

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

Thursday, 11 December 2025

6.31pm to 9.52pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Field (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson), Campbell, Doe, Etheridge, Filmer, Hamilton, Nestorov and Peake

Substitutes: Councillors:
Bowen
Finch

In Attendance: Councillor Alex Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement
Rob Bennett, SQW
Clare Bright, Integrated Care Board
Steve Chevis, Head of Public Health Programmes
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer
Paul Diddams, Acting Chief Inspector, Kent Police
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services and Deputy Director of Place
Bob Dimond, Head of Sport, Leisure, Tourism & Heritage
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Ian Gilmore, Head of Regulatory and Environmental Services
Neil Howlett, Community Safety Partnership Manager
Andy McNally-Johnson, Head of Corporate Accounts
Stephen Perez, Kent Fire and Rescue Service
David Reynolds, Head of Revenue Accounts
Chloe Rooke, Deputy Head of Probation Service
Chris Tilley, SQW

537 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lawrence, Myton, Vye and Williams.

538 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

539 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

540 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

541 Annual Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership including an Update on the Community Safety Plan 2024 to 2027

Discussion:

Cllr Paterson introduced the report, thanked all partner organisations for their contribution and attendance as part of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and highlighted progress in key areas, including action against violence against women and girls (VAWG), CCTV improvements aiding policing and the Chatham High Street Ambassador Scheme.

The Committee took the opportunity to ask questions, and the discussion included the following:

Child Grooming Concerns – Members raised concerns about grooming of under-age children. Kent Police confirmed it was a high priority, with daily case reviews and proactive investigations.

Defibrillator Maintenance – Members queried upkeep of community-funded defibrillators. Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) assured the Committee that regular reviews took place at fire station locations.

Electric Scooters & Off-Road Bikes – It was reported that enforcement was ongoing and recent operations had resulted in seizures.

Under-age Vape Sales – The Committee were informed that Trading Standards lead on enforcement and significant confiscations had been reported. The child centred policing team at Kent Police worked with trading standards on this issue.

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2025

Chatham High Street Ambassadors – The CSP were pleased to report that the pilot project had been successful, and funding had been secured for a few more months via a crime reduction grant. The scheme had a positive impact on business confidence and public perception.

Public Perception of Safety – Members were concerned that despite an increased police presence, perception remained low. The importance of tools such as 'My Community Voice', beat officers and the use of social media in publicising the work of the CSP was highlighted. The challenge of the public perception and external factors was acknowledged.

Flags – Members expressed disappointment with the initial view taken by Kent Police regarding flags that had been put up in Medway, however every flag had now been removed by the Council. Kent Police supported the clear view the Chief Constable had expressed regarding the flags but provided support to Medway Council and their contractors when the flags were removed.

Online radicalisation – Kent Police reported an increase in referrals to Prevent from schools, and this was regularly reviewed with Counter Terrorism teams and centrally managed. A focus on early intervention and the monitoring of online messaging was reported.

Violence Against Women & Girls – The CSP clarified that the strategy focused on perpetrators, not victims and Members called for the explicit inclusion of misogyny and the incel movement in the refreshed CSP plan. Schools programmes address relationships, consent, sexual health and the Probation Service had initiatives tackling toxic masculinity and supporting women.

Road Safety & Speeding – A number of steps had been taken to improve road safety and school streets was one of the tools working towards this alongside enforcement. The Kent & Medway Road Safety Partnership was active in education and prosecution for careless and dangerous driving.

Funding Concerns – It was recognised that the crime reduction grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner was not guaranteed for future years and contingency planning would be needed.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the findings of the strategic assessment.
- b) The Committee supported the proposed CSP priorities in light of the strategic assessment findings.
- c) The Committee scrutinised the activity of the CSP over the past year, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.

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

Discussion:

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement introduced the report and highlighted the nationally award-winning school streets programme and benefits that could be seen from the additional funding for pothole repairs.

The following issues were discussed:

Emergency works and traffic management - Members expressed concerns about the impact of emergency works and traffic management on the Lower Rainham Road. The Portfolio Holder explained that there had been 11 separate emergency closures on the Lower Rainham Road and highlighted the challenges of dealing with competing utility companies and a creaking infrastructure as well as the need to allow emergency works when required.

The Committee were informed that the Portfolio Holder was in regular contact with the Head of Highways and local MP's and would be meeting SGN next week to voice the concerns of residents. Members were encouraged to engage with the Street Works Team if they were aware of any issues and to share traffic management communications to ensure residents were well informed.

Remaining budget for Medway Tunnel – Officers did not have the figure to hand but offered to supply this outside of the meeting.

School Streets and Highway assets data – Members queried the lack of data for school streets safety and claims made in the report. The Portfolio Holder explained that the data was available but had not yet been published and that school streets monitoring showed car journeys had decreased by 10% and walking was up by 9% with interventions starting to show positive benefits. The Committee were informed that the school streets data would be published in due course and if Members required any further data to support claims in the report they should email the Portfolio Holder directly and he would provide it.

CCTV – The Committee were informed that CCTV technology had been refreshed by Kyndi and rapid deployment cameras were used for 12 weeks as a dynamic resource to address any concerns. Members noted success in Barnfield to address the issue of quad bikes.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

543 The River Medway Strategy

Discussion:

The River Strategy was presented to the Committee before being presented to Cabinet and a presentation was given to the Members by consultants from SQW. Members were informed that the main challenge was resourcing the River Strategy and the first step would be to establish a partnership group.

The 5 key themes of the strategy were environment and habitats, tourism, heritage and culture, development and planning, economy and business and leisure and sport. Consultation had been undertaken with a wide range of groups and agencies and access to the river was a key issue raised by a range of groups.

The Committee were informed that an overarching partnership group would be needed to progress the delivery and implementation framework and recommended that the Council nominated a lead officer and lead Member to facilitate the creation of the partnership group.

Members welcomed the River Strategy and hoped that it would be possible to secure the required funding for the Strategy.

Members would like to see some kind of river festival in future and wanted schools to be involved in future projects to encourage young people to become involved. Climate change was also discussed as well as the importance of ensuring any projects were future proofed.

Officers informed the Committee that a programme manager would be needed as a minimum resource and work could be progressed with Child Friendly Medway and the education programme dependent on identifying the required resources and funding.

Decision:

The Committee noted and commented on the River Strategy and recommended that Cabinet approve adoption of the River Strategy.

544 Medway UK Shared Prosperity Fund Overview

Discussion:

The Committee were updated on the work of the team managing the Shared Prosperity Fund including 149 projects across numerous community organisations and council services and it being heralded as an exemplar service.

Members commented on the positive impact that the team and the funding had on community organisations and thanked the team for their hard work.

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2025

Members felt that a heat map looking at where grants had been issued would be useful to identify any inequity across Medway and would help inform future work with localised services.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the update report on the Shared Prosperity Fund and its outcomes to date.
- b) The Committee requested that a heat map be produced showing where grants had been issued and that this should be used to inform localised interventions in future.

545 Capital Budget Monitoring - Round 2 2025/26

Discussion:

The Committee were informed that the report had been presented to Cabinet on 18 November. The overall overspend was £58,000 against a budget of £229.722m and there was a small overspend by £1000 within the remit of this Committee.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the results of the second round of capital budget monitoring for 2025/26.
- b) The Committee noted the changes to the approved budget since Round 1 as set out in sections 8.1 to 8.3 of the report.

546 Revenue Budget Monitoring - Round 2 2025/26

Discussion:

The Committee were informed that the report had been presented to Cabinet on 18 November and the overall overspend was £9.948m, an improvement of £1m from the position reported at round 1. Within the remit of this Committee there was an underspend of £943,000.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the results of the second round of revenue budget monitoring for 2025/26 and in particular the risk to interest and financing projections.
- b) The Committee noted that Cabinet had instructed the Corporate Management Team to implement urgent actions to bring expenditure back within the budget agreed by Full Council.

547 Draft Capital and Revenue Budget 2026/27

Discussion:

Officers informed the Committee that the report had been presented to Cabinet on 18 November, and work was ongoing to reduce the budget gap before the proposed budget was approved.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted that Cabinet had instructed officers to continue to work with Portfolio Holders in formulating robust proposals to reduce the budget deficit for 2026/27 and to liaise with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to secure support through the Exceptional Financial Support scheme, should it be necessary.
- b) The Committee noted the proposals outlined in the Draft Capital and Revenue Budgets 2026/27.

548 The One Medway Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary - Quarter 2 2025/26

Discussion:

The report was taken as read and Members did not have any queries.

Decision:

- a) The Committee considered the Quarter 2 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.

549 Petitions Report

Discussion:

The Petitions report was taken as read.

Decision:

The Committee noted the petition responses and officer actions as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2025

550 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.

Chairperson

Date:

Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332106

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk