



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2025/2026



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1. Foreword



As Chairperson of Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee I am delighted to introduce the first Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report. Overview and Scrutiny plays a vital role in providing effective review of the Executive. In 2025-26 the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees have tackled a number of issues. The work of the O&S Committees can be split into three broad areas, pre-decision scrutiny of forthcoming Cabinet decisions, monitoring of Council performance against key targets and budgets and holding the executive to account through scrutiny of Cabinet Members and call-in. Medway Council has four O&S Committees, Business Support and Digital, Children and Young People, Health and Adult Social Care and Regeneration, Culture and Environment, each with its own areas of responsibility. In addition, the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee has a co-ordinating role to provide guidance and leadership on the development and co-ordination of the scrutiny function for all O&S Committees, including guidance on priorities for scrutiny activity. It is also responsible for the picking of time limited task groups which enable Members to consider a topic in greater depth. That I, as a member of an Opposition Group, have the privilege of being the Chairperson of the Business Support and Digital O&S Committee and introducing this report, highlights the commitment of Medway Council to the role of overview and scrutiny.

This report sets out some of the work undertaken by each of the Committees during the year, where it has made a tangible difference to Council policy and where it has worked for the people of Medway to have the best services possible.

The O&S Committees have taken their role in Holding the Executive to Account with detailed examination of each Portfolio Holder and their role during the year, there has also been one call in, where O&S reviewed Cabinet's decisions in relation to Local Government Reorganisation. Further collaborative working has been embedded within the four O&S Committees via an informal group of Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and Opposition Spokespersons of the Committees which have met twice in the year to agree how emerging issues and best practice can be taken forward.

Further information on the work of the O&S Committees is contained in this report. I would like to thank Members of the O&S Committees, for their attendance at meetings, plus officers for their support, Co-optees and external partners who have also attended and providing reports and answered questions of each of the committees for all of their hard work. Finally, I would like to thank Cabinet Members for taking the time to attend our meetings and be held to account.

I look forward to the challenges of the year ahead, including emerging issues around local government reorganisation.

Councillor Habib Tejan
Chairperson, Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee
April 2026

2. Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to designate an officer as its Scrutiny Officer. The Council has designated the Head of Democratic Services as its Scrutiny Officer, as set out in Article 11 of the Constitution.

My role as the Scrutiny Officer can be summarised as promoting the role of our overview and scrutiny committees and providing support and guidance to our overview and scrutiny committees or committees including both Members and officers, for example, encouraging scrutiny's role in policy development through pre-decision scrutiny.

I am conscious of the challenges that Members and officers face, in particular, capacity issues, which means that our four overview and scrutiny committees have to prioritise the areas they wish to focus on, which can be quite challenging. For example, I recognise the hard work of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their role in holding the NHS to account, which has been crucial this year, however, this has meant that it has had less capacity to consider adult social care issues during the year.

I would like to thank Members, co-opted committee members and officers for supporting the Council's overview and scrutiny function and external partners, for example, NHS colleagues, for attending our meetings throughout the year.

I would also like to thank the members of my team who support our overview and scrutiny committees for their professionalism and dedication. Whilst there is always room for improvement, I feel the team provides a responsive service and plays a critical role interfacing between Members, officers and our external partners, in particular the NHS.

For ease of reference, a glossary is included at section 15, this provides definitions of the agenda types included in the charts in this report.

Looking forwards, I recognise the challenges of planning for local government reorganisation and the role that overview and scrutiny will play to help ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new local authority for Medway and beyond.

Wayne Hemingway
Head of Democratic Services
April 2026

3. Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

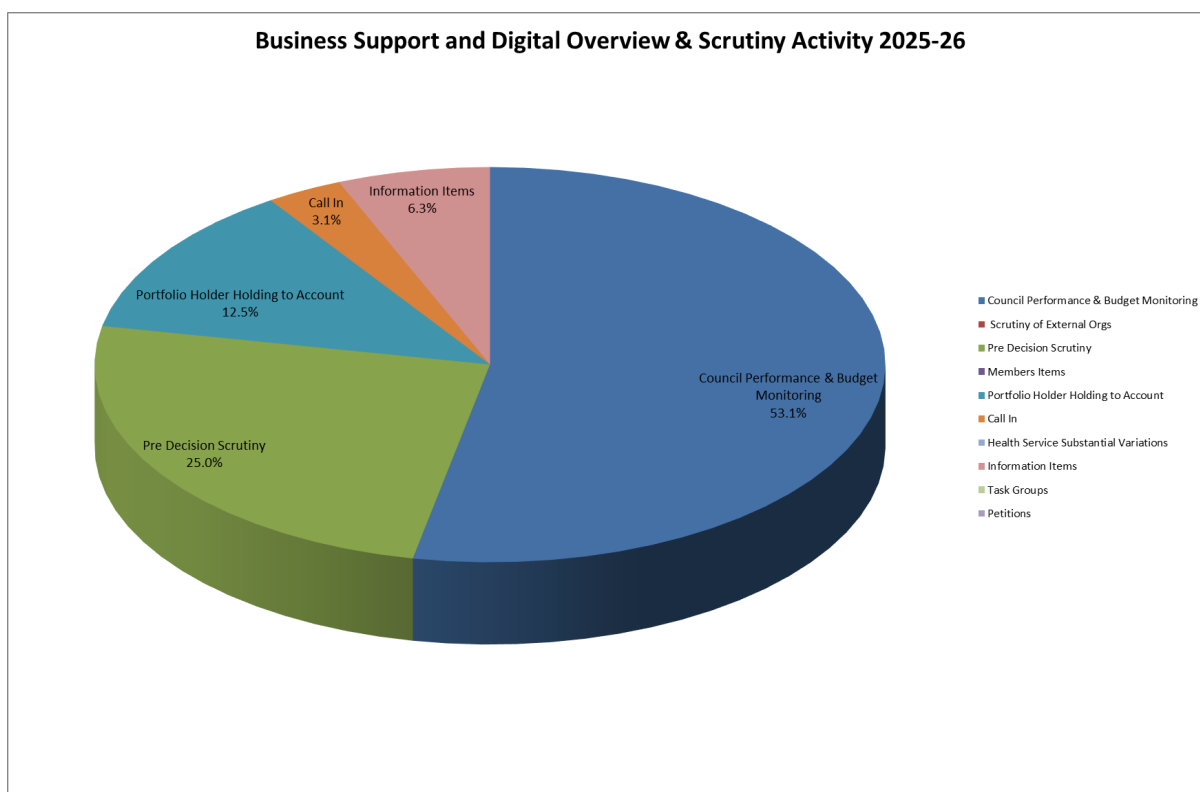


Table 1: Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity 2025-26

3.1. Key Outcomes

3.1.1. In June 2025, the Committee received a report detailing petitions received by the Council during the year, following discussion and review the Committee requested officers provide proposals to the Committee to improve the petition scheme, including accessibility of the scheme and whether the scope of the scheme should be widened to accept from third party websites. Officers made proposals in March 2026, and the Committee made proposals to Cabinet widen access to the petition scheme, including accepting petitions from third party websites, a review of thresholds for petitions to be considered by Council and enhancements in security of the Council's petition software.

3.1.2. In August 2025 the Committee undertook pre decision scrutiny of the Procurement Strategy 2025-30, the Committee proposed amendments to the Strategy to enable the Council to promote and prioritise local suppliers whilst ensuring the Council achieved the best value for money. The amendment strategy was adopted by Council and highlights the opportunities provided during pre-decision scrutiny to improve policy for Medway residents.

3.2. Call in

3.2.1. The Committee considered one call in during the year, this was in relation to the following Cabinet decisions:

3.2.2. The Cabinet agreed to progress the Medway option (option 4d) to a full business case and engage external support to assist with producing the business case (decision 133/2025).

3.2.3. The Cabinet agreed to engage the current provider, (to the Kent and Medway authorities collectively) KPMG as the lead, with others (if necessary), to support the Medway option (decision 134/2025).

3.2.4. The call in notice stated that the six Members expressly wished to explore:

- Financial prudence
- Change in strategic direction
- Scope and nature of the business case

3.2.5. The Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a special meeting on 2 October 2025 to consider the call in. Details of the discussion can be found [here](#). Following discussion, the Committee accepted the Cabinet decision and took no further action.

3.3. Holding the Executive to Account

3.3.1. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement was held to account on progress made by the Medway 2.0 project in October 2025. The Committee heard that a simplified process for reporting issues to the Council had been completed and this could be rolled out across over 70 processes to create significant efficiencies reducing the number of software applications and licenses required by the Council.

3.3.2. The Committee recognised the positive work that been undertaken with external partners, in particular the Council had been praised by JADU at the Local Government Association Annual Conference and received recognition for its implementation of Magic Notes software which significantly reduced the time taken by Social Workers in writing assessments and associated administration time.

3.3.3. The next year would see the development of the AI powered search engine Agent EX, which provided digital support to residents in any language and represented a step change in service provision.

3.3.4. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Regeneration attended the Committee in November about Climate Change. The Committee noted the positive progress made and barriers to Electric Vehicle charging rollout in the

area. The Committee noted the excellent work of the Household Waste Recycling Centres and recognised the opportunities to develop this service further. It also considered the progress of the Climate Change Action Plan which had been agreed by Council during the year and how the Climate Change Team supported this through securing grants and promoting awareness.

3.3.5. The Portfolio Holder for Business Management was held to Account in January 2026 on areas such as HR and Customer Service. The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that recent employee survey had shown an improved response from staff, with lower staff turnover. The Committee also heard that calls to the Council had dropped by around a third over the last two years due to improved digital services.

3.3.6. The Leader of the Council was held to account on 26 March 2026. The Committee scrutinised the Leader on issues such as Local Government Reorganisation, financial sustainability and the Crisis Resilience Fund. The Leader highlighted the proposals for a Community Supermarket to support those in need in the area. A government announcement on the future make up of Kent local government was expected in the summer of 2026, Members received assurance that Overview and Scrutiny would have further opportunities to provide scrutiny regarding LGR over the next year.

3.4. Policies and Strategies

3.4.1. The Committee undertook pre decision scrutiny on a number of policies and strategies during the year including the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-28 which was formally adopted by Cabinet on 26 August 2025. The Plan is focused reducing the Council carbon emissions, increasing resilience against the impacts of Climate Change for residents and improving awareness of the public. The Committee will review progress made in achieving the goals related to the plan in 2026-27.

3.4.2. The Committee reviewed the refresh of the One Medway Council Plan to ensure that Key Performance Indicators remained relevant and challenging to support the Council's vision that Medway is a place that people are proud of.

3.5. Updates

3.5.1. The Committee received a number of updates during the year which provided progress in relation to ongoing Council work. In June 2025, the Committee reviewed the CIPFA Assurance report which highlighted the Council provided value for money. The Committee also considered Complaints and compliments received by Customer Services and was pleased to note the positive ongoing work of the service.

3.5.2. The Committee received a further update on the progress of the Medway 2.0 delivery plan and workstreams, highlighting key projects to streamline and improve operations.

3.6. Performance and Monitoring

3.6.1. The Committee undertook regular quarterly scrutiny of the Council Capital and Revenue budgets. It also took a lead role in scrutinising the draft budget for the 2026-27. Members considered issues such as causes of the projected overspend, the costs of Exceptional Financial Support and sought and received reassurance of continued investment in critical functions areas such as ICT.

3.6.2. The Committee requested further development of the presentation of performance monitoring reports to aid effective scrutiny from members and promote understanding by the public. Initial proposals were considered by the Committee on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in November and further proposals will be presented to the Committee and Council in 2026-27.

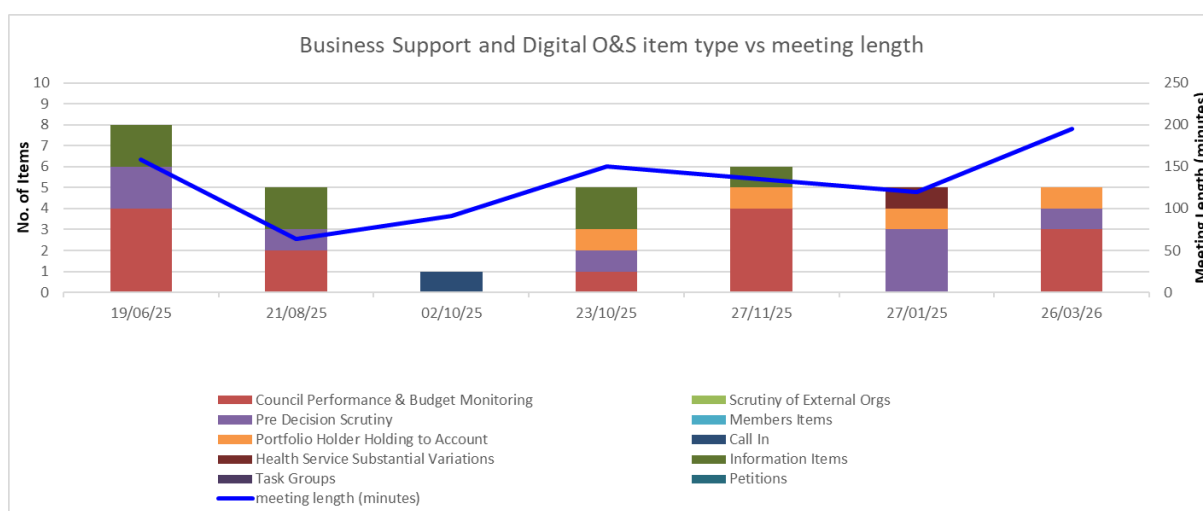


Table 2: Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting length 2025-26

4. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Joanne Howcroft-Scott
Chairperson

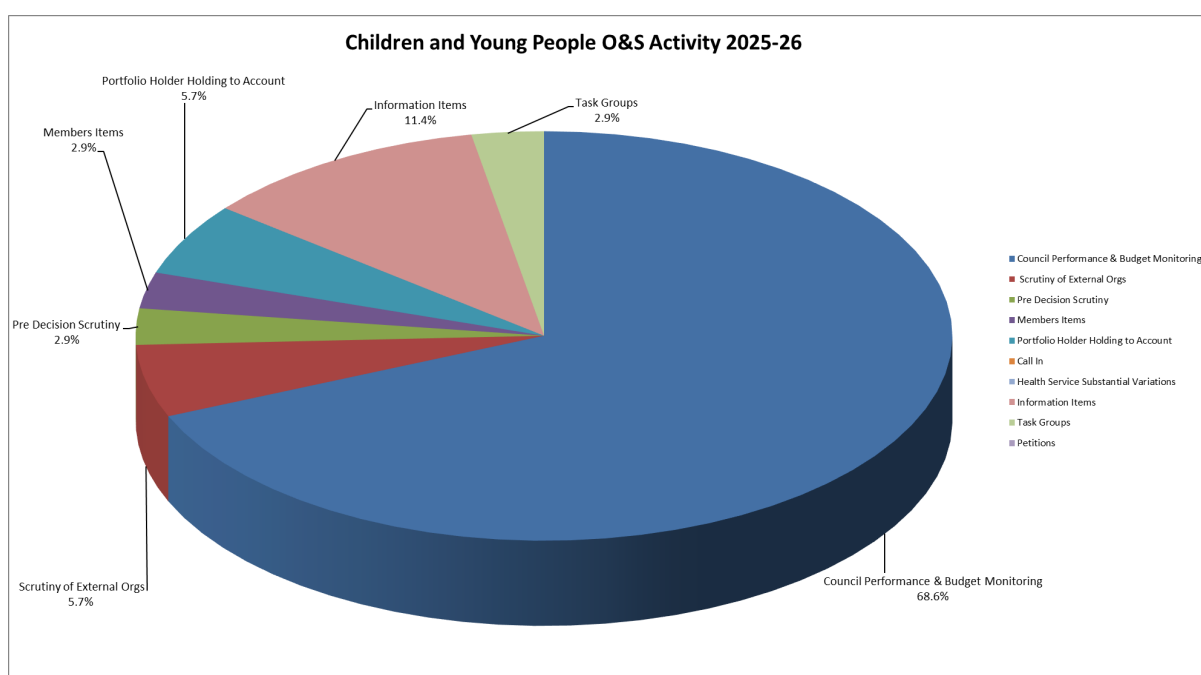


Table 3: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity 2025-26

4.1. Key outcomes

4.1.1. In October 2025, Members of the Committee undertook an Elective Home Education focus group review which was impactful in that as a result of the work undertaken, information was gathered by speaking to parents and carers on the reasons behind their decision to home educate. It enabled positive relationships to be built between families and the Council as they were able to share their experiences be listened to and feel like their voices were being heard. The result of the review was that recommendations were produced for the education team to work to start to address some of the issues identified.

4.1.2. The Committee considered an item at its October 2025 on taking a system wide approach on the commissioning and provision of health and support

services for Medway children and families, and the strategic shift towards early intervention. In attendance were partners from Home Start, Riverside Primary School and Medway Community Health Care, and extensive discussions took place on parent and carer ability to access support services, the importance of early intervention and the experience of families accessing services. The importance of a needs-based approach was discussed, Members stressed and were able to secure assurance on the importance of ensuring emerging needs would be met as a child progressed through various stages of life.

4.2. Children and Young People: Scrutiny, Partnership, and Impact

4.2.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to play a vital and principled role in championing the interests, wellbeing and aspirations of Medway's children and young people. Our work is grounded in partnership, transparency and a shared determination to improve outcomes particularly through strong, evidence led oversight of the Children and Young People Budget and reforms to Children's Social Care through the "Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive" policy and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2025).

4.2.2. We are proud of the sustained progress within children's services following Medway's Good ILACS judgement from Ofsted. Throughout the year, scrutiny has provided consistent, rigorous oversight of the Continuous Improvement Plan, ensuring that improvements in social work practice remain embedded, resilient and most importantly demonstrably improving the lived experience of children and families.

4.2.3. Despite a year of significant financial pressure, the Committee has remained unwavering in its commitment to protecting frontline services. We have consistently championed early help, prevention, and emotional wellbeing, recognising that investment in children and families is both a moral responsibility and a long-term commitment to Medway's future prosperity.

4.2.4. Listening has been one of our greatest strengths. Our Elective Home Education focus group placed lived experience at the heart of scrutiny, ensuring that parents, carers, and young people directly shaped our recommendations. This approach strengthened trust, improved relationships, and ensured policy development was grounded in real experience rather than assumption.

4.2.5. Partnership with children and young people continues to be central to our ethos. Through meaningful engagement with the Medway Youth Council and the Medway Young Mayors (which is currently being developed as a new initiative), scrutiny is enriched with challenge, insight, and ambition from those who understand first-hand what it means to grow up in Medway.

- 4.2.6.** As we look ahead, we remain resolutely committed to working with children and young people, ensuring their voices continue to shape decisions, services, and priorities across Medway.

4.3. Holding the Executive to Account

Children's Social Care

- 4.3.1.** The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services was held to account on matters within his portfolio and responded to questions from the Committee, including issues relating to recruitment to which he provided assurance that the Council continued to prioritise recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced staff who were rewarded for their hard work through competitive remuneration as well as opportunities for development and extensive support by the senior leadership team. The service was committed to establishing a high-performance workforce to meet the needs and improve outcomes for children of Medway.
- 4.3.2.** Councillor Price was congratulated for his award for his service to fostering and the Mockingbird model was commended for its impact and attracting foster carers back to Medway.

Education

- 4.3.3.** The Portfolio Holder for Education was held to account on matters within her portfolio and responded to questions from the Committee which included providing assurance that over 90% of pupils in Medway had been offered one of their preferred choices of school on National offer date. There was a strong relationship with leadership of schools including Academies and open discussions took place on a regular basis on expectations and aspirations for the young people of Medway. There were still challenges in improvement of attainment of some cohorts of children, however, the service continued to work extensively with all its partners, including health, on ensuring the best outcomes for children despite increase in demand for services.

4.4. Spotlight: Youth Voice in Scrutiny

Medway Youth Council and Medway Young Mayors

- 4.4.1.** Young people are active partners in scrutiny, not passive observers. Through co-opted membership and routine engagement, they bring insight, creativity and lived experience directly into democratic decision-making. Their perspectives strengthen accountability, influence priorities and ensure that services reflect the realities of growing up in Medway today.
- 4.4.2.** This partnership stands as a powerful example of youth voice at the heart of local democracy.

Strengthening Support for Kinship Carers

- 4.4.3.** Medway Council continues its strong commitment to kinship carers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and family friends who step forward when children cannot live with their parents. We recognise the stability, continuity and love that kinship families provide, and we remain focused on ensuring they receive the practical, financial, and emotional support they need.
- 4.4.4.** As of February 2026, Medway has been selected as one of just seven local authorities to participate in a national kinship care pilot, supported by the Department for Education. The programme is trialling increased and more consistent financial allowances for eligible kinship carers, bringing them closer in line with foster care rates.
- 4.4.5.** This is a significant and welcome step forward. It acknowledges the invaluable contribution of kinship carers and the need for fairness, stability, and security for the children they nurture.
- 4.4.6.** Supporting kinship families is not only the right thing to do, it is central to our wider ambition: keeping children safe, connected to their families wherever possible, and thriving within their communities.

4.5. Policies and Strategies

- 4.5.1.** Over the 2025/26 municipal year, the Committee considered various policies and strategies, including a progress update against the priorities in the Medway's Short Break Sufficiency Strategy (2024-27), which was adopted by Cabinet in October 2024. Members were provided information on additional Department for Education funding secured for the development and expansion of the short break provision at ROCC Rivermead Inclusive Trust and in the community, workforce development, resourcing, expansion of the offer available to families and investment in data intelligence.
- 4.5.2.** The Committee also considered proposed changes to the Education Travel Assistance Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement which aimed to improve awareness and overall experience of what the Council must do to facilitate travel to school and the eligibility criteria for support. The Committee challenged the proposed changes to the appeals hearing panel and were satisfied with the reasoning for the proposals.

4.6. Updates

- 4.6.1.** Members of the Committee participated in a focus group which undertook a mini review of Elective Home Education (EHE) and reported on its finding and emerging key themes identified. The reason for the focus group was to understand in more detail the drivers behind the decision to EHE as Medway has a growing number of parents and carers choosing to EHE their children.

The number is proportionally high when compared to the national average. The focus group carried out various activities such as online survey to parents and carers on the Council register for EHE and also invited parents and carers to face to face forums to discuss their decision to EHE. The information gathered enables collation of themes and recommendations made to address those issues highlighted.

4.7. Performance and Monitoring

4.7.1. Following the 2023 Ofsted ILACS inspection, in which Medway Children’s Services was judged good, an updated continuous improvement plan was agreed, with oversight maintained by the Continuous Improvement Board. In order to hold the service to account on progress of its areas of focus, Members agreed that it was important for a quarterly update report be presented to scrutinise the quality and impact and outcomes of social work practice for children and young people in Medway.

4.7.2. The Committee noted the demands on the budget and voiced the importance of maintaining firm line of sight on increased and pressures. It was, however, acknowledged that the service was a demand led service and the service worked extensively to plan and manage their budget. It was therefore vital that we continued to ensure that young people were provided with opportunities and services despite financial challenges to the Council.

4.8. Member Items

4.8.1. In August 2025 the Committee took an item on the implications of removal of VAT exemption for independent schools due to the closure of some schools in Medway and the concern as to the offer for those children. The Committee was assured that there was ongoing work to contact the families affected and support provided to find suitable alternative education provision required. It was also clarified that the removal of VAT exemption was not the determining factor in the closure of a particular school in Medway.

4.8.2. It was also clarified that the Council does not have admissions responsibilities for independent schools in the same way as it does for state-maintained schools.

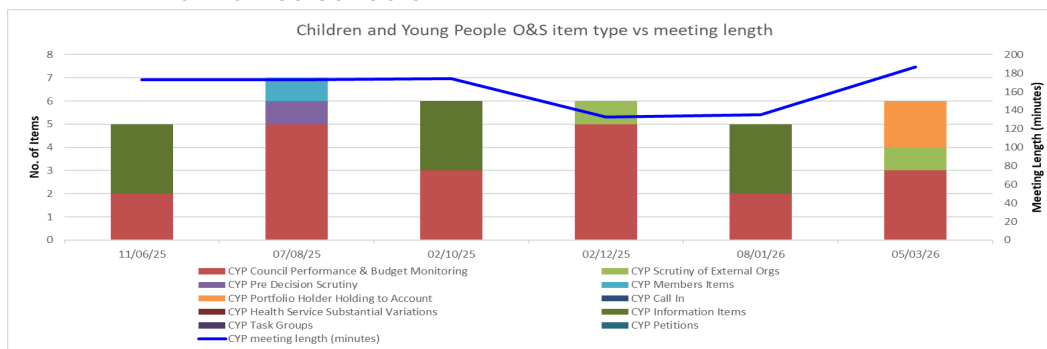


Table 4: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting length 2025-26

5. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor Dan McDonald
Chairperson**

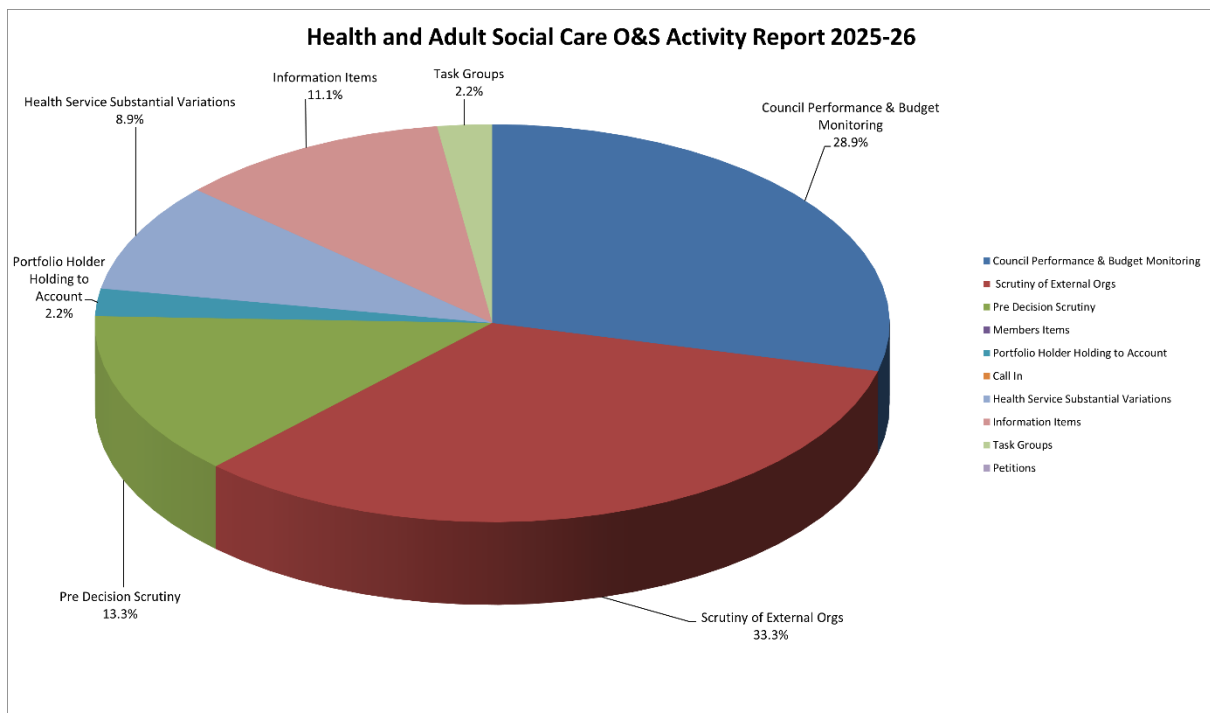


Table 5: Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity 2025-26

5.1. Key Outcomes

5.1.1. Pharmacy provision in Rainham, which had originated from a Member’s item in the previous municipal year, remained an area of focus for the Committee, compounded by its frustrations in the development of the latest Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) and the limitations in that, which led to the situation in Rainham regarding pharmacy provision not being adequately reflected. This led to further discussions and debate with the Deputy Leader (as Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board) and the Integrated Care Board. The Committee agreed to send a letter signed by both the Chairperson and the Director of Public Health to the Government,

requesting updated regulations in developing a PNA, in order to allow it to better reflect a situation in a locality and to enable commissioners to respond more promptly to need.

5.1.2. There has also been robust challenge of our health partners, particularly in relation to the performance of the Emergency Department at Medway Maritime Hospital and in relation to forthcoming contracts and transformation of community based health services and mental health services, to help ensure the best outcomes for Medway residents. In addition, the Committee have been holding our NHS partners to account in relation to changes in leadership arrangements, performance and in relation to other specific services such as Prosthetic Limbs Services and Ear, Nose and Throat Services. It has also considered updates relating to Adult Social Care which have been targeted to specific areas that had been raised by the CQC inspection of the service.

5.1.3. There are significant levels of activity within the NHS landscape, however, the Committee manages capacity the best it can managing competing priorities between health scrutiny and adult social care services, to continue to champion the best outcomes for the residents of Medway.

5.2. External scrutiny

5.2.1. A large part of the Committee's role is to carry out its statutory duty in scrutinising health service and provision in the local area. The 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.

5.2.2. 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. In particular, given the CQC inspection outcome of KMMH, the Committee has raised formal concerns about the trust's ability and readiness to also take on children's mental health services and all-age eating disorder services and is keeping this issue under regular scrutiny.

5.2.3. The Committee has challenged the Integrated Care Board (ICB) in relation to deciding to direct award the all age mental health contract to KMMH and has carried out robust scrutiny on this. The ICB is going through a large scale transformation and recently appointed a new Chief Executive and the Committee is working with the ICB to rebuild relationships to ensure they work appropriately, effectively and for the best of the people of Medway.

5.3. Holding the Executive to Account

- 5.3.1.** The Deputy Leader of the Council was held to account in October on the subject of Adult Social Care and Public Health. The Committee raised issues around pharmacy provision and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, the latter of which was the responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board, which was Chaired by the Deputy Leader. Other areas of discussion included Mental Health Services, Adult Social Care Services rightsizing, Marmot Place and relationships with health partners.
- 5.3.2.** The Deputy Leader shared the Committee's frustrations with regard to Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments and the restrictions around its formation and had been liaising with the local MPs on requesting the regulations to be updated. She supported the rightsizing which had helped improve standards but recognised that demand continued to rise. The Deputy Leader also confirmed that relationships with health partners in Medway were robust with a shared ambition to work together to make a positive difference and welcomed the challenge undertaken by the Committee on health related issues.

5.4. Policies and Strategies

- 5.4.1.** Over the 2025/26 municipal year, the Committee considered various policies and strategies, including the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy, a co-owned strategy by the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership which aimed at integrating work and health to support people with long term conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. The strategy was supported by the Committee and was approved by Cabinet on 26 August 2025.
- 5.4.2.** The Committee also considered the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy. The Committee questioned the decision to create a county wide strategy and one that covered both children and adults. Officers explained that the strategy benefitted from strong partnership approach with more targeted action plans underpinning it. The strategy was approved by the Cabinet on 10 February 2026.
- 5.4.3.** The Committee considered the Adult Social Care Strategy in January 2026, which had been refreshed to respond to increases in both demand and complexity of need and the resultant financial pressure. The Committee recognised the pressures Adult Social Care was under and recommended the strategy to Cabinet for approval, with the Strategy being approved by the Cabinet in March 2026.

5.5. Performance and Monitoring

5.5.1. The Committee provide regular quarterly scrutiny of the Council Capital and Revenue budgets and of the priorities within the One Medway Council Plan that fall within the remit of the Committee. Particular areas that the Committee have focused on are the overspend to the revenue budget due to increased demand and costs in Adult Social Care, along with numbers of locum staff and efforts being made to reduce that.

5.5.2. The Committee also considered the annual report and complaints and compliments in Adult Social Care and explored how proactive staff were in gaining feedback from service users and learning from that.

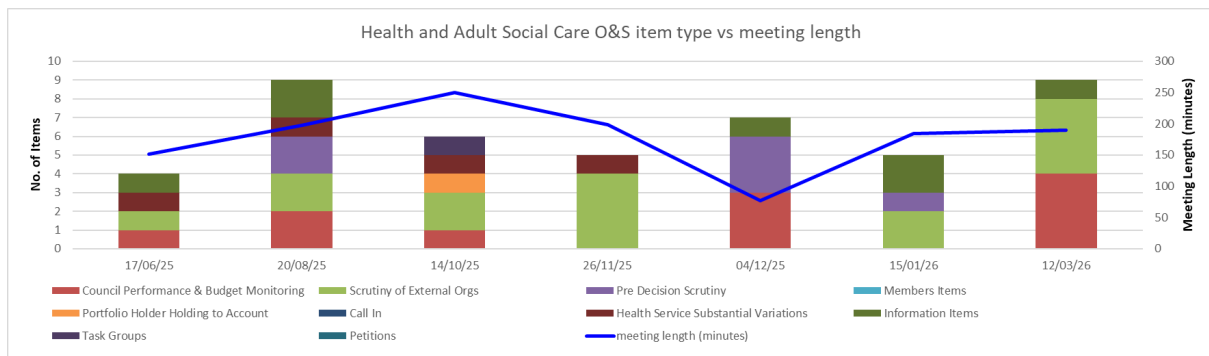


Table 6: Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity 2025-26

6. Regeneration Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor David Field
Chairperson

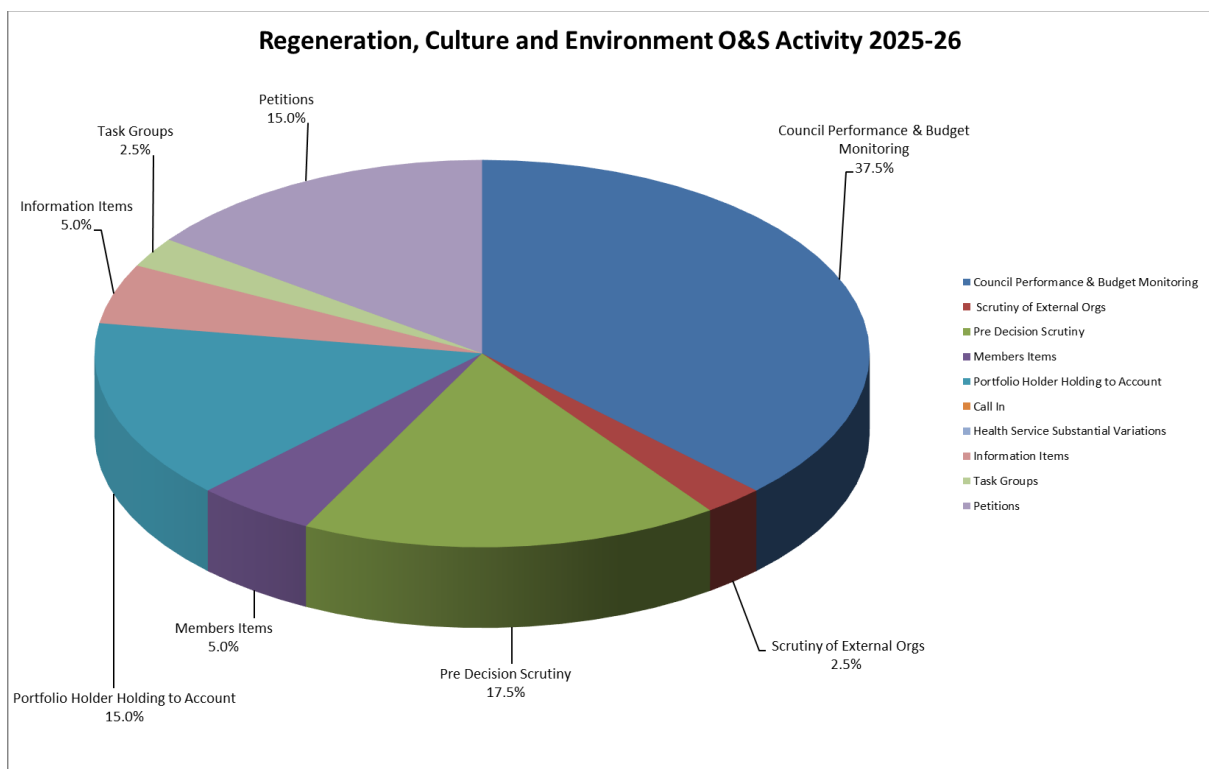


Table 7: Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee activity 2025-26

6.1. Key Outcomes

6.1.1. Annual scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership took place in December 2025, and all Key Stakeholders from the Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, the Probation Service, Public Health and the Integrated Care Board attended. This enabled the Committee to discuss how child grooming,

underage vape sales, electric scooters/off road bikes and violence against women and girls were being addressed. The Committee also discussed the response towards Operation Raise the Colours and the need to support all our communities.

- 6.1.2. The positive impact of the Chatham High Street Ambassadors on business confidence and public perception was also discussed.

6.2. Holding the Executive to Account

- 6.2.1. The Portfolio Holder for Business Management was held to account in June 2025 and the Committee noted progress with property disposals, RAAC remediation works at Gun Wharf, migration to SharePoint and progress with the refurbishment works at the Brook Theatre.
- 6.2.2. In August 2025 the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration reported to the Committee. The impact of development and the Local Plan, planning enforcement and transport, greenspaces and waste management were discussed. The Committee were updated on progress towards achieving net zero and moving towards electric waste fleet vehicles.
- 6.2.3. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement was held to account by the Committee in December 2025. The Committee noted the impact of emergency works and traffic management and member engagement that had taken place to minimise this and the refresh of CCTV technology that had taken place.
- 6.2.4. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness was held to account in January 2026. The Committee noted work to address the length of voids, progress with the purchase of temporary accommodation and the positive impact of the Tenants Panel. The potential impact of the Article 4 Direction and the Renters Rights Bill were also discussed.
- 6.2.5. In March 2026 the Portfolio Holders for Economic and Strategic Regeneration and Inward Investment and Heritage, Culture and Leisure were held to account. The Committee noted the award of Pride in Place funding, support provided to businesses and town centres and actions being taken to reduce the number of under 25 year olds not in education, employment or training. The Committee also noted the positive impact of events and theatres in Medway and the Chatham town centre culture bid.

6.3. Policies and Strategies

- 6.3.1. The Committee undertook pre-decision scrutiny on several policies and strategies during the year including the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028, Medway Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030 and Housing Allocations Policy Review 2025.

- 6.3.2.** With regards to Climate Change, the Committee wanted to see further information on progress with Electric Vehicle charging points and how relationships with wider partners could assist with Climate Change.
- 6.3.3.** The consideration of the Housing Allocations Policy allowed Members to improve their understanding of the role that bandings, community contribution and income eligibility played in allocating housing.
- 6.3.4.** The Committee were also given the opportunity to contribute to and comment on proposals for a Medway Greenspaces Bereavement Memorial Policy and recommended that Cabinet approve the adoption of the River Strategy.

6.4. Performance and Monitoring

- 6.4.1.** The Committee provides regular quarterly scrutiny of the Council Capital and Revenue budgets and of the priorities within the One Medway Council Plan that fall within the remit of the Committee.
- 6.4.2.** The Committee focused on the cost of repair works at Gun Wharf, information of PCN fines and bad debt and action being taken to increase employment in Medway, especially for young people aged 18-24.
- 6.4.3.** The Committee also considered the annual reviews of waste contracts and highways infrastructure contracts. With regards to waste contracts, the Committee discussed barriers to recruitment and ensured that future reports will include information on the diversity of the workforce.
- 6.4.4.** With regards to highways contracts, the Committee asked around the Amber rated performance of Medway Council in the Department for Transport's Road Maintenance Ratings.

6.5. Updates

- 6.5.1.** The Committee received a number of updates throughout the year highlighting ongoing work. As a result of concerns identified during performance monitoring, the Committee required further information on action being taken to increase employment for 18-24 year olds. The Get Kent and Medway Working Plan informed Members of the strategic approach to tackle unemployment and the Connect to Work scheme was highlighted with a good uptake in Medway. Progress with the plan will continue to be reported to the Committee.
- 6.5.2.** Following an update in December 2025 on the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Committee noted the positive impact on community organisations and suggested the use of heat maps to inform localised interventions in future.

6.5.3. In January 2026 the Committee received updates on the Infrastructure Funding Statement and the outcome of consultation on a Local Transport Plan. The Committee challenged officers to ensure that the consultation was representative of all community views including women, parents and carers as well as the need for significant improvements to public transport in Medway.

6.5.4. A monitoring and review report for School Streets Tranche 1 was considered in March 2026 and the Committee discussed displacement, air quality and collection rates and requested further information on exemption applications refused.

6.6. Member Items

6.6.1. Southern Water were held to account at the request of Members in June 2025. This allowed Members to question Southern Water on services provided, their business plan, high levels of executive payment, investment and projects and medium and long term plans for Medway. The item allowed Members to better understand the challenges Southern Water was facing and allowed them to ask Southern Water to provide further information to Members.

6.6.2. In March 2026 the Committee considered a Members Item on Facilities Management Contracts which enabled the Committee to scrutinise the decision making process and how the impact on staff had been managed and minimised. The Committee were also able to challenge officers to ensure that robust contract monitoring arrangements would be in place for the new contracts being implemented.

6.7. Petitions

6.7.1. The Committee considered 2 referred petitions In October 2025. The first petition related to opposition to the removal of a wall at Lordswood Lane, Chatham. The Committee heard from officers about the challenges of the site and options that had already been considered. As a result of the discussion officers were requested to investigate the viability of further options for the site and work with partners in doing so.

6.7.2. The second petition considered related to road safety signage at Wayfield Road, Chatham. The challenges of road safety in Wayfield Road were acknowledged and as a result it was added to the officer's work programme for 2026/27 to ensure all options for improving road safety were explored.

6.7.3. Regarding a petition to provide a direct school bus from Lordswood/Walderslade to Rainham School for Girls/The Howard School, Rainham, officers updated the Committee in January 2026 and explained that they were committed to revisiting the request now that the central government funding settlement was in place.

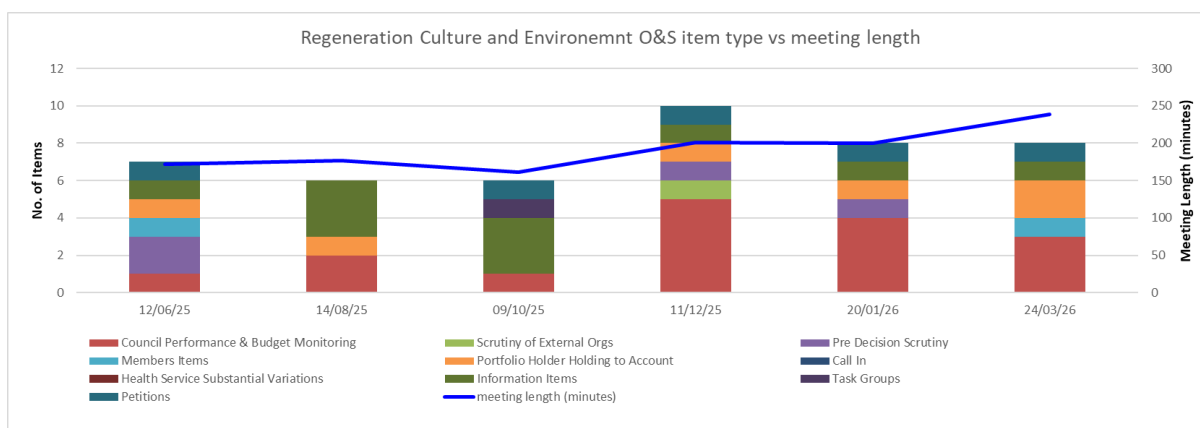


Table 8: Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting length 2025-26

7. Task Groups

7.1. The Air Quality, Public Transport and Active Travel Task Group completed its work in 2025, culminating in the Cabinet agreeing to all of the Task Group’s recommendations at its [November meeting](#), following consideration by the [Regeneration, Culture and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and the [Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#).

7.2. The following Members served on this Task Group:

- Councillor McDonald (Chairperson)
- Councillor Bowen
- Councillor Brake
- Councillor Crozer
- Councillor Field
- Councillor Jackson

7.3. The Task Group’s Terms of Reference were agreed by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee as follows:

1. Air Quality – how the wider Council services contribute to air quality ambitions and reporting.
2. Public Transport and Active Travel – Principles of how Public Transport and Active Travel can contribute to better air quality in Medway.
3. Public Health – Asthma (which we know is exacerbated by poor air quality).

7.4. The Task Group (TG) considered each theme in turn. A stakeholder event was held at the Corn Exchange, Rochester, to gather intelligence on the identified strands of the review. This included attendance by Council officers and NHS

partners. Further TG meetings took place under this strand, in relation to:

- Local Plan
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods
- Asthma



Photo of the stakeholder event run by the Task Group

- 7.5.** The Task Group also agreed a number of key lines of enquiry to inform its evidence gathering and recommendations:
- 7.6.** Air Quality – how the wider Council services contribute to air quality ambitions and reporting:
- Explore the effectiveness of internal reporting on progress against the Council’s air quality action plans.
 - How the environmental protection team are consulted and engaged on projects and policies across the Council which may have an impact on air quality.
- 7.7.** Public Transport and Active Travel – the principles of low traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and the potential benefits to communities across Medway:
- To consult with expert witnesses including other authorities that have implemented LTNs.
 - To explore evidence relating to the impact of LTNs on air quality and sustainable transport, emergency services, local businesses and other key stakeholders.
 - To consider the data required to support any implementation of LTN principles, links to wider local policy objectives and the requirements for consultation and engagement.
- 7.8.** Public Health – Asthma (which we know is exacerbated by poor air quality):
- Exploration of the impact of air quality in relation to asthma.
 - To consult with expert witnesses such as primary care and nursing staff.
 - To identify examples of best practice or work done to support improved

health outcomes in relation to asthma.

7.9. In reviewing the Task Group report, the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee also made the following recommendation to the Cabinet, namely that the Cabinet to agree that for all future scrutiny reviews, a member of the Corporate Management Team is identified to lead or sponsor the project. Along with the TG's formal recommendations, the Cabinet also agreed this specific recommendation.

7.10. The Task Group's recommendations will be monitored and reported back to Overview and Scrutiny later in 2026.

7.11. The next Task Group is on Medway 2.0 and initial work is underway.

8. Informal meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and Opposition Spokespersons

8.1. These meetings take place on a six monthly basis and enables leading Members from the four committees to meet with the Democratic Services team to discuss emerging issues, the aim of which is to strengthen the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

8.2. Issues discussed in the last 12 months have included:

- Format of the annual report.
- Meetings start times.
- Task Groups.
- Scrutiny of large developments outside the borough.
- Format of performance and risk reports.

9. Scrutiny Briefings

9.1. Corporate Finance delivered a presentation on 25 November 2025, to which all O&S members were invited to attend, ahead of the draft budget proposals being presented to all four O&S committees. Previously, Finance officers gave presentations ahead of each meeting, therefore, this enabled Members to be briefed together and ask questions on the budget to aid Members' understanding and improve scrutiny.

9.2. HASC have also held some development sessions on the ICB's transformation and on the use of Assistive Technology in Adult Social Care, the latter of which was opened up to all Members of the Council where Members could see some of the technology used to support our residents to remain as independent as possible and to live safe and fulfilled lives in their own homes.



Members at the HASC – Assistive technology session



Members at the HASC – Assistive technology session

- 9.3.** In the Spring of 2025 HASC also held a development session with the Integrated Care Board which provided a broad introduction to the NHS landscape, how the NHS is funded, the challenges the NHS faces and the opportunities for the future. It is also looking to hold a session on dementia awareness, which again will be opened up for all Members to attend so all can benefit from the additional information and advice which can assist them all in their roles as Councillors.
- 9.4.** CYP Members regularly take part in informal data workshop session where detailed analysis of performance data and other topic-specific information is undertaken. These sessions enhance Members' knowledge and support robust scrutiny within formal meetings.

10. Public engagement and involvement

- 10.1.** Local residents can get involved in Overview and Scrutiny in a number of ways. In particular, the Council's Petitions Scheme enables local residents to attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings to discuss petitions in relation to local issues, information for last year is set out in the RCE section.
- 10.2.** Overview and Scrutiny committee meetings are held in public, so local residents can attend meetings in person or watch them online via the Council's website.
- 10.3.** Both the Children and Young People and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees include co-opted members, these are individuals who represent particular sections of the local community, for example, schools, the Medway Youth Council and Healthwatch and they provide expert views to assist committee members.
- 10.4.** Task Group activity also often attracts input from residents, community groups and other key stakeholders. Groups are targeted depending on their relevance to a topic and the valuable evidence obtained from such discussions then helps shape the Task Group's recommendations.

11. General meeting information: Headline data for our overview and scrutiny committees

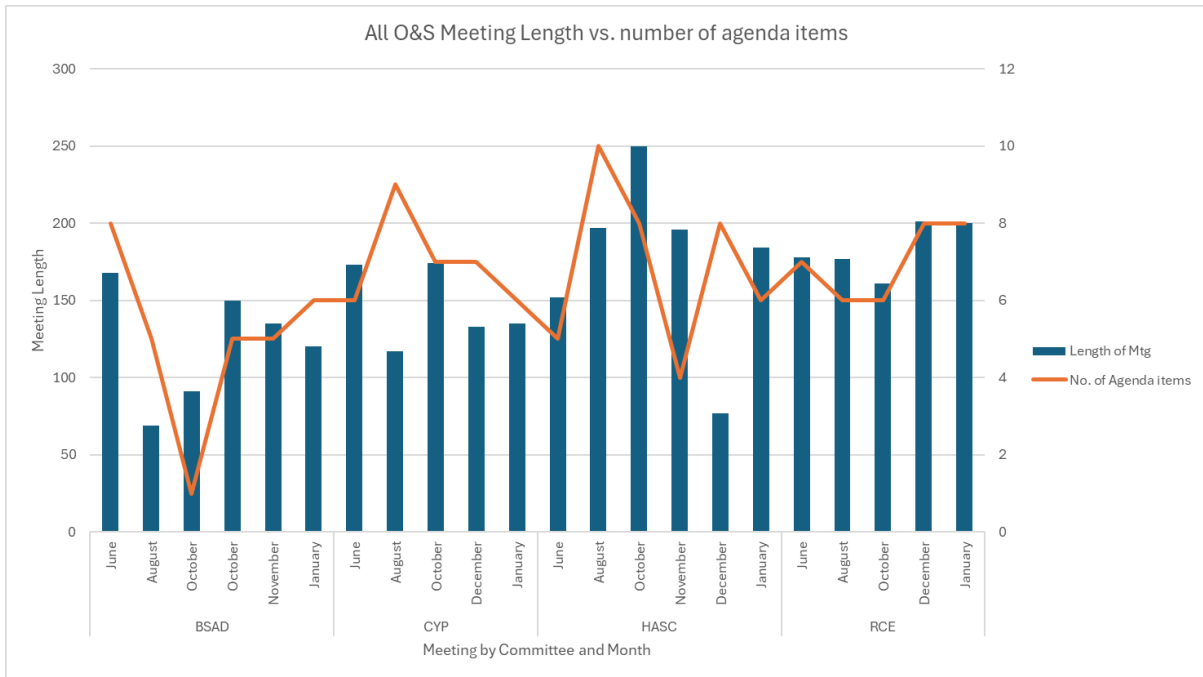


Table 9: Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting length and number of agenda items 2025-26

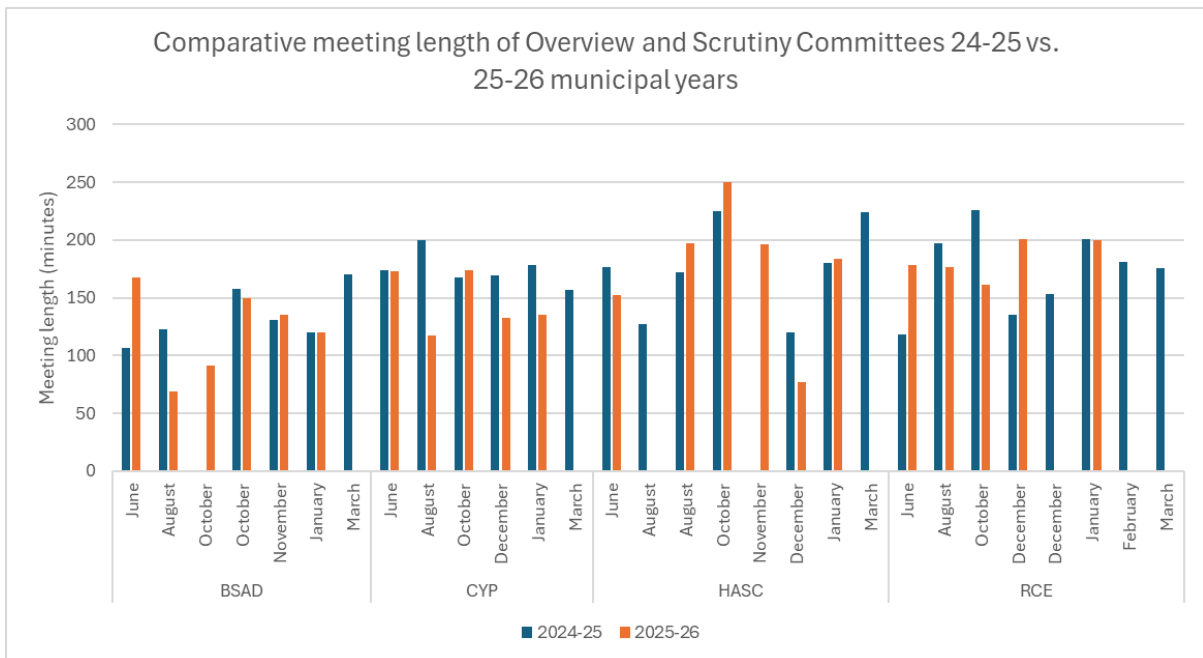


Table 10: Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting length 2024-25 and 2025-26

12. Looking ahead to 2026/27 and beyond

- 12.1.** The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee anticipate the reforms to the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill which will make important changes to the protection of children, improvement to education and increase local authority power with relation to children who are Elective Home Educated.
- 12.2.** As part of the plans to ensure that appropriate mental health and emotional wellbeing services are available for young people, a new Medway Therapeutic Alliance was formed which will be launched in April 2026, to provide increased early intervention for children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing. The benefit of a Medway specific Therapeutic Alliance is to ensure services are meeting the needs of Medway specific children and young people and not become a small part of a much larger Kent and Medway services progress and impact of which will be closely monitored by the Committee.
- 12.3.** Relationships between the Health and Adult Social Care Committee and our NHS partners have been under more pressure in recent times and therefore work is underway to develop a Memorandum of Understanding so that between the organisations they are able to operate in a space of mutual respect and expectations, from which a more productive and effective relationship for health scrutiny can thrive.
- 12.4.** As outlined earlier in this report, overview and scrutiny will have a valuable role to play regarding Local Government Reorganisation, to help ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new local authority for Medway and beyond.

13. Committee information

- 13.1.** All Overview and Scrutiny committee meetings are held in public, you can find out specific meeting information, including committee membership, agendas, reports and minutes [here](#).
- 13.2.** Meetings are usually held at 6.30pm at the St. George’s Centre, Pembroke, Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4UH. You can attend meetings in person or watch meetings live (or watch the recording after the meeting) via the Council’s website. Meeting date information can be found [here](#).
- 13.3.** Terms of Reference for each committee can be found in the Council’s Constitution, specifically sections 20 and 21 of part 4.05 (Overview and Scrutiny Rules) [here](#).

14. Work Programmes

14.1. Each Overview and Scrutiny committee has a work programme which sets out issues that it is planning to consider during the year, these can be found on each committee agenda.

15. Glossary

15.1. There are several charts provided throughout this document, in particular, the types of business considered at each meeting using the following headings:

- **BSAD** – Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- **Call ins** – where a Cabinet decision(s) is reviewed and scrutinised by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee, with a view to either accepting the Cabinet decision and taking no further action or referring the matter back to Cabinet or full Council for further consideration, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny rules.
- **Council performance and budget monitoring** – reports submitted to each overview and scrutiny committee on a quarterly basis setting out performance against the One Medway Council Plan and detailed budget (revenue and capital)
- **CYP** – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- **HASC** – Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- **Health Service substantial variations** – reports which indicate that a change of service provision proposed by the NHS may be classified as a substantial variation and the associated requirement for the NHS to consult with the relevant local authority(ies).
- **Information items** – reports provided to overview and scrutiny committees setting out updates on particular issues
- **Member items** – where a Member formally submits a particular item of business to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny rules.
- **Petitions** – reports providing updates to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee including, where necessary, petition referrals, which allows the lead petitioner to address the Committee in person
- **Portfolio Holders** – another term for Cabinet Members; each Cabinet Member will be held to account by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee for their performance in their role.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny** – reports setting out proposals for initial consideration by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee prior to final consideration by Cabinet and/or full Council. This allows overview and scrutiny to have the opportunity to shape Council policy.
- **RCE** – Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- **Scrutiny of external organisations** – reports and attendance by external organisations, particularly the NHS, and in the last year, Southern Water.

- **Task Groups** – reports setting out the focussed/time limited activity of Members on particular issues.

15.2. In addition, information is set out on length of meetings, including comparative data against number of agenda items and length of meetings in the previous municipal year.

16. Contact information

16.1. If you have a query or comment about this report or Overview and Scrutiny activity more generally, please contact democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

