

Cabinet

2 June 2026

Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Annual Update Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zoë Van Dyke, Portfolio Holder for Business Management

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Summary

This report provides an update of all activities of the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board over the last 12 months since the last Cabinet update on 3 June 2025. This is the second annual update in the programme cycle.

1. Recommendation

1.1. The Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

2.1. Full Council is responsible for agreeing to make additions to the Capital Programme and Cabinet is responsible for ensuring effective Capital Programme Delivery through Quarterly Capital Budget Monitoring Reports.

3. Budget and Policy Framework

3.1. A capital additions request for £22,000,000 for the refurbishment of Gun Wharf was agreed at Cabinet on 13 February 2024, followed by Full Council agreement on 29 February 2024. A budget virement of £263,266 from the Council Meeting Facilities scheme was also approved by the Director of Place in November 2024, leaving a total budget for this scheme of £22,263,266.

4. Background

4.1. Following a structural inspection of Gun Wharf in October 2023, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) planks were identified within the roof

space. The use of RAAC as a building material used during the 1950s to 1990s is well documented and was subject to Central Government advice.

- 4.2. Following guidance available at the time, the Council was forced to trigger its Business Continuity Management Plan(s) resulting in a reduced usable capacity at Gun Wharf.
- 4.3. The Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board was set up in September 2024 and is quite established. The Board is made up of senior officer representation from the Capital Projects Team, Financial and Business Improvement (including Technology), HR (People) and Communications. The Board is chaired by the Assistant Director of Regeneration, who also acts as the Corporate Programme Champion.
- 4.4. In terms of governance, the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme (GWIP) Board has the delegated authority to drive the day-to-day delivery of the programme and reports into the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB). Both boards meet monthly. The CLB acts as the sponsoring group. The CLB is a non-statutory cross-cutting Senior Officer Board that discharges corporate landlord functions on behalf of the Authority in accordance with corporate priorities; the relevant Director or Assistant Director uses their delegated authorities.
- 4.5. Although the programme came about due to the discovery of RAAC in Gun Wharf, the scope has evolved beyond the remediation and repair of the building. To note, no substantial repairs or refurbishment have been carried out since its opening in the late seventies, and it is well overdue on works that will ensure another 40+ years of effective operation. The scope now encompasses our aspirations of redesigning the interior and changing the way that we work and are perceived as an employer, including our aspiration to become an 'Employer of Choice' in an ever more competitive and dwindling recruitment pool for local authorities across the country.
- 4.6. This is an opportunity for us to 'reset' our working environment, evolving the culture and attitude towards Gun Wharf as our headquarters, looking at more creative and innovative spaces in the building. We want to provide good conditions for our staff and drive productivity with a building we can be proud of. A set of key principles for the building design were agreed by Corporate Landlord Board back in February 2025 and can be found in Appendix 1 to the report. These principles remain and have evolved as we have progressed with the programme in reflection of governance oversight and feedback.
- 4.7. The overriding priority within the programme is to ensure that the building is safe and fit for purpose. This includes an element of future proofing, so that we are not only addressing the building's current issues, but also proactively managing works and investing in improvements that will ensure the building's longevity after it is handed back for full operations.
- 4.8. Decisions are agreed on a prioritised basis reflecting the factors that are most important to Medway Council against the available budget to deliver the project, as defined based on the criteria below. Priority 1 indicates the

highest level of importance, while priority 5 signifies the lowest level of importance.



Image 1: Programme Prioritisation Hierarchy

- 4.9. The programme covers multiple workstreams, integrating not just the physical elements of the building but also the less tangible ‘people’ side. For example, we want to ensure that the building reflects our Council values and integrates equality, diversity and inclusion into the design, enabling a broader span of choice in employees, encouraging high productivity, staff retention and again taking the Council forward as an employer of choice.
- 4.10. External factors such as Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation have also been accounted for as much as we can at this stage. These inputs will all inform the final design, but it should be noted that as additional requirements emerge, these may affect delivery deadlines.
- 4.11. The programme works essentially fall into one of three phases:
- **Phase 1 (a & b)** involves the ongoing management of the Gun Wharf Office and has evolved to include the temporary relocation of services to facilitate the refurbishment.
 - **Phase 2** includes all tasks related to establishing the permanent layout and usage of the building. This phase includes the RAAC remediation, urgent roof maintenance, the creation of a new CCTV Monitoring Hub, the main building refurbishment works, technology improvements, comms and people engagement activities.
 - **Phase 3** will include all aspects post refurbishment and in-use operations.

5. GWIP Workstreams – Progress over the last 12 months

5.1. Phase 1a: Interim Management

- 5.1.1. Gun Wharf Transformation Officer role appointed. A Dedicated Gun Wharf Transformation Officer was appointed in January 2026 to provide day-to-day coordination and practical support to services throughout the decant and relocation activity. The role has been instrumental in helping teams clear workspaces in a consistent way, including support with file management and agreed retention/disposal processes, and ensuring that the right furniture, ICT and other equipment was identified, labelled and matched to individual teams' operational needs. This has helped to resolve issues quickly, maintain momentum across multiple moves and provide a clear point of contact for staff during the transition.
- 5.1.2. Service Manager Toolkits. All Service Managers were issued with a relocation toolkit to help them and their teams plan for, and manage, the move. The toolkit provided clear steps and timescales, practical checklists (including desk clear-down and IT requirements), FAQs and key points of contact. This supported a consistent approach across services and enabled managers to plan locally, respond to staff queries promptly and help reduce uncertainty.
- 5.1.3. Clearing of Levels 4 and 5. Both floors have now been fully cleared of furniture, equipment and remaining materials, with items either relocated, stored or disposed of in line with agreed processes. The areas have been left safe and accessible, ready for the principal contractor to take ownership and commence enabling works.
- 5.1.4. Level 3 decant. At the time of writing this report, Level 3 was in the process of being cleared and decanted, with teams completing desk clear-downs, file management activities and dismantling of office furniture and equipment. Meetings that would ordinarily have been held on this floor were relocated to alternative venues from 11 May onwards.

5.2. Phase 1b: Service Relocation Effort

- 5.2.1. Following engagement led by the Council's Capital Projects Team at the Kent Construction Expo in October 2025, and subsequent consultation with the construction industry, the Corporate Landlord Board recommended to Cabinet in November 2025 that Level 3 be decanted, alongside Levels 4 and 5 which were already out of bounds on safety grounds. The recommendation to decant Level 3 was made to provide the principal contractor with uninterrupted access to Levels 3, 4 and 5, reducing interfaces with occupied areas and enabling a safer and more efficient programme of works. This approach supports delivery to programme timescales and helps to secure value for money by reducing the need for repeated mobilisation, temporary segregation and phased working arrangements.

- 5.2.2. Detailed planning for the temporary relocation of services has been undertaken over the last six months, commencing in March 2026 and scheduled to conclude by the end of May 2026. This has been a significant programme of work, including the relocation of over 55 Council teams, the securing of new leases, delivery of staff consultation and drop-in sessions, the removal of furniture and equipment from Gun Wharf, the set-up of new premises, and the transfer of a full schedule of Council business for the next calendar year while Gun Wharf is refurbished.
- 5.2.3. Alternative office accommodation has been secured, with two sites located near the University Campus on Chatham Maritime. The majority of the People Directorate (including Adult Social Care, Education and Public Health) plus the Communications Team, Child Friendly Medway Team and part of our HR division will work from these locations. There are also plans for a front-facing element at Compass Centre, with further information to be shared more widely in due course.
- 5.2.4. Gun Wharf Level 2 will remain open throughout, but without public access (signage outside Gun Wharf will redirect the public to appropriate sites). The majority of the Business Support Directorate (which includes Legal and Governance; and Business, Finance and Information) will remain, alongside Facilities Management and the Parking Team. A reception for staff will also be temporarily located on this level (the riverside entrance).
- 5.2.5. A cluster of teams will work from satellite sites within the Council's property portfolio. These include:
- Planning is based at Strood Sports Centre.
 - Regeneration is informally based at the Innovation Centre.
 - Highways, Streetworks, Traffic Management and Transport are based at Pender House
 - Housing:
 - Landlord Services: Tenant Services & Property & Development Service [HRA] are based at Gun Wharf
 - Strategic Housing: Private Sector Housing & Strategy & Partnerships [includes Rough Sleepers Team] - will be based at Kingsley House
 - Remaining at Kingsley House: Housing Options, One Medway Lettings, Re-housing including Temporary Accommodation [level 1] - Front Door - ground floor including Domestic abuse services [housing], temporary accommodation and housing advice.

- Sports, Greenspaces and Climate Change will be based at various leisure sites throughout Medway.

5.2.6. Children Services will remain at Broadside, and Public Protection teams will remain at Deangate Ridge.

5.3. **Phase 2: Refurbishment and Redesign update**

5.3.1. RAAC Remediation and Roof Maintenance. Extensive RAAC remedial work was completed in March 2026, addressing the immediate structural risk associated with the RAAC planks identified within the roof space. This has enabled the programme to progress to the next stage of works, supported by ongoing monitoring and assurance processes. Essential roof and gulley maintenance works are continuing and remain on course to be completed in June 2026.

5.3.2. CCTV Monitoring Hub. The new CCTV Monitoring Hub has been delivered as the first project within the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme, through a partial remodelling of the existing data centre at Gun Wharf on Level 2. The project was successfully delivered to programme and has provided a dedicated, secure base for the Council's 24/7 CCTV operations. Kyndi Ltd, who operate CCTV services on behalf of Medway Council, transitioned from the former Strood Civic site and moved into the new premises in January 2026 (subject to finalising lease arrangements). The hub was officially opened by Cllr Simon Curry in February 2026.

5.3.3. Main Refurbishment Works. After a comprehensive and challenging procurement exercise, Apex Contractors Ltd were appointed as the principal building contractor to carry out the main Gun Wharf refurbishment works. Cabinet approved the decision on 7 April 2026. The contractor is scheduled to commence works on Levels 3, 4 and 5 by the start of June and aims to have these floors open by February 2027. Focus will then shift to the refurbishment of Level 2 and the basement level (Level 1), to be completed by the end of 2027.

5.4. **People Engagement & Communications**

5.4.1. Staff Roadshows. In September 2025, the GWIP Team held a series of drop-in roadshows to present the RIBA Stage 3 design proposals for the Gun Wharf refurbishment, including the developing layout, planned improvements, key constraints and anticipated build programme. Staff feedback was captured and used to inform the approach to RIBA Stage 4, including refinements to space planning and the provision of key facilities.

5.4.2. Staff Forums and Wider Engagement. Our People Engagement Lead has worked with a wide range of internal stakeholders, including corporate management, third party partners in Gun Wharf (the Ministry of Justice and Kyndi), staff forums and the Equalities Board, to gather views on key staff priorities and accessibility improvements for the

building. This engagement has helped the programme to understand how different groups experience the current working environment and to test emerging proposals against equality, diversity and inclusion requirements. Feedback has informed priorities for the next stage, including inclusive wayfinding, appropriate welfare and wellbeing facilities, and ensuring that spaces and technology support a range of working patterns and needs. In parallel, a suite of supporting staff policies is being developed, including 'How we work at Gun Wharf' and 'How we travel to Gun Wharf.' These will set expectations for day-to-day working arrangements in the refurbished building (including use of shared spaces, meeting and desk booking, collaboration etiquette and hybrid working practices) and provide practical guidance on access and travel options (including active travel, public transport, revised car parking arrangements and reasonable adjustments). The policies will be communicated ahead of re-occupation and kept under review during delivery and the Council's transition back to Gun Wharf next year, to support readiness for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

- 5.4.3. Council Visits. Towards the end of 2025, GWIP Board members visited the London Borough of Bromley and Canterbury City Council, for a second time, to benchmark their recent experiences of delivering major office refurbishments and service relocations. The visits provided practical insight into design choices, alongside lessons learnt on contractor performance management and the governance arrangements required to maintain pace and quality during delivery.
- 5.4.4. Extensive communications. Internal communications have reflected the fast-moving nature of the programme, with timely, targeted updates issued through the Council's established channels. Communications have been used to explain key decisions and changes, provide clarity on milestones and timescales, and set out what staff and Members need to do at each stage, including decant arrangements, changes to access and facilities, and updates on the refurbishment programme. A dedicated GWIP programme page on the Council intranet (MedSpace) signposts key information, and two-way engagement is supported through opportunities for staff and Members to ask questions and provide feedback via the dedicated email inbox. This enables the programme team to respond promptly, correct misinformation and adapt messaging as requirements evolve.
- 5.4.5. Gun Wharf Newsletter. The newsletter launched in early February 2026 and is issued on a six-weekly cycle, to provide a regular and accessible update for all staff. Each edition is tailored to share key programme milestones, progress against the programme timetable and upcoming activities during the refurbishment, alongside practical information to support staff through the changes (for example, key dates, what to expect next, points of contact and signposting to guidance). Feedback on the newsletter has been positive, with staff noting that regular updates help to improve understanding of the

programme and provide reassurance.

5.5. Technology

- 5.5.1. Updated Meeting Rooms and Council Chamber. The Council's ICT Department has developed a specification for the upgraded meeting rooms and the creation of a new flexible Council Chamber space to support modern ways of working. The specification is designed to enable a more adaptable layout and improved hybrid meeting capability, ensuring rooms can be configured to suit different types and sizes of meetings and Council business. Proposed enhancements include touchscreen voting, upgraded audio and visual technology, improved connectivity and a more consistent user experience, helping to support effective participation for Members and officers both in-room and when joining remotely.
- 5.5.2. Assisting with relocation effort. The Council's ICT Department has been integral in supporting the programme of staff moves and ensuring that new office locations are fully operational and ready for teams to relocate into. This has included planning and delivering network connectivity, set-up of end-user devices, telephony and printing arrangement. ICT colleagues have also provided on-site and remote support around key move dates to resolve issues quickly, working closely with Facilities Management, landlords and suppliers to coordinate installations and commissioning activities. Overall, this has represented a significant piece of work delivered alongside day-to-day operational responsibilities, helping to minimise disruption and provide staff with a reliable working environment.

5.6. Aesthetics / Artwork

- 5.6.1. The Council has been gifted, and owns and stores, a significant collection of civic artefacts, supported by an established catalogue of items of particular significance to the Medway towns. The collection includes items used for civic and ceremonial purposes, as well as historic objects and artworks associated with the area's heritage. As part of the refurbishment programme, the catalogue is being used to inform options for the display and interpretation of appropriate items within the refurbished building, including in public-facing areas and formal meeting spaces, ensuring items are handled, stored and displayed in line with relevant conservation and security considerations. This work will support a coherent approach to the look and feel of the refurbished building, while helping to celebrate local identity and enhance the visitor and staff experience.
- 5.6.2. The Culture Team will work closely with the principal contractor and client delivery team to ensure that the areas identified for civic artefacts are practical, secure and fit for purpose, and that they support an appropriate standard of presentation. This includes considering the most suitable locations and layouts, interpretation and signage, and any requirements relating to lighting, accessibility and

ongoing maintenance. The intention is to curate displays on a planned cycle aligned to the Culture Team’s programme and key civic dates, enabling items to be rotated and refreshed over time. This approach will support the long-term care of the collection by ensuring items are displayed for appropriate periods, with due regard to condition, conservation requirements and security, whilst also allowing themes to be developed that reflect Medway’s civic identity and heritage.

6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	To avoid or mitigate risk	Risk Rating
Programme Delivery	Delays to key milestones due to contractor mobilisation, sequencing of works, or interdependencies between refurbishment and service relocation activities.	Strong governance through the GWIP Board and Corporate Landlord Board, supported by regular progress reporting from the principal contractor and early escalation where slippage emerges.	BII
Health and safety during refurbishment works	Risk to staff, contractors or visitors arising from construction activity with an operational corporate headquarters, including residual RAAC related issues.	Clear separation between construction and occupied areas, supported by an approved Construction Phase Plan, ongoing statutory inspections and monitoring, and regular health and safety assurance reporting through the programme governance structure.	CII
Budget control and variation pressures	Inflation, unforeseen site conditions and change requests may drive cost increases. Wider geopolitical disruption, including the Iran War, may also increase energy and material prices and disrupt supply chains. Together, this would put agreed budgets at risk and/or requiring scope reprioritisation.	Active cost management and reporting; early surveys and intrusive investigations where required. Align decisions to the prioritisation hierarchy (see 4.8).	BII

Risk	Description	To avoid or mitigate risk	Risk Rating
Democratic services and Council business continuity	Refurbishment works, decants or technology changes may disrupt formal Council meetings, committees or public access.	Planned relocation and specification of alternative meeting facilities; ICT upgrades to support hybrid and flexible meeting formats; early engagement with Democratic Services and Members on scheduling and logistics.	CII
Stakeholder confidence and staff engagement	Prolonged decant periods and uncertainty during refurbishment may result in staff disengagement or reduced confidence in the programme.	Ongoing engagement and communications plan; GW Newsletter; regular briefings to managers and Staff Forums.	CII
LGR and policy uncertainty	Local Government Reorganisation or changing service models may affect accommodation requirements during delivery.	Design flexibility embedded in refurbishment; periodic review of assumptions; engagement with corporate policy leads to anticipate emerging requirements.	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

7. Consultation

- 7.1. Due to the consequential and high-profile nature of this programme, a sustained programme of consultation and engagement has been undertaken with staff, Members and key stakeholders over the last 12 months.
- 7.2. Consultation has been used to inform design development, shape the approach to service relocation and business continuity, and maintain transparency as the programme evolves.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019 and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 8.2. All Council officers have a responsibility to take action to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the services they provide, and this programme will help deliver that commitment by improving the environmental performance of the Council's corporate headquarters.
- 8.3. The refurbishment design is being developed using a 'fabric first' approach, prioritising measures that reduce energy demand before considering additional technologies. This includes upgrades to the building envelope and core elements, such as improving insulation and airtightness, enhancing window glazing and ensuring ventilation and heating solutions operate efficiently within the refurbished spaces. By reducing heat loss and improving the building's thermal performance, these measures are expected to lower operational energy consumption and associated carbon emissions, whilst also improving internal comfort and resilience for staff and visitors.
- 8.4. In addition, the programme will consider improvements to the external environment, including landscaping, tree planting, and enhancements to the wider grounds and car parking areas, to support biodiversity, sustainability and the overall quality of the site. Internal courtyard areas are also being reviewed with a focus on environmental enhancement and staff wellbeing, incorporating principles of biophilic design to maximise the physical and mental health benefits associated with increased connection to nature.
- 8.5. The overall approach forms an important contribution to delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and wider ambitions to reduce emissions from the corporate estate.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The total budget for the programme amounts to £22,263,266. This Reflects the capital additions approved by Full Council to support the refurbishment of Gun Wharf, together with a subsequent budget virement, as set out in section 2.2. The budget is intended to fund delivery of the agreed scope across the programme workstreams, including the main refurbishment works and associated enabling activity, professional fees and specialist surveys, and other costs necessary to support delivery and transition.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. The contracts for the works and services provided have been procured in conjunction with category management colleagues and have followed the Council's Contract Procedure rules.
- 10.2. As noted above, if there are changes required to where staff are contracted to work on a permanent basis this will require consultation as it will be a

change to the terms of employment.

- 10.3. A number of lease and Licence agreements are required to secure alternative accommodation for staff who have been, or will be, displaced as part of the project. Due to the urgency and short turn-around times between high level terms being agreed with landlords and the move in dates the project team had required these have all represented significant pieces of work and there is an increased risk associated with having to accept terms we would generally negotiate away from because of the lack of time. The impact of this is twofold, firstly there will need to be an increased level of vigilance to ensure that we do not breach lease terms which we usually would not have agreed to, for example very short payment times when we would usually ask for at least 28 days. Secondly this has diverted legal resources away from other areas such as the disposals project which forms part of the Council's FIT plan.

Lead officer contacts

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key principles

Background papers

None

Appendix 1: Gun Wharf Improvement Programme Key Principles

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Futureproofing: The building must be future-oriented/sufficiently versatile to accommodate long-term developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational headquarters: The building will continue as the headquarters for Medway Council staff. Residents will be able to access front-line services through Community Hubs situated throughout Medway. Staff at Gun Wharf will be available to signpost residents to their nearest location. Gun Wharf will be operational Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Chamber: Designed to accommodate up to 90 members at Gun Wharf, pending further investigation, confirming member numbers and capacity of the building.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Café: Provision of catering facilities and somewhere for staff to take a break and eat meals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Space: The building might have bookable space/meeting rooms for community activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Change: The building's operations will align with Medway's Climate Change Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational Timeline: The office will be operational for new ways of working in 2027
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reception: A secure and welcoming reception area will be established for officers and visitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility: The building will have an inclusive design and cater to physical, neurodiverse accessibility and equality needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listed Building: The works will be carried out in line with constraints (legislation)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site Footprint: The site footprint, including parking space, is fixed and cannot be increased or extended.