

Public Questions

Question A – Josephine Davies, of Gillingham, had submitted the following question to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson:

“There has been growing negative sentiment and safety concerns regarding the significant degradation in road maintenance. Particularly the now dangerous disintegration of Medway roads. These issues are not only safety concerns but are also causing additional burden of costs for repairs at a time where rising costs are applying further pressure on household budgets.

Whilst residents appreciate the Council has limited budget for road maintenance, the current roads are no longer safe, and there are concerns around quality control of contractors who fill potholes for them to only degrade weeks later.

Medway residents would like a very clear and detailed response as to how the Council will tackle this issue. In your response we would ask that the Council do not simply refer to their standard response of grading roads and inspections but rather how they will put to use the budget and identify how they can deliver on improved road maintenance: including details of the Council’s quality control standards for pothole repairs so that residents have full understanding of how funding is being used by the Council to ensure fair value of tax payer funding; and whether a full and comprehensive plan will be published publicly to Medway residents, with clearer guidelines on how residents are able to escalate concerns around Medway Council to higher authorities.”

In response to the question, Councillor Paterson said that the significant degradation referred to was due to winter. Water entering cracks in prolonged wet and cold weather contributed to deterioration as did climate change, increasingly dry summers and mild seasons. These presented new and additional challenges in an area of local authority spending, which had been chronically underfunded for decades. The freeze-thaw cycles seen in recent months had been particularly damaging, causing potholes to form or worsen very quickly, even on recently repaired roads.

The Council’s approach was always to deliver the right repair first time. However, during periods of extreme weather, it was necessary to carry out temporary emergency works to remove an immediate safety risk. These would be followed by longer lasting repairs when conditions permitted.

Councillor Paterson had seen this annual cycle repeat over many years and he was on record, including as an opposition Councillor, in stating that the best time to fix a pothole was before it became a pothole. The implication of the question that this was a new problem was incorrect with many of the potholes appearing on Medway's roads today having become an issue before the current administration had taken control of the Council.

The current administration was fixing a problem that it had not caused and it did not have a short term obsession with pothole repairs, as had been seen under previous

administrations in Medway and currently at Kent County Council. In his view, pothole repairs were an indicator of failure.

Councillor Paterson said that decades of cost-cutting and the lack of proactive road maintenance had to be paid for by everyone eventually. He was empowering the Council's officers to reverse that decline and doing so meant ignoring pressure from those who had voted for cuts but now objected to the consequences.

The Council continued to invest in improving the 850 kilometre road network in Medway. In the last year 16 roads had been resurfaced and patching works had been carried out at more than 100 locations across Medway. It was planned for a similar level of resurfacing and patching to be delivered again in the current year.

This approach helped slow deterioration, protected the network, and ensured best value for money. The question asked had dismissed inspections and the grading of roads as irrelevant, but as there was not enough money to carry out all the repairs wanted, prioritising roads in need of the most urgent intervention was the only responsible way to spend taxpayers' money. Funding was directed where it would have the greatest impact.

This included preventative maintenance to slow decline, targeted patching to extend the life of road surfaces, and prioritising repairs on the busiest or most safety critical routes. To ensure that money was well spent, there were strong quality control measures in place, including post-repair inspections and requiring contractors to return at their own cost if a repair failed. Ongoing performance monitoring was undertaken to ensure standards remained high.

A Department for Transport annual transparency report was available online. This set out how work was programmed and how funding was allocated across the road network, enabling residents to clearly see how money was being used. Work was also being undertaken on improving how the Council shared information about its maintenance plans.

While Medway was increasing the real time monitoring of the condition of the road network, using route reports from cameras mounted on Council vehicles, he urged residents to continue to report specific defects using the tool on the Council website. This would be more effective than complaining about issues on social media. He said that the Council was working hard to improve the road network.

Improvements would not happen immediately given the years of underinvestment and recent damage done by extreme rainfall. With continued investment and a relentless focus on long-term repairs, Councillor Paterson was confident that residents who looked at the bigger picture rather than false politically motivated narratives would recognise the difference being made.

No supplementary question was asked as Josephine Davies was not present.

Question B – Milo O’Connor, of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“Many residents in Cliffe and Cliffe Woods are facing extreme difficulty finding adequate public transport to get to Medway for work. They also find difficulty getting to Medway train stations to get to day jobs in London. A lot of residents consider the bus network unreliable. Do you have any long-term plans to upgrade the road and bus network in Cliffe, or work with the national government to extend the Strood Maidstone train line to Cliffe and Cliffe Woods?”

In response to the question, Councillor Curry said that this was a complex issue. Cliffe and Cliffe Woods were served by the 133 bus, which had been improved in recent years through developer contributions and the Council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan. The route also provided direct access to Rochester and Chatham stations. It was recognised that reliability was an issue, particularly when trying to connect to trains for work.

Through an enhanced partnership with bus operators and regular meetings, the Council continued to monitor performance closely and support measures that improved punctuality and passenger information. For a rural area of this size, the 133 offered a comparatively strong level of provision. Medway would keep working with operators to identify opportunities for further enhancement where funding allowed.

In relation to rail, the Strood–Maidstone line did not pass close to Cliffe or Cliffe Woods and creating a new spur or station would require substantial new national infrastructure. This was not currently being considered by Network Rail or the Department for Transport and was not within the Council’s control.

The new Medway Local Plan did not propose major growth in Cliffe or Cliffe Woods and therefore did not identify large scale transport schemes or major road upgrade schemes in this area. It did support improved bus services and better access to rail for rural communities. The Council would continue working with operators, residents and national partners to support improvements as opportunities arose.

There had previously been some uncontrolled development in the Cliffe and Cliffe Woods area due to be Medway not having an up to date Local Plan. The agreement of the new Local Plan would allow greater development control.

Milo O’Connor asked the following supplementary question:

“In 2024, the Kent Messenger did a piece about how many local residents were dissatisfied with the buses and that there was only one an hour. There was a petition on Change.org outlining that some of the buses missed stops and it wasn’t providing the service necessary to get to Medway efficiently. Are you aware of this petition, has there been any work done since 2024 to address those concerns?”

In response, Councillor Curry said he was not fully aware of the petition and that he would look into it. Councillor Maple requested that the questioner provide a link to the petition via Democratic Services. At present, the Council, because of the previous administration’s position did not recognise Change.org petitions but he recommended keeping an eye on the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Question C – Neil Davies, of Chatham, asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Louwella Prenter, the following:

“As part of the Cabinet meeting in January, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness gave an update on £100,000 that had been allocated to charity and voluntary community organisations to help with homelessness and rough sleeping. Can I ask what the breakdown is with regards to which organisations were issued this money and if any of it remains?”

In response to the question, Councillor Prenter said that the Council had been notified of additional top-up funding for the 2025/26 Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG) as part of the Government’s commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

Medway had been allocated an additional £425,534 of which £85,107 was to be used towards interventions that would deliver and add value to partnerships and services with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in the local area.

Medway had a strong and committed VCFS supporting rough sleepers and single person homelessness. The grant conditions included ensuring services were designed to meet local needs, reduction of high risk repetitive or enduring homelessness, prevention and reduction in long stays in temporary accommodation.

Allocation of the VCFS funding had been agreed with the Council’s MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) Rough Sleeping Advisor and allocated as follows:

- £5,000 additional training for volunteer and staff team training – One Big Family;
- £37,500 paid staffing to supplement volunteers at high needs supported housing provision – One Big Family;
- £25,000 for winter night shelter provision for people sleeping rough – AMAT;
- £5,000 breakfast club for people who were homeless and had substance use issues to offer engagement with treatment services - Open Road;
- £21,000 towards running costs of “off the street” provision - Caring Hands.

This top-up had been invaluable, especially over the winter period. It had supported Medway’s Winter Shelter which had been open since 1 January and would run until 31 March. Any remaining funding be utilised but it had not yet been allocated.

In addition to the top up grant, the Government announced on 19 February “*The Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund*”. This was a 3-year grant programme running from 2026-2029. The grant was open to voluntary, community or faith-based organisations operating in England with an annual income below £5million. Applications opened on 23 February and would close on 31 March 2026. Information could be found in the Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund - prospectus.

Neil Davies asked the following supplementary question:

“One of the only ones you haven’t mentioned of the community organisations I’m aware of, would be Medway Street Angels, so if there is any money left, I’d be really appreciative if Medway Street Angels could be considered?”

In response, Councillor Prenter said that she would take that away and liaise with the services as it would depend upon the services they provided.

Question D – Elizabeth Kebbell, of Chatham, asked the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:

“Could the Cabinet Member outline the Council’s current strategic approach to improving mental health and emotional wellbeing across the area.

In their response can they please include; how success is measured; what key performance indicators are used; how progress is reported publicly; and, how the Council is ensuring that prevention and early intervention are prioritised alongside crisis response services?”

In response to the question, Councillor Murray said that Medway Council delivered this strategic priority through the Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority theme 1, which was Healthier, Longer Lives for Everyone. The Strategy stated that one of Medway’s key ambitions was to promote mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience, by encouraging community-based initiatives and facilitating social connections, whilst recognising the importance of a robust support network for people’s resilience. This strategic ambition was reinforced by the One Medway Council Plan and the Integrated Care Strategy.

The Council delivered this strategic priority by commissioning the Release the Pressure help line, the Men in Sheds project and ensuring that mental wellbeing was a core component of the Work Place Health Programme and Child Health Programme. It also supported the set up and running of Safe Havens and Crisis House in Medway and commissioned a wide range of young people mental wellbeing services, including the soon to be launched Medway Therapeutic Alliance.

These commissioned services all had associated key performance indicators, that were monitored and reported by the providers at regular contract management meetings. As part of her role as Portfolio Holder, Councillor Murray was held to account by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the performance of all these services.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also held other key NHS partners to account for their work on mental wellbeing services. This included the Integrated Care Board and Kent and Medway Mental Health Trust. These scrutiny sessions were open to members of the public to attend, streamed on the Council website and all previous minutes were also available on the Council website.

In relation to measuring the success of Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy objectives, the Public Health Intelligence Team had produced log frames that supported the reporting of progress against all priorities, including the range of mental health and emotional wellbeing indicators. These were reported via the Health and Wellbeing Board, which Councillor Murray chaired, the Health and Adult

Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and through Integrated Care Partnership meetings, all of which were open for the public to attend. Councillor Murray said that where it was determined that one of the performance indicators was not where it needed to be, this was the opportunity for an intervention to be put in to turn it around.

Elizabeth Kebbell asked the following supplementary question:

“How is the data collected? Is it from service users, is it reports from the services themselves, is it an inspection?”

In response, Councillor Murray said that it was all those things. The Council was very keen to ensure that lived experience played a big part in all the data that the Council collected and all the judgements made. Public Health Intelligence reports were available on the Gov.uk website.

Question E – Amanda Chinnery, of Rochester, asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

“The success of the flagship Rochester Riverside regeneration development is compromised by only having one vehicular access instead of the four that were promised.

The Rochester Riverside Residents Association would like to know what the Council will do to ensure the approved accesses, that are currently years overdue, are prioritised and delivered to a published timetable to ensure there is convenient and safe access to and from Riverside, before any further development is commenced?”

In response to the question, Councillor Curry said that he understood the desire to ensure that the fabulous development that was Rochester Riverside, could be accessed by more than just Gas House Road. The potential additional accesses for the development were Blue Boar Lane, Furrell’s Road and Doust Way.

The first 3 phases of the development were all complete, including the new school, but these relied on the current sole access of Gas House Road for vehicles, albeit that Blue Boar Lane was available for cycles and pedestrians, although it was not yet properly surfaced.

The Council had been working with Vistry on ways to enable construction to proceed without placing additional demands on Gas House Road. As part of phase 7, the Council had worked with Vistry so that Furrell’s Road was to be used for construction access and was also available as an emergency access for residential use if there was ever an issue in Gas House Road. The new houses in phase 7 were constructed starting from Doust Way and working backwards, so that the new houses had their vehicular access from Doust Way and therefore did not put pressure on Gas House Road.

Work was progressing to enable Furrell’s road to be brought into use shortly for general vehicular traffic and Vistry had confirmed that no construction work would commence on phases 4 and 5 until the Furrell’s Road access was complete and available.

In relation to Blue Boar Lane, Vistry had provided access up to the bridge, although the bridge was quite low, which required due consideration by Network Rail and the Council about its use for vehicular traffic. On the Corporation Street side of Blue Boar Lane, MHS were using it as construction access for their development, which was complete and now being occupied. Plans were in place for Blue Boar Lane to be surfaced and laid out for pedestrian and cycle access only, but with bollards both sides of the bridge so that it could be used for vehicular traffic in emergencies.

Amanda Chinnery asked the following supplementary question:

“My question to Councillor Curry and to Councillor Paterson, is for them to commit to meeting with us. We have been trying to set up meetings for a while now. We want to do this together, talk through all the issues and come up with a clear plan for how we are actually going to make this happen.”

Councillor Curry said he was happy to meet to talk through timetables and to see how this could go forward. Councillor Paterson said he was also happy to meet and assist in any way possible. As a ward Councillor he had been exerting pressure through officers and progress was finally being made.

Question F – Raza Griffiths, of Chatham, asked the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Murray, the following:

“What are the mechanisms and means by which the users of voluntary sector services can help to inform commissioning and funding decisions?”

In answering the question does the Council agree that it is vital to meaningfully consult with the users of voluntary sector services to inform Council decisions on whether to fund a specific group which the Council either is funding, or should fund, to meet a shortfall and also consult them in setting the funding criteria defining what successful bids should look like, so that funding is aligned with the real needs of service users?”

In responding to the question, Councillor Murray said that the Council’s Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) programme had been delivered from the outset with the intention of maximising community participation and engagement, ensuring projects would be led by the community, for their communities. The programme involved engagement with voluntary sector organisations throughout the process through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) board meetings and associated network, which provided a regular forum for voluntary sector organisations to communicate directly with the programme team and in which feedback was consistently sought to ensure programme delivery met the specific needs of the organisations and the communities represented. An example of this was the implementation of the Summer Events Fund which was created as a direct response to a Voluntary Sector organisation’s request to make funding available for the Summer period. Based on feedback from engagement activities the application form had been simplified and shortened.

The Voluntary sector was integral to the success of this programme, which could not be delivered without their significant involvement. This could be seen through the Council’s work with organisations such as Medway Voluntary Action through their Volunteering project, Emerge Advocacy and their Emerge Medway Programme or through Arts and Homelessness International with their AHI Professional Development Programme.

The SPF team held 1:1 bookable sessions during the UKSPF Year 4 application window. These sessions, which took place every Friday, were fully booked and resulted in engagement with over 100 prospective applicants. The sessions were open to anyone to attend and provided invaluable feedback that helped inform the process moving forward. This was due to continue through the next phase of the programme, which was the Medway Together Fund. The Voluntary Sector would continue to be critical to the delivery of this.

Prior to the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Community Renewal Fund was a good example of this approach, with skills and employment outcomes delivered by 10 voluntary sector partners. The Council also worked closely with the voluntary sector through the Adult Education Service, to ensure that reported needs were met where possible.

Service users were central to shaping effective voluntary sector decision-making. A range of community methods were used to ensure direct influence on priorities and investment decisions. These included Town Centre Forums and Partnerships, which brought together residents, service users, community groups, and local partners to identify emerging needs and highlight gaps in provision. Placemaking initiatives, such as the Gillingham Co-Creation Programme provided opportunities for structured engagement through workshops and public events where people could share lived experience and influence local solutions. These approaches ensured that funding criteria and commissioning decisions were grounded in the real experiences of service users that aligned to the priorities of Medway's communities."

Raza Griffiths asked the following supplementary question:

"We don't want novelty, we want continuity, we don't want something that's time limited, we want something that's ongoing and co-produced with service users and we want something that smaller providers can apply for, not for the whole of Kent and Medway. These commissioning criteria are not always aligned with the needs and wishes of mental health service users. What can be done to ensure they are aligned with our needs and wishes?"

Councillor Murray said that she knew MEGANCIC very well, had met several times with the people who ran it and had attended some of the support groups. This service was commissioned by the NHS and the decision that had been made about the type of support provided was based on a model that the NHS had decided was an appropriate model. This did not prevent MEGAN from getting involved in other things. They were very visible at local Voluntary and Community Sector events.

Councillor Murray said she was always happy to meet with MEGANCIC to discuss issues but that she could not directly influence the commissioning that the NHS undertook for that particular workshop.

Members' Questions

Question G – Councillor Wildey, had submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple:

“As Leader of Medway Council, will you write a letter to Maidstone Borough Council supporting the allocation of £200,000 of Section 106 funding - funding that would unlock a further £1,000,000 from the Kent Youth FA - for the long planned 3G pitch at Lordswood Leisure Centre, a project supported by Lordswood Youth FC, Lordswood Leisure Centre and local councillors and which will benefit boys, girls, and young people with disabilities across Medway, given that we were told this funding will not be available unless Medway formally requests it?”

In response to the question, Councillor Maple said that Councillor Wildey, along with Councillor Gurung and himself, had been present at a recent meeting where this issue had been discussed.

Councillor Maple said that it would not currently be appropriate to seek specific allocations of Section 106 funding when the Council had not yet been formally consulted on the planning application.

The Council wanted there to be as many good sporting facilities in Medway as possible but it was important to look across the whole of Medway. This was why two important pieces of work were being undertaken, the development of a Playing Pitch Strategy and of a Sports Facility Strategy. These would identify what Medway needed as a whole.

In relation to the Section 106 funding, it was clear that this Section 106 contribution would be strongly or unanimously within the Medway area. The question stated that the funding would not be available unless Medway Council formally requested it. Councillor Maple said that if the individual who had stated that wished to give £200,000 to Lordswood Youth FC, he was sure this would be welcome.

Question H – Councillor Lawrence, had submitted the following to the Portfolio Holder of Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson:

“For each month since the introduction of the School Street Scheme can the Portfolio Holder confirm the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued? In giving his can he also include:

1. The value
2. The % paid in full
3. The % cancelled through the Council's appeals process
4. The % cancelled following an Appeal to the Independent Tribunal.”

In response to the question, Councillor Paterson said that the Medway School Street Scheme had begun in March 2024 and that every unauthorised driver who put children in danger by breaking the rules was subject to a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN).

The following data provided was from 4 March 2024 to 28 February 2026.

1. Closed PCN's - £896,801. Open PCN's and outstanding balance - £663,185.
A School Street PCN was charged at £70.00 but a 50% reduced price of £35.00 was applied if paid within 14 days. If no payment was made the PCN would increase in price, in accordance with legislation.
2. 67.81% were paid in full.
3. 9.1% were cancelled through the Council's appeal process.
4. 0.8% were cancelled following an appeal to the Independent Tribunal.