

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

**Tuesday, 20 January 2026**

**6.31pm to 9.51pm**

**Record of the meeting**

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

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Perfect  
Mrs Turpin

**In Attendance:** Councillor Louwella Prenter, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness  
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer  
Alex Constantinides, Strategic Lead Front Line Services  
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services and Deputy Director of Place  
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking  
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Dave Harris, Chief Planning Officer  
Sohail Hussain, Project Manager, Volker Highways  
Lee Love, Veolia  
Andy Mann, Managing Director, Medway Norse Ltd  
Amy Mason, Waste Operations Manager  
Kerrie Richardson, Senior Engineer (Highway Operations)  
Natasha Spencer-Jones, Waste Disposal Manager  
Karen Tamsett, Head of Highways  
Rebecca Wilcox, Chief Housing Officer

**626 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Etheridge and Williams.

**627 Record of Meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

**628 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**629 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Mrs Turpin informed the Committee that she was a private landlord but had been advised that this did not exclude her from taking part in the discussions regarding the housing and homelessness portfolio.

**630 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness**

**Discussion:**

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, which fell within the remit of this Committee.

The Portfolio Holder responded to Members' questions and comments as follows:

**Length of Voids** – The Committee were informed that this was a snapshot taken at the end of October and that officers were working on trying to reduce the length of voids. The Portfolio Holder offered to provide more detailed information on the length of voids.

**Savings from the purchase of temporary accommodation** – Members queried when savings from the purchase of temporary accommodation would be realised. The Committee were informed that due to the use of grants it had been possible to purchase more properties and the benefit of savings from the use of temporary accommodation were already being seen. Additional benefits included greater control over the quality of properties and reduced costs of borrowing.

**Progress on improving C2 Judgement** – Members requested an update on progress improving from a C2 judgement to C1 and were informed that meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing were now quarterly instead of monthly. The Committee were informed that the Regulator was reassured that

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the council was moving in the right direction and the next inspection would be likely to take place in 2029.

**Tenants Panel** – The positive impact was discussed, and the Committee were informed that the panel was comprised of a wide demographic that all live in different parts of social housing.

**Bedroom size and overcrowding** – Members requested clarity regarding the number of 1 and 2 bed properties purchased via the need and expressed concerns regarding potential overcrowding. Officers explained that 1 and 2 bed properties were purchased as this matched the demand and all accommodation had good space standards.

**Rent Arrears** – The Portfolio Holder offered to provide a briefing note giving the Committee further information on rent arrears and the work of the Sustainment team was briefly explained.

**Article 4 Direction** – The Portfolio Holder explained this would enable the council to identify HMO's and have a better idea of where they were. Additional and selective licensing was also being progressed, and the next step was the consultation period with the aim to introduce additional and selective licensing by the summer of 2026.

**Winter Shelter Funding** – The Portfolio Holder explained that the Winter Shelter that runs from January to March had been given an ongoing funding commitment of 3 years.

**Renters Rights Bill** – The Committee were reassured that the housing team had been briefed and licensing was being progressed so that the council could ensure that properties were of a good standard and that Landlords took their responsibilities seriously, with enforcement measures in place if needed.

Members also discussed social value for tenants and external factors that were impacting on the viability of housing markets and the impact this had on the ability to provide affordable and social housing.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the report.
- b) The Portfolio Holder committed to provide further information on the length of voids.
- c) The Portfolio Holder committed to provide a briefing note on rent arrears.

**631 Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets 2026/27**

**Discussion:**

Officers summarised the report, the requirement for a 30 year balanced business plan and the proposed rent and service charge levels for 2026/27.

Members queried the level of reserves and were informed that £1.9m would remain in reserves and officers were comfortable that this, along with insurance, would be sufficient. Officers explained that levels of borrowing were stress tested by Savills including worse case scenarios to ensure that a balanced business plan was in place.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to recommend the following to Cabinet:

- a) A proposed social rent increase of 4.8% (CPI of 3.8 plus 1%) for the social rent housing stock as set out in Appendix A (based on 52 collection weeks) with effect from 01 April 2026. All new tenancies issued during 2026/27 to be set at either the formula rent or rent cap for social rent dwellings, whichever is lower.
- b) A proposed affordable rent increase of the lower of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate or 4.8% (CPI of 3.8 plus 1%) for the affordable rent properties as set out in Appendix B (based on 52 collection weeks) with effect from 01 April 2026. All new tenancies during 2026/27 to be set at either 80% of market rent or the LHA rate for affordable rent dwellings, whichever is lower.
- c) A proposed rent increase of 4.8% to be applied to all garage tenure types with effect from 01 April 2026 as stated in section 5.
- d) That the service charges increases/decreases as set out in Appendix C of the report for 2026/27 be approved.
- e) That the revenue budget for the HRA service for 2026/27 as per Appendix D be approved.
- f) That the provision for the estimated repayment of debt, based on annuity-based payment as set out in section 7.3, on the HRA's outstanding debt for 2026/27 be approved.
- g) To delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Culture and Community or Chief Housing Officer to agree weekly rental values presented by the Head of Tenant Services for any in-year completed HRA acquisitions and/or new builds during 2026/27.
- h) That Members approve the 30-year HRA Business Plan model as attached at Appendix E.

**632 Waste Contracts Annual Review - October 2024 to September 2025**

**Discussion:**

The report was introduced to the Committee and key achievements were highlighted. Officers informed the Committee of the collection success rate of 99.97%, new fleet of vehicles, 96.9% diversion rate, over 176,000 visits to recycling centres and the 66% recycling rate at recycling centres.

Members thanked officers on behalf of Medway residents for the services they provide.

In response to a query regarding whether general waste should only be put out for collection in black bags, officers confirmed that general waste should be put in black bags and street bins now used blue bags so were distinguishable.

With regards to street cleansing the Committee were informed that areas had to be targeted at the right time and this was looked at in monthly service meetings. Services can be enhanced where needed but with limited finances and resources this would involve moving resources around.

Members queried who would bear the cost of containers for weekly food waste collections and it was confirmed that this would be funded by a grant from DEFRA.

Members asked for more information on enforcement for fly tipping and officers agreed to provide a briefing note on this.

The advantages of the booking system at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) were discussed and officers explained the booking system was not linked to an increase in fly tipping. Members queried the drop rate for scheduled visits to HWRC's and officers agreed to provide this information outside of the meeting. Members queried whether large vans could be allowed to access HWRC's to dispose of larger items. Officers explained that sites were constrained for space and that this policy allowed trade waste to be eliminated but officers would look at this further.

Members queried the stability of the workforce and barriers to recruitment were discussed. Officers explained that despite the turnover of agency staff there was a stable core staff base with pride in delivering the service. Officers reported that there were a number of female operatives including drivers and that the diversity of the workforce would be included in future reports.

Members asked how many households had purchased an additional brown bin and were informed that this was higher than expected at 446 and would reopen again on 1 April 2026.

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### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the content of this report including the Annual Service Reports and other briefings set out in Appendices 1 to 6.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note on enforcement regarding fly tipping.
- c) The Committee requested data on the drop rate for scheduled visits to Household Waste and Recycling Centres.
- d) The Committee agreed that information on the diversity of the workforce should be included in future reports.

### **633 Highways Infrastructure Contract - Annual Review**

#### **Discussion:**

Officers introduced the report and the new ranking system that had been recently announced was discussed with Medway ranking as amber.

Officers informed the Committee that the principle of highway repairs was to get it right first time and reduce repeat interventions. If any repairs were rejected, they were promptly rectified and sample surveys were carried out to check completed works.

Members queried whether there had been an increase in claims for damage caused by potholes. Officers reported that there had been an increase in claims over winter however this was being addressed by the inspection programme and increased driving of the network to identify potholes before they cause any issues.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the Annual Review for Year 8 of the Highways infrastructure Contract as set out in Appendix 1.

### **634 Infrastructure Funding Statement**

#### **Discussion:**

Officers explained that the report covered 2024/25 and sets out Section 106 monies received, spent and proposed for infrastructure provision moving forward.

Members queried provision for health services in Rainham and were informed that a community meeting was taking place on 21 January 2026 to discuss Section 106 provision and resident's concerns. Officers explained the difficulties as the council has no control over health services, however regular

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meetings were held to plan for the provision of health services and officer would continue to report on this.

Officers informed the Committee that the developer contribution guide and delivery plan had been reviewed as part of the Local Plan. The promotion of strategic sites with developers continued to ensure the required infrastructure is delivered.

The Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Community Infrastructure Levy versus Section 106 funding. Officers reported that they had never had to return any Section 106 funding due to it not being spent in the required timeframes. This was due to the good work of officers and a system of governance including monthly meetings to address any delays and deal with developer queries.

The implications of small pots of funding for health were discussed and officers reported that the NHS had updated their developer contribution guide so this should lead to some increases in funding going forward.

With regards to the timing of Section 106 payments, officers explained that they needed to make sure payments were made as early in the process as possible and wouldn't be any later than at 75% completion.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the content of the report.

## **635 Local Transport Plan Consultation Report**

### **Discussion:**

Officers informed the Committee that the report provided the outcome of the first phase of engagement for a new Local Transport Plan and set out emerging themes that could shape the vision for the plan.

Members noted the high level of car owners and drivers and issues with the reliability of bus services.

Officers explained that the plan would be about providing the residents of Medway with choice and bus reliability had been identified as a key theme which needed ongoing partnership working to address. There was an appetite for cycling for leisure and the barriers to safe cycling were acknowledged.

Members expressed concerns about the unintentional consequences of School Streets Schemes and the difficulties with travel in Medway when there were issues with the M2.

Members recognised the importance of railway travel and associated issues such as

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cost, ease of purchasing tickets, coverage of routes, adequate parking for vehicles and cycles, safety when walking to stations and proposals for integrated ticketing across Medway.

Members queried how women, parents and carers were consulted and requested a briefing note providing further information on this. Members also expressed the importance of addressing safety for women and vulnerable groups when developing plans.

### **Decision:**

- a) The Committee noted the Baseline Consultation Report at Appendix 1 and endorsed the emerging themes that would guide the development of Medway's new Local Transport Plan.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note addressing how the consultation was representative of all community views including women, parents and carers.

### **636 Petitions Report**

#### **Discussion:**

The Petitions report was taken as read.

Regarding the petition to provide a direct school bus from Lordswood/Walderslade to Rainham School for Girls/The Howard School, Rainham, officers provided an update.

The Committee were informed that officers were committed to revisiting the request now that the central government funding settlement was in place.

#### **Decision:**

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

### **637 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.

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- b) The Committee noted the action log as set out at Appendix B to the report.

**Chairperson**

**Date:**

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