for 1A; Medway for 4D; Gravesham & Dartford for 5A), undermining a single shared approach.
- That the pack confirms call-in will be waived for the Cabinet decision due to urgency, emphasising the compressed timetable for scrutiny.
- That Option 4D itself models £135.9m in one-off implementation costs, 7.9 - 14.5 years for payback, and £32.9 - £48.6m in recurring disaggregation pressures, and includes an extra £5m complexity premium for boundary changes.

Council further notes the Kent Finance Officer Group's (KFOG) caution that: the modelling is high-level, does not set targets, does not show how transition costs will be funded, and payback periods may be longer given Kent's scale and complexity.

Council therefore agrees to provide the following steer to Cabinet, namely that ~~Medway Council submits option 4d (four unitary authorities) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for local government reorganisation across Kent and Medway, not to submit any reorganisation proposal at this time and to adopt a Status Quo ("Do Nothing") position, on the basis that:~~

1. It avoids immediate six-, seven- and eight-figure reorganisation costs that would otherwise precede any savings for up to a decade or more.
2. It protects Medway from the additional boundary-change complexity embedded in Option 4D.
3. It prioritises directing scarce resources to front-line services and debt reduction rather than structural upheaval whose funding plan is not evidenced in the business cases.

Council also requests that Cabinet publish a clear, Medway-specific breakdown of LGR spend to date and opportunity costs, alongside a plan to extract efficiencies within the current structure (governance, IT, commissioning, estates) without risking service fragmentation, for scrutiny by Members and the public before any future submission.'

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Amendment reads:

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- That tonight's debate is expressly to provide a non-binding steer to Cabinet ahead of its decision on Tuesday 18 November 2025, with the submission to the Secretary of State due by 28 November 2025.
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Council also requests that Cabinet publish a clear, Medway-specific breakdown of LGR spend to date and opportunity costs, alongside a plan to extract efficiencies within the current structure (governance, IT, commissioning, estates) without risking service fragmentation, for scrutiny by Members and the public before any future submission.'

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

The substantive motion was put to the vote and was carried.

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Decision:

The Council agreed to provide the following steer to Cabinet, namely that Medway Council submit option 4D, for the establishment of four unitary authorities, as set out at Appendix 4 of the report to Cabinet, to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), for Local Government Reorganisation across the region of Kent and Medway.

Mayor

Date:

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