

## **Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**26 March 2026**

### **Attendance of the Leader of the Council**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Vince Maple, Leader of the Council

#### Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Leader of the Council. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

#### 1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.

#### 2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Leader of the Council, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- Armed Forces Covenant (in conjunction with Armed Forces Champion)
- Benefits and Financial Welfare Services
- Category Management/Procurement
- Communications and Marketing
- Council Tax and Business Rates Administration and Recovery
- Democracy and Governance
- Finance
- Strategic overview of Medway Council including Council Plan, Risk Management and Performance Management

#### 3. Background

3.1. Serving the residents of Medway as Council Leader continues to be the greatest honour of my life. I am therefore proud to present in this report across a broad range of services to this Committee. We have always been open about the challenges we inherited, and the difficult decisions we have had to take to secure the financial sustainability of the Council, and we have continued to make positive progress in improving services for the people of Medway.

3.2. Over the past year we have delivered significant achievements and progress on our key priorities for Medway both within my Portfolio of services and across the Council and I want to reiterate here my thanks to all the staff of Medway Council, and our partner organisations, who work tirelessly to deliver services for all of Medway's residents, businesses and visitors.

3.3. Local Government Reorganisation will change the relationship between central and local government enabling a shift of powers away from Whitehall into local communities, reorganising local government so that all areas are served by unitary authorities like Medway. The Council has submitted proposals to the Government, and we will learn the future for Medway in the summer of 2026, and a great deal of work next year will be focused on preparation for those changes.

#### 4. Providing political leadership and challenge

4.1. In our election literature we made it clear that, given the chance to serve, we would do so with honesty, integrity, accountability and compassion and I am grateful to my Cabinet colleagues for working to meet those values in the way they lead the services in their portfolios of responsibility. We continue to expand our engagement with residents, including our Medway Matters Live events to a programme of direct communication which includes our regular, bite-size One Minute Medway videos and the Medway Matters booklet delivered to every household three times a year.

4.2. In collaboration with the Corporate Management Team and officers we have set out our priorities and how we will deliver them through the One Medway Council Plan, secured the Exceptional Financial Support required to agree the budget for 2026/27 that makes significant investments in improving service delivery, and introduced a new regime to hold ourselves accountable for delivering savings and transformation in the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan.

4.3. We recognise that both devolution and local government reorganisation could bring significant opportunities to Medway and we are committed to engaging with the government on this journey.

4.4. The new government made its intentions clear around the priority for devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Council debated proposals for LGR in November 2025 and following a rigorous debate and consideration by Cabinet proposals were submitted to government and I will be happy to give a verbal update at the start of this item. I thank officers across the Council for their outstanding work to date, often on very short deadlines.

4.5. I work closely day to day with the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer and Assistant Director, Legal and Governance and many of their team members to discuss key projects and activity not only the services in my portfolio but also across the wider Council. I also meet collectively on a

quarterly basis with the Team of 25 – the Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team members – to share information, discuss issues and agree proposals for improvements. The arrangements in place between officers and Cabinet Members are genuinely collaborative. As well as the early conversations about the budget, FIT plan and performance and risk monitoring, we track a much broader set of measures of activity and performance on a regular basis, and this enables the Council to adapt and respond quickly to any risks or opportunities that arise.

4.6. We cannot deliver for Medway’s residents without our partners across the public and voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector. Alongside championing partnership working wherever this benefits our residents, I represent the Council on a number of strategic boards, committees and meetings including:

- Court of the University of Kent at Canterbury
- Informal Working Party on Polling Districts and Polling Places
- Kent and Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board
- Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
- Kent and Medway Employment Task Force
- Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
- Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership Joint Committee
- Kent and Medway Region Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Meetings
- Kent Leaders Meetings
- Key Cities Group
- Key Cities Group - Executive Committee
- Local Government Association - General Assembly
- Medway for Business - Economic Partnership
- South East 7 Leaders Meeting
- Thames Gateway Strategic Group
- Town Centres Board

## 5. Championing the Interests of service users and Medway residents

5.1. As I reach the end of my third year as Leader of the Council, I am proud of our efforts to reach out to our local residents including, as set out in section 4 above, our popular Medway Matters Live Events where the Chief Executive and I speak about current issues as well as taking questions from the audience.

5.2. Staying on the issue of Local Government Reorganisation and devolution, I am very keen that local residents have the opportunity to provide their views on this significant issue the consultation ends on 26 March 2026 and I would urge residents to make their views known to government.

5.3. Beyond Medway’s boundaries, I have leveraged the strong relationships that Medway Labour and Co-operative group has with the Labour Party nationally to advocate for Medway at every turn and have continued to use

my connections with partners including the Local Government Association to contribute to causes including the continuation of the Household Support Fund into the Crisis and Resilience Fund and for funding reform.

## 6. Support for key service areas

### 6.1. **Armed Forces Covenant (in conjunction with Armed Forces Champion)**

- 6.1.1. Both Councillor Stamp and I have visited some of the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club sessions which happen in Medway. At Hoo, Wigmore and Chatham there are regular sessions which has a range of advice and guidance available as well as a good amount of social interaction. The hub actively advocates for veterans in a wide range of issues including housing and health. In November it was the 10th Anniversary of the Chatham Medway West Kent Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club.
- 6.1.2. 2025 saw another successful Armed Forces day, where we once again supported the Medway Veterans Hub to be present.
- 6.1.3. As a Council we have secured the revalidation of our Employer Defence Recognition Gold Award, maintaining our gold status and demonstrating our commitment to the armed forces as an employer. This was secured through our robust HR policies that support reservists and cadet force volunteers, incorporating the Armed Forces Covenant into our procurement procedures and our commitment to encouraging businesses to sign the covenant. Both Kyndi and the Medway Development Company have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. On remembrance day, as part of the Medway Council staff roadshow the 3rd Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment reservist unit attended Gun Wharf, engaging with staff on the benefits of being a reservist.
- 6.1.4. This year, following Cabinet approval, I have launched a new Medway Armed Forces Partnership Board. The inaugural board was very well attended with current serving military, reservists, veterans, education colleagues, armed forces charities and more all in attendance.
- 6.1.5. We continue to be an active member of the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board, taking part in sub groups, such as Skills & Employment and Recognise and Remember. Medway Council has led the way by embedding the Armed Forces Covenant into our procurement processes and continues to encourage businesses around Medway to sign the Covenant.
- 6.1.6. Councillor Stamp has indicated she will be stepping down as Armed Forces Champion at Annual Council and I wish to place on record my thanks for her outstanding service in this role.

## 6.2. **Benefits and Financial Welfare Services**

- 6.2.1. In January 2023, Cabinet approved the creation of a combined central Benefits and Financial Welfare service to better support vulnerable residents in Medway. This service now delivers Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Assessment, Discretionary Financial Assistance (including the Household Support Fund), Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service, Housing Related Support and Financial Welfare.
- 6.2.2. The team continues to administer Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction. Despite the introduction of Universal Credit, the team currently still has a Housing Benefit caseload of 5,252 claims. These claims are made up now of the most complex claims, pensioners, specified accommodation and temporary accommodation. The migration to Universal Credit is now virtually complete so this will be our approximate Housing Benefit caseload moving forwards. The simpler scheme we introduced in 2022 has made it easier for residents to apply, and the number of claims received is increasing as residents contend with the difficult financial environment. A total of 16,188 residents currently receive support through this scheme worth over £15.4m. The Council Tax Reduction scheme and the council's budget allow for a modest level of Exceptional Hardship Payments to support residents. In 2024/25 £45,646.52 was awarded in Exceptional Hardship Payments and expenditure in the 2025/26 year will exceed that level with £58,072.70 awarded to date.
- 6.2.3. Alongside administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, the service also operates schemes which offer discretionary assistance for housing costs (including Universal Credit) and Council Tax. The Discretionary Housing payments scheme is funded by the government, and through this scheme the Council spent £484,158 through 310 awards in 2024/25. Where a claimant was not eligible for a DHP payment yet found to be in need, awards were made from the Household Support Fund to prevent homelessness. The service continues to receive high volumes of applications in 2025/26 and anticipates that the fund will be fully spent by the time it closes on 31 March 2025. The Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme ends on 31 March and has been replaced by Housing Payments within the Crisis and Resilience Fund.
- 6.2.4. A significant area of work across the service has been the delivery of the Household Support Fund. The government announced the Household Support Fund in September 2021 as part of the package of support for individuals through the Covid-19 pandemic. Medway Council's allocation for 2025/26 was £3.97million. The main focus of the fund in Medway was to provide support to those eligible for benefit-related free school meals during the school holidays, supporting members of the Medway Food Partnership with their work in the area, and delivering a grant scheme through which all eligible residents could apply for assistance.
- 6.2.5. The team are now focussed on the exit plan for the Household Support Fund and introducing the new Crisis and Resilience Fund. The Crisis and

Resilience Fund (CRF) is a new three-year national scheme (1 April 2026 - 31 March 2029) providing grant funding to local authorities in England to deliver preventative financial support and direct crisis assistance to residents. It replaces the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments, creating a single framework for crisis and resilience.

- 6.2.6. Medway's allocation is £4.590m and is contained within the final Local Government settlement. The funding is being added to the Council's revenue budget following agreement at Full Council in February. The fund has three intended outcomes:
1. Provision of effective crisis support - ensuring residents can access timely, appropriate help during financial crisis.
  2. Improving individuals' financial resilience - helping people build the capability and stability to better withstand future crises.
  3. Bolstering the local-level support landscape— strengthening local systems, partnerships, and services that prevent hardship and support long-term wellbeing.
- 6.2.7. The fund must be allocated across four components, Crisis Payment, Housing Payment, Resilience Services and Community Coordination.
- 6.2.8. The Crisis and Resilience Fund guidance removes from blanket provisions of vouchers to a provision of crisis payments and ongoing support for those families in receipt of free school meals. We are committed to supporting families who are experiencing hardship and will provide alternative options for those who are in receipt of free school meals during the holidays:
- Provision of the Crisis Payment scheme including the ability to accept applications from professionals within schools.
  - Holidays and Activities Fund, there are spaces available for those in receipt of free school meals and funding has been ringfenced to provide additional provision. These activities can be provided to the whole family with hot food provided.
  - Support through Family Hubs.
  - Welfare and Debt Advice to ensure that families have maximised their income and are able to budget efficiently.
  - Vouchers to enable families to access food and support through local shops where the need arises including our community supermarket.
- 6.2.9. These measures will be proactively communicated to families and schools to ensure awareness of the support that is available.
- 6.2.10. We have already started work on how we can provide preventative support with some of this year's Household Support Fund being used to fund the start-up of a community supermarket within Medway and year 2 provided through the Crisis and Resilience Fund. The supermarket forms an important step in reducing the reliance on emergency food support through having low cost goods for sale and enabling residents to move up the food ladder to independence. This project is being undertaken with Public Health and the Medway Food Partnership.

- 6.2.11. The Housing Related Support Team work alongside colleagues in Housing to support residents who have been made homeless or who are at risk of homelessness. Since the team's inception on 1 April 2023, they have received over 2,100 referrals, providing a wide range of support. They have worked with the Rehousing Team to ensure that when people are placed in temporary accommodation, they are supported to claim Housing Benefit and any other benefits they may be entitled to. They provide advice and guidance around finding permanent accommodation, bills and budgeting and wider support to ensure tenancies are maintained. When extra capacity is required to maintain tenancies for Medway Council's Housing Revenue Account tenants, the team can step in to provide tenancy sustainment support.
- 6.2.12. The Financial Welfare Team have been in operation since 1 January 2024. In this time, they have helped over 2,300 Medway residents with direct casework. The team co-locate with each Adult Social Care locality on a rota basis so that officers have access to welfare advice when they need it to assist residents. The team has quickly become the face of the service attending many events to promote the support the team provides, assisting residents and partners. To date, they have attended many events working with key stakeholders across Medway including the Welcome to Medway events, Carers First carer's event, Medway Food Partnership, World Homeless day and Medway Matters Live.
- 6.2.13. In January 2024, Cabinet agreed to an extension of the existing Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service. This added two Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts to the team and enabled the team to cover North and West Kent in addition to Medway following a request by Macmillan. This provided a more resilient service for Medway residents and is funded in full by Macmillan, addressing a small subsidy the council had previously contributed to the service. Macmillan announced in 2025 that the way in which the charity provides welfare support would change. In late 2025, Macmillan appointed a new regional lead partner for the South-East with a reduced scope of support.
- 6.2.14. The Council has decided to preserve the service we currently offer to Medway residents given the successful outcomes of the Macmillan team - £4.6m financial gain for Medway Residents in 2024 and a financial gain of £8.7m for those in Medway, North and West Kent during 2025.
- 6.2.15. We are using the Crisis and Resilience Fund to launch a new service supporting our responsibilities under the Crisis and Resilience fund focused on community co-ordination, benefit take-up and complex claims. This new team will support the wider welfare landscape in Medway, those with complex needs and anyone with life limiting illnesses.
- 6.2.16. Led by the Head of Benefits and Financial Welfare, the council's refreshed Cost of Living plan was published in July 2025. The plan brings together all of the support that is available for residents from Medway Council, and partners, into one place to make it easier to access.

6.2.17. Through the refreshed Cost of Living Plan, we have also invested in technology to help identify and encourage residents who may be eligible for support at both a national and local level to apply. We introduced the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) from Policy in Practice to help ensure Medway's residents access all government and additional support to which they are eligible. We have used the LIFT to proactively target residents for the household support fund and identify where Medway residents could be entitled to benefits that they have not yet claimed. In 2026, we will see a new plan which encompasses all the financial resilience work being undertaken by the Council following the move to resilience under the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

### 6.3. **Category Management and Procurement**

6.3.1. The Category Management team continues to work with and support all services in achieving value for money and exploring more efficient ways of working. We achieve this by delivering against the recently well-adopted procurement strategy covering 2025-2030.

6.3.2. Through collaborative working, the team has seen another successful year in respect of delivering social value and we remain committed to working with colleagues to explore more ways in which this can be achieved.

6.3.3. The team formed part of the working group with KCC to adopt the new procurement system, which went live October 2025. The new system introduced new tools, both data analytical and contract management, to support all services with a common platform to achieve contracted deliverables. This so far has been well received, and we continue to introduce and train colleagues on the platform as and when appropriate.

6.3.4. As recurring from last year, the continued delivery of the 'Core Responsibility' training has facilitated a greater coverage of the team's purpose and engages services much earlier in the procurement cycle to make engagement more proactive.

### 6.4. **Communications and Marketing**

6.4.1. The Communications and Marketing department continues to support the council's priorities through transparent, proactive communication and wide ranging engagement with residents, staff, and stakeholders. Our work spans media relations, marketing campaigns, digital content, design, public health messaging, and internal communications.

6.4.2. A core strategic focus this year has been supporting income generating services and Medway's journey to financial sustainability, alongside communication around the proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Media and corporate communications

- 6.4.3. The government's plans to reorganise local government into two tier authorities by 2028 continues. Alongside communications colleagues across Kent, we ran a residents' engagement survey in September 2025 and the insight for that was included in our final 4D proposal, which was submitted in November 2025. We have continued to keep residents informed about the forthcoming changes across social media, in our Medway Matters magazine and discussions at our Medway Matters Live in person events. In addition, we held a second all staff briefing in early December 2025 to keep officers informed, and we continue to publish regular updates both internal and externally through our website and intranet.
- 6.4.4. The official Government consultation runs throughout February and March, and we promoted this via social media and video content. In addition, we have held a number of stakeholder webinars across sectors including culture, heritage, business, housing and charity and interfaith groups. These events were well attended and the open forum for questions have allowed us to keep an open dialogue with stakeholders.
- 6.4.5. We held two further successful Medway Matters Live events in Hoo and in Gillingham last year welcoming around 300 residents to hear from the Leader and Chief Executive on council priorities and to take questions on all related issues.
- 6.4.6. The Press Office continues to manage an increasing demand for its support from media, as well as from services and stakeholders requiring support to issue public information and press releases to update Medway residents on announcements or support available. During the year (April 2025 up to mid-February), the Press Office managed 530 enquiries and issued 153 press releases proactively promoting council priorities, events and announcements. They also facilitated 86 media interviews, as well as informative briefings with media, covering topics such as Medway's VE and VJ Day events, School Streets, domestic abuse support, public health advice and more.
- 6.4.7. Last year, the Press Office also worked closely with the production team behind BBC One's Strictly Come Dancing – resulting in both Riverside Country Park and Rochester Castle featuring on the national show.
- 6.4.8. As part of the department's work to offer residents more opportunity to hear directly from the council and its Cabinet on decisions and service news, it continues to produce short and engaging videos, including the weekly One Minute Medway.
- 6.4.9. Across social media, Medway Council's corporate pages have seen nearly 20million impressions and almost 100,000 link clicks, with Facebook leading the way as our most popular social media platform. Focus has continued to shift away from X – formerly known as Twitter - due to its decline in engagement. This has enabled us to shift our focus to engaged

audiences on other platforms, resulting in 6,000 new followers across other platforms.

- 6.4.10. Video content produced by the team, including the popular One Minute Medway series, saw 1.5million views, 14,000 likes, 3,000 comments and 2,300 shares. In total, 80 videos were created by the press office, including weekly One Minute Medway episodes and 30 pieces of news and other content.
- 6.4.11. In total, almost 4,700 pieces of content were published across our corporate channels. Our most popular content covered topics including news stories, flag raising events, organised events such as Medway's VE Day celebrations and the Christmas Market, Local Government Reorganisation and popular culture linked to Medway.

#### Marketing campaigns

- 6.4.12. Our Marketing and Graphic Design teams work with services to plan and create engaging campaigns which drive income generation, encourage behaviour change and support information sharing.
- 6.4.13. The Local Plan, a fundamental piece of work for Medway, has been submitted and was supported through a comprehensive communications plan, which ensured residents and stakeholders were involved in consultations with the largest engagement in last summer's Regulation 19 consultation.
- 6.4.14. Over the summer, we produced and launched a new Summer in Medway tourism campaign video, alongside a series of shorter films showcasing each of our heritage sites. The main video achieved exceptional reach, with nearly 1.5million views. As a result, our heritage attractions saw significant growth in visitor numbers over the summer period: admissions increased by 10 per cent at Rochester Castle, 19 per cent at The Guildhall Museum, and 32 per cent at Upnor Castle.
- 6.4.15. Our marketing support for Sport continues to perform strongly, with a particular emphasis on promoting Premier Memberships. We currently have a record 10,008 members in total. Additionally, we successfully relaunched The Strand for the summer season. We welcomed more than 30,000 visitors (around 4,000 more than the year before).
- 6.4.16. This year also saw the delivery of our first Love Gillingham summer weekend, beginning with the ever popular Medway Mile on Friday. On Saturday, we encouraged increased footfall at Gillingham Market, and on Sunday we hosted the Big Day Out - helping to reinforce local pride and community engagement. We also ran a Love Gillingham, Hate litter campaign that resulted in a 24 per cent reduction in waste related reports.
- 6.4.17. Continued promotion this winter of our My council tax online service has seen a further 2,300 people sign up in the past three months.

- 6.4.18. Our Free Bus Travel campaigns continue to deliver positive results, with growing numbers of residents choosing to travel by bus during promotional periods.
- 6.4.19. Christmas in Medway was another strong success. Across the festive season, we welcomed more than 250,000 visitors. Our digital reach totalled 4.2million people, including 3million through our social media channels. The Christmas in Medway webpage on Visit Medway received 137,000 unique visits. The panto generated an additional £42,000 compared to the previous year. We also continued to deliver clear and targeted communications around Christmas waste collection, resulting in improved compliance with revised collection dates.
- 6.4.20. Public Health – our priority is to support the council’s Prevention agenda through our many campaigns supporting our mission to tackle health inequalities across Medway.
- 6.4.21. With out-of-home campaigns and monthly social media posting, Stop Smoking referrals were up with more than 1,000 residents stopping smoking in 25/26 with 350 stop smoking referrals in Q4 alone.
- 6.4.22. Through our social media campaigns this year we welcomed 739 walkers to our BumpClub Walks and 57 pregnant residents signed up to our six-week BumpClub online programme.
- 6.4.23. The successful MedwayGo initiative, through our HAF scheme, saw 4,641 individual children attend sessions with more than 5,000 hot meals provided.
- 6.4.24. A significant event in Medway’s calendar, was the Baton of Hope tour where Medway has 36 baton bearers and around 200 supporters. The national campaign involved 30 different partner organisations which collaborated to deliver the event in Medway and across Kent. On average, approximately 200 people per month received support from each of the Medway Safe Havens between May and Nov 2025. As well as social media, online support sessions and on the day resources, a film was produced celebrating this amazing day and it gained national media coverage.
- 6.4.25. The ferrules campaign continues with more than 350 ferrules changed at monthly and special events throughout the year, with the aim of reducing the number of falls.
- 6.4.26. Hundreds of our bespoke Tooth Fairy books were given out to 72 schools, and so far 214 small books have been given out via foodbanks, charities and nurseries and 22 large books via libraries and community settings. The book was written and illustrated by the Communications and Marketing team.

- 6.4.27. Following extensive marketing by the team, 12,455 health checks for people aged 40+ were carried out in Medway (in association with the NHS) and our one-on-one outreach saw 926 residents with 690 quit dates set and 338 quitting smoking.
- 6.4.28. Fostering - This year we have run a number of paid and organic fostering marketing campaigns including the 'Could you Foster? It's a Wonderful thing' out-of-home and online campaign designed in house. We have had 12 approvals so far this financial year and 13 have been taken through assessment. In total this year, from our marketing campaigns, we have had 189 enquiries.

#### Internal communications

- 6.4.29. We continue to review and improve our offering to our staff and internal communication channels and activity each year and the evidence was clear from some excellent results in last year's Staff Survey. 73.7 per cent of staff reported that they feel well informed about council plans and progress, this is a further 6.6 per cent increase on the previous year.
- 6.4.30. New initiatives have been recently introduced, to further strengthen our communication with staff, including online all staff briefings and a Staff Roadshow. We used this channel for two live briefings with the Leader and Chief Executive to inform staff about Local Government Reorganisation with more than 1,000 members of staff joining each event. This is proving a hugely popular and effective way to ensure strong, visible leadership at a time of change for the council.
- 6.4.31. Our second series of Our Medway Live events took place in June where all staff were able to hear from the Leader and Chief about their priorities and have the opportunity to ask the questions directly in a dedicated Q&A session - 700 staff attended in 2025 across three dates.
- 6.4.32. We also launched Our People Promise setting out the benefits of working for the council, aimed at both existing and potential employees. The staff survey results tell us that 93 per cent of staff are aware of our new Values and Behaviours (launched in 2024), and 74.8 per cent are aware of the People Promise. We continue to promote both of these corporately, with the Values and Behaviours embedded in our HR processes such as Performance Reviews and the Make a Difference staff recognition awards, and they are shown on our corporate footer as a daily reminder. We have also run a major information campaign to raise awareness of the range of staff benefits which helps in staff recruitment and retention.
- 6.4.33. Our autumn Staff Roadshow is a dedicated two week programme of events for colleagues to share valuable information about our work, highlight current projects, and showcase the many ways we support both our staff and our community. The event featured talks and sessions, online and in person, designed to benefit colleagues in their professional roles and personal lives, as well as opportunities to ask questions and connect with

other teams. The roadshow featured ten online sessions involving more than 30 services and nearly 500 colleagues attended the different events.

## Summary

- 6.4.34. Across all areas—media, digital engagement, marketing, public health, internal communications, and corporate campaigns—the department has delivered strong performance, expanded reach, and supported key strategic priorities including financial resilience, Local Government Reorganisation, prevention, community pride, and staff engagement.

## 6.5. **Council Tax and Business Rates Administration and Recovery**

- 6.5.1. Council Tax – the collection rate at the end of February 2025 was 90.88% compared to 91.44% at the same time last year. A slight drop against last year is not unexpected and is a symptom of the cost-of-living crisis that many council tax payers are continuing to experience. This year saw the introduction of a 100% premium for properties referred to as second homes (unoccupied and furnished) and as with the empty homes (unoccupied and unfurnished) premium there are a number of exceptions. These exceptions include properties that are up for sale or available to let, for a period of up to 12 months.
- 6.5.2. Business Rates – the collection rate at the end of February 2025 was 94.52%, slightly up on 94.36% this time last year. This is particularly pleasing as this year saw a drop in the rate of the Government funded discount for ratepayers in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors from 75% to 40%, resulting in an additional £3.5m to be collected, mainly from smaller businesses. This relief is due to be replaced by lower multipliers from April 2026 and work has been undertaken to identify those properties that qualify under the new scheme which now extends to Council owned properties such as leisure centres and libraries.
- 6.5.3. Online services – further progress has been made this year with the introduction of automated payment plans. Council Tax payers can now request to change their payment plan without having to contact us with an offer for manual review. The resident is given an immediate response and as long as the offer falls within set parameters it is accepted and the back-office system updated without the need for intervention. We currently have over 32,000 residents (26%) signed up for My Council Tax Online and more than 1,100 businesses (18%) have a Business Rates Online account. Almost 29,000 of those with an online account have opted for paperless billing. Numbers are consistently growing as we continue to promote this service via emails, texts, social media, inserts that go out with our annual bills and QR codes for easy sign up on all envelopes. So far this year 58,000 paperless bills have been issued and 30,000 transactions have been carried out online, improving efficiency and reducing response times for residents.

## 6.6. **Recovery**

- 6.6.1. In 2025/26 the Magistrates Court granted over 14,000 Council Tax Liability Orders for non-payment of Council Tax. In recognition that financial circumstances can change residents can self-serve and set up their own payment plans online through My Council Tax Online, this functionality provides residents with the flexibility to increase / decrease payment plans to clear arrears in line with their ability to pay.
- 6.6.2. Two additional invest to save posts were recruited to in 2024/25 to deal with high value arrears cases, they have an existing portfolio of £4m and have collected / reduced the arrears figures by £672k to date and further to this they have future reductions of £500k on payment plans, attachment to earnings orders or pending insolvency solutions. These initial 'invest to save' posts have made a positive impact by helping to collect and reduce Council Tax debt owed by some of our most vulnerable residents, the work on these cases remains ongoing and is often time-consuming due to complexity.
- 6.6.3. The officers are responsible for engaging and supporting vulnerable residents working together with the Benefits and Financial Welfare team, as well as progressing high level arrears cases where ability to pay has been identified to improve Council Tax collection.
- 6.6.4. A business plan submitted in January 2026 has been approved, and funding has been granted for two additional Invest to Save posts, one at Range 4, to manage another portfolio of work relating to open Council Tax accounts valued at approximately £2 million.
- 6.6.5. An additional Range 3 role has also been approved to provide operational support to the Range 4 officers. Including cases identified using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) and to organise and run proactive engagement techniques - bulk messaging awareness campaigns, direct bespoke messaging to invite engagement, as well as dealing with Enforcement Agent returns and absconded debtors promptly.
- 6.6.6. To maximise efficiency and ensure clear workflow progression, the team will also be structured into pre enforcement and post enforcement functions.
- 6.6.7. We have received 7,800 Enforcement Agent returns so far in 2025/2026. These cases arise when Enforcement Agents have been unable to collect the outstanding debt.
- 6.6.8. There is an opportunity to implement Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to manage these Enforcement Agent return reports more efficiently. This proposal is supported by ICT. Ascendant Solutions, the provider of the Pathway product, has already deployed this RPA solution successfully for another local authority, demonstrating its effectiveness and reliability. The product is an off the shelf solution that can be tailored and customised to

align with Medway's processes. This has been agreed within the business plan mentioned above.

- 6.6.9. We are also utilising Ascendant's Pathway product, which provides valuable insight into a resident's ability to pay. The system draws on a combination of credit reference data, open banking information, and vulnerability registration data to assess and categorise residents' affordability. This enables a more informed, fair, and targeted approach to debt recovery, ensuring support is directed to those who need it while improving overall collection outcomes.
- 6.6.10. We are also introducing a new Vulnerability and Financial Difficulty Policy for 2026/27. This policy sets out how Corporate Debt and other service areas will work together to provide coordinated support to residents who are struggling financially. Its purpose is to ensure a consistent, holistic approach so that residents receive the right help at the right time across the organisation.
- 6.6.11. The Corporate Debt Team has now taken on responsibility for tracing absconded residents, a task previously managed by Revenues, where significant backlogs had developed due to capacity pressures. Effective tracing is essential to reduce the Council's bad debt provision and support income collection.
- 6.6.12. To improve efficiency, the team now uses Pathways bulk Credit Reference Agency searches instead of manual case by case tracing, enabling faster identification of new addresses and continued recovery of Council Tax. This process is also suitable for future automation through Robotic Process Automation, as noted in above.
- 6.6.13. We have also used the Enforcement Agents added value tracing services. From February 2025, £3.3m of absconded Council Tax debt was sent on a Trace and Collect basis. Enforcement Agents retain cases where a new address is found and return unresolved cases.
- 6.6.14. Using Pathways data, we subsequently identified contact addresses for many cases initially returned as "unsuccessfully traced," and reworked previously written off accounts. This prevented around £300k from being written off and allowed recovery action to resume.
- 6.6.15. Using the product, we are identifying residents that are either financially stable, or vulnerable tailoring messaging to their situation, this has enabled us to invite appropriate cases to welfare and debt guidance surgeries and to obtain face to face support.
- 6.6.16. The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 allow the Council to recover reasonable costs for taking a case to the Magistrates' Court and obtaining a Liability Order. After almost ten years without review, summons related costs were reassessed for 2024/25. We were also had unrecovered costs incurred between the summons and

Liability Order stages up to 31 March 2024, meaning residents not in arrears were subsidising these expenses. From 1 April 2024, the contribution for a summons was set at £95, and Liability Order costs were introduced at £25. These Liability Order costs increased to £30 for 2025/26, while the summons cost remained unchanged.

- 6.6.17. This is estimated to raise £1.69m in costs during this financial year. (Estimated as the final court for this year is still in progress, summonses were issued in February, and the hearing is in April 26).

## 6.7. **Democracy and Governance**

### 6.8. Democratic Services

- 6.8.1. As always, I want to start by thanking Members for the role they play in the democratic process, not only by attending meetings and making decisions on a range of issues, but also their wider role including representing their local communities in Medway.

- 6.8.2. In particular, I want to reflect on a couple of significant issues that have happened in the past year. Firstly, the Council agreed the Local Plan at a special Council meeting on 26 June 2025. Members will be no doubt aware that our current Local Plan dates back to 2003 and previous efforts to agree a new Plan were unsuccessful. Therefore, I am extremely proud that the Council agreed a Local Plan we can move forward with. I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Curry and the Planning team for all their hard work on developing the Local Plan, noting that the Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination towards the end of last year. The Council will continue to provide updates throughout this process.

- 6.8.3. Secondly, we held a special Council meeting on 13 November 2025 to enable all Members to discuss Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and in particular, Medway Council's formal submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Members expressed a variety of views and it was important that all Members had that opportunity to put their arguments forward before the Cabinet agreed the formal submission of option 4d, at its meeting on 18 November 2025. Members will of course be aware that the final decision on LGR in the Kent and Medway Region rests with the Government and I would further encourage everyone to respond to the Government's public consultation, which closes later tonight (23:59, 26 March 2026). It is expected that Government will make a final decision on LGR by July 2026, this will set out the number and boundaries of the new unitary authorities in the Kent and Medway region, with shadow elections due to take place in May 2027 ahead of vesting day on 1 April 2028. Once the Government has announced its decision, it will be really important that all of the constituent Councils, including Medway, play their part in ensuring a smooth transition to the new unitary authority.

- 6.8.4. With regards to our Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Members continue to do an excellent job of not only holding Cabinet Members to account but also our partners, with a view to getting the best possible outcomes for our residents. The Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has raised particular concerns around the Community Services contract and the all age Mental Health Services contract and has received regular updates on the progress of these workstreams. In addition, the Committee has held both Medway NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) and Kent and Medway Mental Health NHS Trust (KMMH) to account for recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections into their services and their actions to address the concerns raised.
- 6.8.5. Furthermore, I am pleased that Overview and Scrutiny continues to play an important role the development of Council policy, through pre-decision scrutiny, recent examples including the Climate Change Action Plan, the Education Travel Assistance Policy, the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy and the Housing Allocations Policy Review. Overview and Scrutiny also considered a number of Members' items last year.
- 6.8.6. There was one call in last year, relating to LGR, in particular the Cabinet's decisions in September 2025 to progress the Medway option (option 4d) to a full business case and engage external support (KPMG) to assist with producing the business case. The Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a special meeting on 2 October 2025. I attended the meeting to listen to Members' contributions and to respond to the call in and I am grateful to the Committee for taking the time to attend this meeting, which took place late in the evening, for scrutinising the Cabinet's decisions thereby adding a further layer of transparency to the Cabinet's approach to LGR.
- 6.8.7. Looking at Task Group activity, the Air Quality and Public Transport & Active Travel Task Group was completed last year and its recommendations were reported to Cabinet in November 2025 following consideration at both the Regeneration, Culture and Environment & Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees. I am pleased to say that Cabinet agreed all of the Task Group's recommendations and a couple of additional recommendations from the two committees regarding public transport and senior officer support for task group activity. In terms of implementation, overview and scrutiny will be due to receive updates towards the end of this year.
- 6.8.8. Initial work on the next Task Group, Medway 2.0, has started and I look forward to this work progressing and a report being submitted to Cabinet in due course.
- 6.8.9. With reference to our Full Council meetings, I have continued to meet with other Group Leaders, Deputy Leaders and Group Whips, supported by senior officers, to look at how we can better structure our Full Council meetings. This work has culminated in the decisions at the adjourned full Council meeting to November 2025 to reduce the number of motions to a

maximum of three per ordinary meeting on “an equity plus 10% basis”, the introduction of an annual report on overview and scrutiny plus highlighting reports which require no decisions as information reports only, not for debate.

- 6.8.10. Following a trial, which commenced in June 2025, Members agreed at the January 2026 full Council meeting to make permanent the trialled changes to how we deal with questions at meetings whereby questions which relate to Cabinet agenda items and other executive functions are raised and answered at Cabinet meetings, whilst Council (non-executive) related questions will still be dealt with at full Council meetings, following a trial which commenced in June 2025. I am pleased that the Council agreed this as a permanent change to the Constitution because it further opens up democracy to both our local residents and our Councillors. Up to and including Cabinet on 10 March 2026, the Cabinet has dealt with 40 public questions and 50 questions from Members across all four political groups and the Independent Councillor.
- 6.8.11. The Cabinet, as always, has dealt with a range of issues over the past year. I would draw out the important work on the development of Additional and Selective Licensing and Article 4 Directions to deal with the issues of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) as a couple of examples where the Cabinet aims to improve standards for our local residents.
- 6.8.12. In addition, our regulatory committees continue to play their part in ensuring the important work of the Council is carried out in a timely manner, such as the Planning Committee carefully considering and determining planning applications, the Licensing and Safety Committee and its sub-committees reviewing policy and dealing with various issues, including premises licence applications and the Employment Matters Committee ensuring that our staff are supported and valued. And of course, the Health and Wellbeing Board plays a critical role in ensuring that the health of our residents is at the forefront of our thinking with Medway Council’s officers working collaboratively with our NHS colleagues.
- 6.8.13. The team have organised over 10 briefing/training sessions for Members on key issues of interest throughout the year including Armed Forces Covenant training, Marmot Place and Additional and Selective Licensing.
- 6.8.14. I would like to thank our current Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Councillor Clarke and Councillor Spring respectively for their excellent work throughout the year, having been elected in May 2025 as a result of the reintroduction of the Mayoral points system under the current Administration. The Mayoral team, who have been supported by Democratic Services this year, have delivered a range of fantastic charity fundraising events in the past year including a ‘Call the Midwife Tour’, a curry night, a Christmas Carol at our beautiful Medway owned Eastgate House and a fabulous panto evening at the Oasthouse Theatre. They are now working towards the Mayor’s ‘Celebration of Thanks’ event on 1 May 2026 and I am very much looking forward to attending that.

- 6.8.15. In addition, the Team have worked hard on many other events this year, such as the Mayoral Dedication Service, the Admiral's Cruise and the annual meeting of Admiralty Court, the Remembrance Sunday Service in Rochester, the Prisoner of War Memorial Service and even arranged for the Mayor to help celebrate Medway's oldest resident on her 112th birthday.
- 6.8.16. Finally, I would also like to congratulate Councillors Hamandishe and Jackson who have been nominated as the Mayor elect and Deputy Mayor elect for 2026/2027 and I look forward to them being formally elected at the Annual Council meeting on 13 May 2026.

## 6.9. **Electoral Services**

- 6.9.1. There were no scheduled elections during the last year, however, two Parish By-Elections have been successfully held, and the team has been restructured following the retirement last year of the service manager.
- 6.9.2. The Electoral Services team have completed an exercise to contact over 31,000 postal voters in Medway who needed to renew their postal vote application in accordance with new legislation. Due to the high volume the team staggered the exercise throughout the year. After a year of communications by various methods to the affected postal voters our team successfully renewed 22,985 applications. After the 31 January 2026 deadline, they had to cancel 7,970 postal voters. They have all been contacted to inform them that their postal vote has been cancelled and a new application was also included. It is the elector's choice now if they wish to re-apply for any future elections, The percentage of postal votes cancelled was 25.38%, significantly lower than the national average of postal voters who did not re-apply was 33% following a survey by the Association of Electoral Administrators. This is testament to the dedication and hard work of the team.
- 6.9.3. As well as the postal vote renewal project, the team delivered another successful Annual Canvass between July - December. The team contacted over 120,000 addresses to confirm we hold the correct details for the 205,000 electors on the Electoral Register. This ensured that the Full Register of Electors was as accurate as possible when it was published on 1 December.
- 6.9.4. The team recently implemented Automatic Register Distribution which is forms part of the Electoral Management System, following collaborative work with IT and this represented a long term goal of the team. All members who currently receive the Electoral Register and monthly updates electronically have been contacted informing them of this change and details on how to gain access to the files. I am pleased to say that anyone who receives an electronic copy of the register received it automatically in February. The team received very few queries about access issues therefore it's been very successful. This will save the team a lot of time,

especially at the end of year for publishing the new register, as previously the distribution of registers were completed manually.

- 6.9.5. Although there are no scheduled Elections in 2026, the team are already proactively giving consideration to Local Elections in May 2027. As this is a scheduled Election, preparation work for this will commence from December 2026 onwards. The team are keeping abreast of the ever-changing legislations linked to the Local Elections/Shadow Elections/LGR. The team are confident that no matter what challenges are ahead, they will be well prepared and as always deliver another successful election.

## 6.10. **Finance**

- 6.10.1. The Council continues to operate in exceptionally difficult financial circumstances, as the number of residents who need support from our statutory services across social care, special educational needs and disabilities and homelessness continues to rise. At the same time the cost of delivering these services continues to rise, with increasing complexity of our residents' needs, inflation and staffing costs adding to our budget pressures. The budget for 2025/26 reflected the continued need to provide these vital services for our most vulnerable residents. The budget also continued to invest in our People Promise with a 5% cost of living pay increase for all staff on MedPay terms and conditions, the introduction of a wellbeing Day each year, discounted Medway Sport Premier memberships and a doubling of our Learning and Development budget. While we had to make many difficult decisions including increasing the fees our residents and visitors pay to use some of our services, we retained the lowest council tax in Kent. And with the second year of support from the Government through the Exceptional Financial Support scheme (EFS) we set a balanced budget for 2025/26.
- 6.10.2. For the 2025/26 financial year, we continued with more regular monitoring and oversight of the agreed budget, savings and transformational activities and continued monitoring at Cabinet on a quarterly basis. In April 2025 the Cabinet agreed the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan, setting out the priorities, savings and other key actions that form part of our ambitious improvement journey. Collectively the activity in the plan sees the Council rethinking how we operate, support, and deliver high quality services to help us deliver our One Medway Council Plan in a financially sustainable way. We improved arrangements for all teams involved in the FIT plan activity to track activity and outcomes on a monthly basis, and Finance continued to work alongside teams to validate progress recorded and ensure consistency with budget reporting. This activity has continued to be among the very highest priorities for both the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team during 2025/26, and while the revenue budget monitoring continues to project significant overspends, prompt and robust management actions have been put in place to protect the Council's general reserves at the minimum balance set by S151 Officer of £10million. This action includes a review and subsequent declassification

of some earmarked reserves and the flexible use of capital receipts to fund some transformational activity.

- 6.10.3. In December 2025 as part of the ongoing assurance review as part of the EFS process, members of the finance team submitted an update EFS request which was reviewed by CIPFA and followed up with discussions with officers including the Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer. Following this review the Government has confirmed agreement in principle to extending the EFS for 2025/26 by a further £10million to fund the projected overspend and for the support required for 2026/27 to balance the budget. We are grateful to colleagues and Ministers from MHCLG and CIPFA for their continued positive engagement, support and insightful advice and guidance through this process.
- 6.10.4. Beginning in June 2025 work began to develop the budget for 2026/27. The Medium Term Financial Outlook published in August 2025 indicated a potential budget gap of £29.9million, however proposals for savings and income generation saw that reduced to £25.9million in the draft budget in November 2025.
- 6.10.5. The final budget approved for 2026/27 reflected the impact of the Final Settlement and continued work to reduce pressures since the Draft Budget was prepared and therefore reflects a reduced requirement for EFS of £9.856million for 2026/27, which is consistent with the projections included with our original EFS request in 2024. On 23 February 2026, the Government confirmed agreement in principle to the additional EFS required for 2025/26 and the EFS required for 2026/27. Our ability to rely on EFS in both years, allows the Council to protect the £10million minimum balance in our General Fund reserve.
- 6.10.6. The local government financial settlement for the three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29 was positive for Medway in several ways. Firstly, as the first genuine multi-year settlement for a number of years, it has allowed the Council to make medium term financial projections and plan expenditure commitments with much greater certainty. Secondly, it reflects the result of the long awaited Fair Funding Review 2.0, which represents the anticipated shift in the distribution of government funding, with a higher focus on deprivation as an indicator of needs. This has seen higher allocations for Medway Council over the medium term, however owing to the government's need to protect those authorities which fare less well, the transitional arrangements mean that the benefit to Medway has not been felt as quickly as hoped. It is the current administration's stated aim to balance the budget for 2027/28 without recourse to EFS.
- 6.10.7. I am pleased to note that the Council's draft Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 were published by the statutory deadline of 31 May 2025, It is recognised that in meeting the deadline for publishing the draft statements for 2024/25, there have been issues with quality, which were addressed in the final Statement of Accounts. The Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have delivered a disclaimer opinion for 2024/25 by the backstop deadline set by the Government intended to return the system to normality.

The disclaimer opinion is the same as for the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 Statements. I am assured that work is already underway to prepare the Council's Statements for 2025/26 for publication by the deadline of 31 May 2026 and we will work with our auditors to support their audit in due course.

**6.11. Strategic overview of Medway including Council Plan, Risk Management and Performance Monitoring**

6.11.1. Risk Management

6.11.2. Risk management is a process which aims to help the Council understand, evaluate, and act on all our risks. It supports effective decision making, identification of priorities and objectives, and increases the probability of success by making the most of opportunities and reducing the likelihood of failure. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. I recognise that the Council has a responsibility to identify and manage the barriers to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services we provide to the community.

6.11.3. To strengthen our risk management, the Corporate Risk Management Group was re-established in August 2025. This group includes senior officer membership from all directorates, and corporate services including information governance, finance, audit, and performance.

6.11.4. The Corporate Risk Management Group ensures that strategic and operational risks are identified, assessed, and managed consistently across the organisation. It provides oversight of the strategic risk register and Risk Strategy and offers recommendations to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet. The group does not make decisions but acts as an advisory body to strengthen governance and compliance.

6.11.5. They play a fundamental role in reviewing and developing the Council's Risk Strategy, which:

- promotes a common understanding of risk.
- outlines roles and responsibilities across the Council.
- proposes a methodology that identifies and manages risk in accordance with best practice thereby seeking to prevent injury, damage and loss.
- sets out an objective method for analysing risks taking into consideration the likelihood and impact of the risk.
- states the Council's agreed tolerance level for risks.

6.11.6. The Strategy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains up to date and continues to reflect the Council's approach to risk management. The Strategy was reviewed by Corporate Risk Management Group and Corporate Management Team, before consideration by Audit Committee on 27 January 2026, Business Support & Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2026 and Cabinet on 10 February 2026.

- 6.11.7. As part of our Medway 2.0 Programme, we have started to streamline and centralise the collection of risk updates. An interim solution was introduced during Quarter 2, 2025/26, whilst a long-term solution is being developed in-house by our ICT Development Team. While no changes were made to the quarterly reporting process, this change and future development will allow formal reporting to be complemented with more interactive insights.
- 6.11.8. Council Plan and Performance
- 6.11.9. The One Medway Council Plan's purpose is to set the vision and direction of the Council for the next four years. The One Medway Council Plan (OMCP) 2024/28 was agreed at Full Council on 15 May 2024. It sets out the Council's priorities over the next four years and includes the indicators we will use to track performance. These indicators are refreshed annually. The 2026/27 review is more light touch to ensure that the indicators continue to drive performance.
- 6.11.10. One Medway Council Plan 2026/27 key performance indicator refresh was agreed at Full Council on 25 February 2026. Monitoring of the One Medway Council Plan takes place on a quarterly basis, through Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 6.11.11. As with our risk reporting, as part of Medway 2.0 we have looked to review our processes and systems for collection of performance indicator data. The Data and Design Service undertook a business analysis review to enable our ICT Development Team to develop a system for our performance data collection and management. The system will go live in quarter 1, 2026/27 and will allow us to review and improve performance information shared through Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.
- 6.11.12. One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan
- 6.11.13. Under my leadership, Medway Council has made clear and sustained progress in strengthening its financial resilience while continuing to protect the services that matter most to residents. The One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan has turned priorities into clear actions with named accountability and regular reporting. This has marked a decisive shift from short-term stabilisation to a more disciplined, delivery-focused approach to long-term sustainability.
- 6.11.14. A defining feature of this approach has been transparency. The FIT Plan sets out plainly what the Council committed to do, what has been delivered, and where further improvement is required. Progress is monitored rigorously through senior management and reported openly to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, ensuring that difficult decisions are visible, evidence-led and subject to challenge. This openness has strengthened confidence in the Council's leadership and its ability to manage public money responsibly.
- 6.11.15. Crucially, the FIT Plan demonstrates delivery. Commitments to redesign Adult Social Care have resulted in greater use of assistive technology,

earlier intervention and improved transitions for young people, supporting independence while reducing long-term costs. In Children's Services, stronger oversight of placements and increased in-house fostering have improved outcomes for children and delivered significant savings. Across place-based services, initiatives such as our safer, healthier streets programme and investment in sustainable transport show how financial discipline is being aligned with better outcomes for residents.

6.11.16. Together, these achievements illustrate a clear "we said, we did" approach. The FIT Plan, now undergoing its third iteration for 2026/27, has become a practical tool for accountability, assurance and delivery, demonstrating that the Council is taking decisive, transparent action to secure a more sustainable future for Medway.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1. I am immensely proud of what has been delivered through the services in my Portfolio in the last year, and of the collaborative approach taken by the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team as a whole, taking a genuine One Medway approach, to securing investment in transformation and improving services for Medway's residents.

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### Appendices

None

### Background papers

None