

Medway Council
Meeting of Medway Council
Thursday, 22 January 2026
7.00pm to 10.11pm

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)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Spring) Councillors Anang,
Animashaun, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Cook, Coombs,
Crozer, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Finch, Gilbourne,
Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell BEM, Hamandishe, Hamilton,
Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp,
Lammas, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald,
Murray, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect,
Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, 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

638 Apologies for absence

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

639 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.

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640 Record of meeting

The records of the ordinary meeting of Council held on 16 October 2025, which was adjourned to 13 November 2025 and of the two special meetings of the Council, also held on 13 November 2025, were approved and signed by the Worshipful Mayor as correct.

641 Mayor's announcements

The Worshipful The Mayor of Medway announced that former Councillor Chris Nickless had recently passed away. He had been a councillor from the early 1970s through to 1991, in the Rochester area of Medway, as an Independent Member. On behalf of all Members, the Mayor offered condolences to the family. The Leader of the Council also offered his condolences.

The Mayor announced that Parish Councillor Bill Budd was retiring after serving continuously on St Mary Hoo Parish Council for over 25 years. The Mayor paid tribute to his public service and dedication and wished him well for retirement.

The next events taking place to help fundraise for the Mayoral charities, Caring Hands and Slide Away, would be a pantomime on 29 January, a charity quiz night at the Anchorians Clubhouse, Gillingham on 13 March and a Thanksgiving Celebration at the Corn Exchange, Rochester on 1 May. Tickets would be available from the Mayor's office.

The Mayor advised that revisions to some Council Rules had been agreed at the last full Council meeting, which meant that previously trialled changes were now permanent.

Speakers per motion were limited to the proposer and seconder, plus up to 10% of each group (rounded up) as follows:

- Labour and Co-operative Group – 4
- Conservative Group – 2
- Independent Group – 1
- Reform UK Group – 1
- Independent Members – 1

The same number of speakers would be allowed for each amendment to a motion.

642 Leader's announcements

There were none.

643 Petitions

Public:

There were none.

Member:

There were none.

644 Public questions

Question A – Matthew Broadley of Chatham asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vince Maple, the following:

'The 2021 census indicates that there were 2,041 residents unable to vote in local elections in Medway in 2021. It is likely that this number is now higher. These people live, work, study, make use of public services, and call the UK their home. Many foreign-born residents in Medway from EU and Commonwealth countries can vote in our local elections. Yet, voter registration levels are low, and this is often due to the complex eligibility rules that make registering to vote inaccessible to residents. Over 1 million residents across England & Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote.

Migrant Democracy Project are inviting local councils to pass their motion on the right to vote for all residents, as set out below:

"This Council notes:

- *The right to vote is the most important foundation of our democratic system. Yet, we do not yet have a universal franchise.*
- *That all residents, no matter their nationality, bring significant value to the area.*
- *One in six usual residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK.*
- *Over 1.2 million residents across England and Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote at all and 4.4 million residents do not have the right to vote in General Elections.*
- *2,041 residents do not have the right to vote in Medway.*
- *Scotland and Wales have extended the franchise to allow all residents with lawful immigration status to vote.*
- *Over 50% of people agree that every resident, no matter where they are from, should have the right to vote at least in local elections.*
- *21 local authorities across England have passed motions asking for the right to vote to be extended to all residents in local elections.*

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This Council resolves:

- *Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the relevant shadow frontbenchers requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in England and Northern Ireland in the upcoming Elections Bill in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales.*
- *Write to the local Member(s) of Parliament asking for their support ensuring that the upcoming Elections Bill includes the extension of franchise to all residents in local elections.”*

Will the Council today commit to supporting this motion and joining 21 other councils across England & Northern Ireland to support this initiative?’

In response, Councillor Maple said that it was not for him to specify what motions would be coming forward. It was for all members of political groups to decide what motions to put forward and for individual councillors. Some changes had been made to how motions were dealt with at meetings of Medway Council.

Councillor Maple wholeheartedly supported the principles of the campaign. He had been pleased to meet with the Migrant Democracy Project and the MP for Gillingham and Rainham, Naushabah Khan, at the Labour Party Conference.

Councillor Maple said that he would consider what he could do in a personal capacity to increase the franchise. He considered that those who paid taxes should have a say on how services were delivered and that was why he supported voting from the age of 16. He was therefore happy to support the Migrant Democracy Project campaign.

Matthew Broadley asked the following supplementary question:

‘Would Councillor Maple be supporting a motion if it came through a Member or be proposing it?’

Councillor Maple said he was very supportive of the campaign and had been pleased to support it at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool. How the other 58 Members of the Council supported the campaign or not would be a matter for them. Motions were an important part of democracy in Medway but were not the only aspect and there were many ways people could support the campaign if they chose to.

645 Motions

Motion A – proposed by Councillor Maple and supported by Councillor Perfect:

‘This Council condemns the violence, intimidation, and serious disruption that occurred at a recent meeting of Swale Borough Council, including the throwing of objects, intimidation of Councillors, and criminal damage to Council premises

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which prevented the orderly conduct of democratic business and caused distress to Councillors, officers, and members of the public.

This Council believes that:

- To “disagree agreeably” is a core democratic principle, requiring that even the strongest differences of opinion are expressed peacefully, respectfully, and within the law.
- Elected Members and Council officers must be able to conduct democratic processes in public, openly and transparently, without fear of intimidation, harassment, or violence.
- Violence or the threat of violence, regardless of motivation or cause, has no place in democracy and undermines public confidence in democratic institutions.
- The right to protest does not extend to actions that seek to silence debate, disrupt lawful meetings, or intimidate those participating in democratic decision-making.

This Council resolves to:

- Write to Swale Borough Council to express this Council’s full support and solidarity with all Councillors and officers, affected by the incident.
- Write to the Chief Constable of Kent Police to seek assurance that all elected Members and officers can carry out their duties without fear, and to ask what additional steps can be taken to ensure the safety and integrity of council meetings.
- Write to the Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise concerns about the safety of elected members and officers in local government, and to request consideration of what further national measures or guidance may be required to protect democratic participation at a local level.’

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

‘This Council condemns the violence, intimidation, and serious disruption that occurred at a recent meeting of Swale Borough Council, including the throwing of objects, intimidation of Councillors, and criminal damage to Council premises which prevented the orderly conduct of democratic business and caused distress to Councillors, officers, and members of the public.

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- Elected Members and Council officers must be able to conduct democratic processes in public, openly and transparently, without fear of intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse or violence.
- Violence or the threat of violence, regardless of motivation or cause, has no place in democracy and undermines public confidence in democratic institutions.
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- Write to the Chief Constable of Kent Police to seek assurance that all elected Members and officers can carry out their duties without fear, and to ask what additional steps can be taken to ensure the safety and integrity of council meetings.
- Write to the Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise concerns about the safety of elected members and officers in local government, and to request consideration of what further national measures or guidance may be required to protect democratic participation at a local level, whilst protecting freedom of expression.

Amended motion reads:

'This Council condemns the violence, intimidation, and serious disruption that occurred at a recent meeting of Swale Borough Council, including the throwing of objects, intimidation of Councillors, and criminal damage to Council premises which prevented the orderly conduct of democratic business and caused distress to Councillors, officers, and members of the public.

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- Violence or the threat of violence, regardless of motivation or cause, has no place in democracy and undermines public confidence in democratic institutions.

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- Write to the Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise concerns about the safety of elected members and officers in local government, and to request consideration of what further national measures or guidance may be required to protect democratic participation at a local level, whilst protecting freedom of expression.'

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

For: Councillors Finch, Lammas, Pearce, Spalding, Mrs Turpin, Vye and Williams. (7)

Against: Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Van Dyke and Wildey. (46)

Abstain: Councillor Crozer (1)

The amendment was lost.

Note: In addition to the Councillors named under apologies for absence, Councillor Brake was not present for the recorded vote.

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

For: Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Bowen, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Crozer, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Finch, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Lammas, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Pearce, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Spalding, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Mrs Turpin, Van Dyke, Vye, Wildey and Williams. (54)

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Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Note: In addition to the Councillors named under apologies for absence, Councillor Brake was not present for the recorded vote.

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried:

This Council condemns the violence, intimidation, and serious disruption that occurred at a recent meeting of Swale Borough Council, including the throwing of objects, intimidation of Councillors, and criminal damage to Council premises which prevented the orderly conduct of democratic business and caused distress to Councillors, officers, and members of the public.

This Council believes that:

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- Write to the Chief Constable of Kent Police to seek assurance that all elected Members and officers can carry out their duties without fear, and to ask what additional steps can be taken to ensure the safety and integrity of council meetings.

Write to the Secretary of State at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to raise concerns about the safety of elected members and officers in local government, and to request consideration of what further national measures or guidance may be required to protect democratic participation at a local level.

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Motion B – proposed by Councillor Lawrence and supported by Councillor Tejan:

‘The Council notes that many Councillors are receiving correspondence about the poor implementation of the Medway School Street Scheme and the impact on the lives of those who live in the controlled areas.

The Council will be aware of the recent decision by the independent traffic penalty tribunal after an adjudicator found that signage at Burnt Oak Primary School (Richmond Road in Gillingham) was inadequate.

The Council further notes that the areas of concern are:

1. The lack of evidence on air quality and accidents involving school children during term time that justifies the imposition of a scheme.
2. There is a feeling that residents’ views have been ignored through the statutory consultation, and equipment installed before consultation processes completed.
3. The poor signage means many drivers are only aware of restrictions once they had turned into a restricted zone.
4. Vulnerable residents are finding themselves locked into an inflexible scheme that stops their ability to freely leave their homes during the operation of the controlled zone.
5. Parents are forced to park in other areas that cause traffic issues and increases danger to children.
6. Collection rates on penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued.

The Council recommends to the Cabinet that it undertakes a full independent review, which is subsequently reported to the Regeneration, Culture, and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, no later than May 2026.’

Decision:

Upon being put to the vote the motion was lost.

Motion C – proposed by Councillor Mrs Turpin and supported by Councillor Pearce:

Title:

Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules, specifically the rule restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

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Background:

At a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025, the Labour Administration and the Conservative Group voted through a constitutional change to motion rules. This change restricts the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

This Council recognises:

1. Motions are a key part of the democratic process, used by all Groups and Independent Members since the founding of Medway Council, to focus attention on a specific action, opinion or subject of their own choosing at every Council meeting.
2. Restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent members to table motions was not part of the original Work Plan of the Cross-Party Working Group. It was instead unexpectedly proposed by the Labour Administration.
3. The Council's own reports concerning the constitutional change to motion rules confirms the Cross-Party Working Group was not in full agreement.
4. All Members have a duty to taxpayers in recognising the considerable cost the Council may incur in defending any legal challenge to a constitutional change.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules* and reinstate the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting,
2. Avoid the considerable cost to taxpayers of the Council potentially needing to defend a legal challenge to the constitutional change to motion rules*.

** voted through at a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025'*

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

'Title:

Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules, specifically the rule restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

Council, 22 January 2026

Background:

At a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025, the Labour Administration and the Conservative Group voted through a constitutional change to motion rules. This change restricts the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

Independent Legal Opinion:

The Medway Council Reform UK Group first expressed legal concerns to the Council on 14 October regarding the proposed changes. Reform requested that the Council seek an external legal opinion. They did not.

The Reform UK Group therefore obtained a legal opinion independent of the Council, prepared by Gavin Persaud, a solicitor, dated 22 October 2025.

The independent legal opinion of is clear that the proposed changes are 'improper', 'disproportionate', 'risk democratic disenfranchisement', 'go beyond legal powers' and 'vulnerable to likely successful legal challenge'.

Given the serious concerns outlined within the independent legal opinion, Reform requested that the Council not consider and vote on the proposals and implement the recommended procedural safeguards before any decision was put to Members.

Council Response:

The Council decided to proceed with the vote on changes on 13 November 2025 on the basis that:

- **The opinion was provided by a solicitor that 'does not specialise in local government law'.**
- **The Council already has changed rules and procedures to structure debates at Council meetings.**
- **The changes to restrict the ability of smaller groups to table motions stem from a cross-party working group.**

Expert Legal Opinion on Legality and Risk of High Court Challenge:

Since, Cllr Lammas on behalf of the Reform UK Group, instructed a specialist barrister to advise as to the legality of Medway Council's recent adoption of amended standing orders that restrict the ability of Councillors to propose motions at full council meetings.

The second legal opinion independent of the Council, prepared by Rupert Beloff, a barrister specialising in local government, dated 21 January 2026 concluded:

"There are strong and properly arguable grounds for contending that the amended standing orders adopted by the Council are unlawful. In particular, there is a substantial basis for arguing that allocating

opportunities to introduce motions by reference to political group size is liable in practice to restrict materially the ability of some councillors to participate meaningfully in the deliberative functions of Full Council. The analysis raises serious issues as to whether the amendments fall within the scope of the procedural power conferred by Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, whether that power has been exercised for a proper purpose, and whether the Council has given proper and conscientious consideration to the democratic implications of the measures adopted.

“In my opinion, those issues place a judicial review challenge on a firm footing. While the court will ordinarily afford a measure of latitude to a local authority in regulating its internal proceedings, that latitude is constrained where procedural arrangements have a direct and material impact on democratic participation and access to the Council’s agenda. Subject to any further evidence as to the practical operation of the scheme, I consider that a judicial review challenge would have good prospects of success, particularly on grounds of procedural unfairness and improper purpose, with the rationality and proportionality arguments providing additional support.”

This Council recognises:

1. Motions are a key part of the democratic process, used by all Groups and Independent Members since the founding of Medway Council, to focus attention on a specific action, opinion or subject of their own choosing at every Council meeting.
2. Restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent members to table motions was not part of the original Work Plan of the Cross-Party Working Group. It was instead unexpectedly proposed by the Labour Administration.
3. The Council's own reports concerning the constitutional change to motion rules confirms the Cross-Party Working Group was not in full agreement.
4. **All Members have received copies of the independent expert legal opinion advising the changes are “unlawful”.**
4. **5.** All Members have a duty to taxpayers in recognising the considerable cost the Council may occur in defending any legal challenge to a constitutional change.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules* and reinstate the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting,

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2. Avoid the considerable cost to taxpayers of the Council potentially needing to defend a legal challenge to the constitutional change to motion rules*.

** voted through at a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025'*

Amended motion reads:

'Title:

Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules, specifically the rule restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

Background:

At a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025, the Labour Administration and the Conservative Group voted through a constitutional change to motion rules. This change restricts the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting.

Independent Legal Opinion:

The Medway Council Reform UK Group first expressed legal concerns to the Council on 14 October regarding the proposed changes. Reform requested that the Council seek an external legal opinion. They did not.

The Reform UK Group therefore obtained a legal opinion independent of the Council, prepared by Gavin Persaud, a solicitor, dated 22 October 2025.

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Given the serious concerns outlined within the independent legal opinion, Reform requested that the Council not consider and vote on the proposals and implement the recommended procedural safeguards before any decision was put to Members.

Council Response:

The Council decided to proceed with the vote on changes on 13 November 2025 on the basis that:

- The opinion was provided by a solicitor that 'does not specialise in local government law'.
- The Council already has changed rules and procedures to structure debates at Council meetings.
- The changes to restrict the ability of smaller groups to table motions stem from a cross-party working group.

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Expert Legal Opinion on Legality and Risk of High Court Challenge:

Since, Cllr Lammas on behalf of the Reform UK Group, instructed a specialist barrister to advise as to the legality of Medway Council's recent adoption of amended standing orders that restrict the ability of Councillors to propose motions at full council meetings.

The second legal opinion independent of the Council, prepared by Rupert Beloff, a barrister specialising in local government, dated 21 January 2026 concluded:

"There are strong and properly arguable grounds for contending that the amended standing orders adopted by the Council are unlawful. In particular, there is a substantial basis for arguing that allocating opportunities to introduce motions by reference to political group size is liable in practice to restrict materially the ability of some councillors to participate meaningfully in the deliberative functions of Full Council. The analysis raises serious issues as to whether the amendments fall within the scope of the procedural power conferred by Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, whether that power has been exercised for a proper purpose, and whether the Council has given proper and conscientious consideration to the democratic implications of the measures adopted.

"In my opinion, those issues place a judicial review challenge on a firm footing. While the court will ordinarily afford a measure of latitude to a local authority in regulating its internal proceedings, that latitude is constrained where procedural arrangements have a direct and material impact on democratic participation and access to the Council's agenda. Subject to any further evidence as to the practical operation of the scheme, I consider that a judicial review challenge would have good prospects of success, particularly on grounds of procedural unfairness and improper purpose, with the rationality and proportionality arguments providing additional support."

This Council recognises:

1. Motions are a key part of the democratic process, used by all Groups and Independent Members since the founding of Medway Council, to focus attention on a specific action, opinion or subject of their own choosing at every Council meeting.
2. Restricting the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent members to table motions was not part of the original Work Plan of the Cross-Party Working Group. It was instead unexpectedly proposed by the Labour Administration.
3. The Council's own reports concerning the constitutional change to motion rules confirms the Cross-Party Working Group was not in full agreement.

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4. All Members have received copies of the independent expert legal opinion advising the changes are “unlawful”.
5. All Members have a duty to taxpayers in recognising the considerable cost the Council may occur in defending any legal challenge to a constitutional change.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reverse the constitutional change to motion rules* and reinstate the ability of the smaller Groups and Independent Members to table motions at every Council meeting,
2. Avoid the considerable cost to taxpayers of the Council potentially needing to defend a legal challenge to the constitutional change to motion rules*.

** voted through at a meeting of the Council on Thursday 13th November 2025'*

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

For: Councillors Crozer, Finch, Lammas, Pearce, Mrs Turpin, Vye and Williams. (7)

Against: Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Van Dyke and Wildey. (47)

Abstain: Councillor Spalding. (1)

The amendment was lost.

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

For: Councillors Crozer, Finch, Lammas, Pearce, Spalding, Mrs Turpin, Vye and Williams. (8)

Against: Councillors Anang, Animashaun, Bowen, Brake, Browne, Campbell, Clarke, Cook, Coombs, Curry, Doe, Fearn, Field, Filmer, Gilbourne, Gulvin, Gurung, Hackwell, Hamandishe, Hamilton, Howcroft-Scott, Hubbard, Hyne, Jackson, Jones, Joy, Kemp, Lawrence, Mahil, Mandaracas, Maple, McDonald, Murray, Nestorov, Nestorova, Paterson, Peake, Perfect, Louwella Prenter, Mark Prenter, Price, Shokar, Spring, Stamp, Tejan, Van Dyke and Wildey. (47)

Abstain: None.

Decision:

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

646 Leader's report

Discussion:

Members received the Leader's Report. The following issues were discussed:

- Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution progress and forthcoming Government consultation.
- Parklands Resource Centre Ofsted Inspection, four areas that had been reviewed were now good.
- Development of the new Medway Local Plan which, which was submitted for examination on 17 December 2025.
- The variety of events held across Medway including the Dickensian Christmas, the Spotlites Jaws, the Panto, in Chatham which was featured on BBC Breakfast, Child Friendly Medway events and the River Festival.
- Other events included the Festival of Remembrance held in Rochester and the Topping Out Ceremony for the Commissioner's House in Chatham Historic Dockyard.
- Improvements to Luton Library using Section 106 funding.
- The agreement of a Council Flags Protocol and the variety of flags flown by the Council to mark a range of events and organisations.
- Reopening of St John's Church in Chatham.
- The replacement of Visit Kent and Invest in Kent organisations by in house Council provision.
- Hosting of the Make a Difference Medway Council staff awards, which had been fully funded by sponsors.
- Agreement by the Cabinet of the recommendations made by the Air Quality, Public Transport and Active Travel Overview and Scrutiny Member Task Group.
- Publication of the Director of Public Health's Annual Report, "The Power of Sleep - a Wake-up Call."
- Creation of the Horsted Valley nature reserve.
- Additional controls introduced by the Council in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation and private sector housing.
- Agreement of the Medway Greenspaces Memorial Policy.
- Qualification by Chatham Town Women for the last 16 of the FA Cup.
- Provision of Pride in Place Funding for Medway.
- Financial pressures facing the Council, the need for Exceptional Financial Support and the cost of refurbishing Gun Wharf.
- Concern about changes to rules relating to motions submitted to Council meetings.
- The reintroduction of Elm Trees at Four Elms Hill and the planting of many new species across the Hoo Peninsula.

647 Members' questions

Question A – Councillor Pearce asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Labour Group Councillors Hubbard and Shokar have submitted objections to the Labour administration’s Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation. Both Councillors declared the plan is unsound and fails the Duty to Cooperate. Councillor Shokar declared the plan is not legally compliant.

Does Councillor Maple agree with his two Labour Group colleagues?”

In response, Councillor Maple said he referred Councillor Pearce to the comments he had made in his Leader’s report.

Question B – Councillor Mrs Turpin asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, the following:

“Will the Leader of the Council confirm that he will oppose and agree to not cancel or delay any local elections?”

In response, Councillor Maple highlighted his track record. This included the first ever opposition Chairperson of a scrutiny committee, reestablishment of the Mayoral Points System and the permitting of supplementary public questions at Full Council. Cabinet meetings now also included public and Member questions for the first time and Medway Matters Live events provided an opportunity to hear from both Councillor Maple, as Leader of the Council and from the Chief Executive. All these things had opened up democracy for the people of Medway.

Councillor Maple referred to the letter he had sent to Jim McMahon, the then Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, on the issue of elections being delayed. Councillor Maple had stated he did not believe it was appropriate for seven year council terms, which would have been the case for some councils, had elections being delayed in 2025 and might now be the case in some areas. He did not consider that to be acceptable.

Where transitions were taking place to create new unitary authorities, it was perfectly normal to delay elections. Councillor Maple stated that Robert Jenrick, the former Conservative, had delayed elections in 2021 because it would risk confusing voters in view of transitions to unitary authorities.

Councillor Maple concluded that he anticipated elections would take place in Medway in May 2027 for the new unitary authority, the size and shape of which would be determined by the Secretary of State.

648 Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy 2025

Background:

This report asked the Council to approve the proposed Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

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, by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 October 2025 and by the Cabinet on 16 December 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, supported by Councillor Browne, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council noted the comments and decisions made by the Audit Committee on 11 September 2025, by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 October 2025 and by the Cabinet on 16 December 2025, as set out in sections 6, 7 and 8 of the report.
- b) The Council approved the Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy document presented at Appendix A to the report.
- c) The Council agreed that a briefing, for all Members of the Council, be arranged in relation to the new Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

649 Review of the Constitution - Questions at Cabinet and Full Council Meetings

Background:

The matter of how Council meetings were conducted continued to be kept under review by Group Leaders and at the Cross-Party Governance meetings, with any proposals being reported to full Council for consideration.

As reported to full Council on 23 January 2025 and 24 April 2025, following initial discussion at the Cross Party Governance meeting on 22 November 2024 and the Group Leaders' meeting on 10 January 2025, it was agreed that proposed changes to the arrangements for dealing with public and Member

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questions be trialled for six months starting from the beginning of the 2025/2026 municipal year.

The report set out a review of the trial of public and Member questions at Cabinet meetings and sought to make these changes permanent by amending the Constitution as necessary.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple, supported by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council approved the changes to the Council Rules, as set out in Appendix A to the report, regarding the arrangements for public and Member questions at full Council meetings.
- b) The Council approved the changes to the Leader and Cabinet Rules, as set out in Appendix B to the report, regarding the arrangements for public and Member questions at Cabinet meetings.

650 Allocation of Committee Seats and Committee Memberships, Selection of Mayor and Deputy Mayor and Schedule of Meetings for 2026/2027

Background:

This report set out the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees on receipt of a notice from the Reform UK Group requesting a review following notification that Councillor Lammas had joined the Reform UK Group in October 2025.

The report set out the results of the calculations under Council Rule 20 to select the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2026/2027 municipal year.

The report also sought approval to membership changes on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and set out the provisional programme of meetings for the 2026/2027 municipal year.

Councillor Peake, supported by Councillor Kemp, proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

Decisions:

- a) The Council noted the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council, as set out in section 3 of the report.
- b) The Council agreed the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

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- c) The Council agreed to remove the following Conservative Group members from the following committees: Councillor Filmer from the membership of the Licensing and Safety Committee and Councillor Kemp from the membership of the Governor Ad-Hoc Committee.
- d) The Council agreed to add the following Reform UK Group members to the following committees: Councillor Lammas to the membership of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Vye to the membership of the Licensing and Safety Committee.
- e) The Council agreed to appoint Jessica Beer to the teacher position on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a two year term.
- f) The Council agreed to appoint Jacqueline Rudden as the named teacher substitute on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a two year term.
- g) The Council noted the entitlement of the Labour and Co-operative Group to nominate a Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2026/2027 municipal year and that the entitlement would be accepted or declined at the Council meeting on 25 February 2026.
- h) The Council agreed a provisional programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2026/2027, as set out in Appendix D to the report, for recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 13 May 2026.

651 Reports for information

Background:

This agenda item set out the following reports for the information of the Council:

Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review Report 2025/26

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.

Disposal of the Former Civic Centre Site, Strood Waterfront

This report advised the Council of the sale of the former Civic Centre site in Strood.

Disposal of the Freehold of Gillingham Business Park

This report advised the Council of the sale of the freehold of Gillingham Business Park.

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Use of Urgency Provisions

This report provided details of recent usage of urgency provisions contained within the Constitution.

The Mayor, supported by the Deputy Mayor, moved that the reports be noted without debate, in accordance with Rule 2 of the Council Rules.

Decision:

The Council noted the reports.

Mayor

Date:

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