

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

Thursday, 11 June 2026

6.34pm to 10.01pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Field (Chairperson), Cook (Vice-Chairperson),
Brake, Bowen, Gilbourne, Hamilton, Jones, Kemp, Lawrence,
Myton, Peake, Vye and Williams

Substitutes: Councillors: Brake, Bowen, Jones and Kemp

In Attendance: Councillor Zoë Van Dyke, Portfolio Holder for Business
Management
Robert Banks, Capital Programme Manager
Pete Bates, Head of Facilities Management
Rob Carmen, Senior Transport Operations Officer
Nicola Couchman, Democratic Services Officer
Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking
Sunny Ee, Assistant Director Regeneration
Dave Harris, Chief Planning Officer
Gillian James, Assistant Director, Culture and Community
Michael Jennings, Arriva
Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture
Mr Dan McDonald
Catherine Smith, Head of Planning Policy
James Sutton, Sustainable Transport Manager

59 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, Doe, Etheridge and Nestorov.

60 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 12 May 2026 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

61 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

62 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Field informed the Committee that he works for London Buses and they have a contract with Arriva as a supplier but he is not in any way involved in this and therefore he does not need to withdraw from the meeting for item 6.

63 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Business Management

Discussion:

The Committee received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Van Dyke, which fell within the remit of this Committee.

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

Costs and compliance for transferred Medway Norse services – The Committee were informed that with regards to compliance and staffing costs including TUPE transfers, pensions and salary equalisation this was included in the £6million budgeted for the transfer of services. Officers explained how there had been some gaps in compliance and this would now be addressed by the hybrid model in place.

Funds from the sale of assets – The Committee noted the £19.5million realised from the sale of assets and confirmed that this had been fully received and was in the bank. Members queried whether this was being used to pay off debt as recommended by CIPFA and officers agreed to pass this query on to finance colleagues.

Debenhams Site – Members expressed disappointment at the time lost whilst waiting on the NHS to reach a decision as well as lost income and business rates. Officers explained that there had not been any other viable alternative, so opportunities were not lost. A speculative mixed use residential scheme is currently being explored and if progressed would not be in place until 2028/2029, but the site remains a challenge and there were no guarantees that this would proceed.

Rochester Pier progress on costings – This forms part of the River Strategy and officers will report back to Members on whether costings are available.

Registration and Bereavement Services – Members queried whether staff resource levels were adequate to continue delivering services with the caring approach required whilst demand was increasing. The Portfolio Holder reported that services were being monitored and procedures tweaked to achieve savings including a 35% saving on energy costs which can then be shifted into service delivery. Front line services will be asked to provide a further response outside of the meeting. Members also requested that data be benchmarked against neighbouring boroughs to provide a useful comparison.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the report.
- b) The Committee requested information on the costings for Rochester Pier.
- c) The Committee requested that data for registration and bereavement services be benchmarked against other local authorities and provided to Members.

64 Member's Item: Bus Services in Medway

Discussion:

Councillor Field introduced the Member's item and areas for discussion.

Mr Jennings explained that Arriva operate the majority of buses in Medway and the network is challenging with reduced patronage due to changes in work and retail habits. The Committee were informed that Medway had made a better than average recovery post Covid however traffic congestion was flagged as an issue.

Mr Kemp informed the Committee that Nu-Venture operate approximately 30 buses of which half are in Medway, and they have a close working relationship with officers. The impact of the Bus Service Improvement Programme (BSIP) was noted as was the challenging topography and geography in Medway.

Officers informed the Committee how data was used to identify areas that needed to be focused on as part of the BSIP and how quick wins that would make a difference were being addresses in the first few years.

Members queried how many buses were electric vehicles and Mr Jennings explained that Arriva had invested £5.5million in the last 2 years in vehicles and a refurbishment shop for interiors. The high costs of electric vehicles compared to diesel vehicles were noted as well as difficulties with depots for electric vehicles. Mr Jennings explained that 38% of the buses from the Gillingham

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depot were Euro 6 vehicles, 60% were Euro 5 vehicles and 2% were Euro 4 vehicles.

Members requested further information from officers on the costs associated with achieving net zero and how much it would cost to convert all vehicles to electric vehicles. Officers explained that there was currently no deadline in place for when you can no longer purchase diesel buses or heavy good vehicles.

Members expressed concern about the 133 and 191 bus routes on the peninsula and how they would be sufficient with the house building that is taking place. Mr Jennings explained that these were the most challenging routes due to the bottleneck in Strood and limited river crossings and Mr Kemp also noted the impact of congestion on services in Strood.

Officers informed the Committee that they were very aware of the issues in Strood and were exploring a potential red route to see if this would improve congestion as well as upgrading and optimising traffic signals to improve congestion. Improved punctuality was noted despite the challenges caused by congestion in Medway.

Members raised the issue of limited timetables in Rochester for the 156 service and the impact this had on older residents and whether there had been any engagement with older people. Mr Kemp explained that the 156 runs three times a day to a timetable prescribed by Medway Council, is funded by them and must work around the peak school bus services. Mr Kemp explained he would be happy to engage with officers and Members to discuss any issues.

The Committee discussed the challenges of balancing subsidised and commercial services with timetabling to meet residents needs.

The free bus services during Sweeps Festival and the community experience they provided was noted as was the good work of bus drivers in supporting the community when incidents occur.

The Committee discussed the future potential for integrated ticketing and were informed that daily and weekly integrated tickets were being explored initially as part of national initiatives.

The use of City Swift software to improve punctuality was explained by Mr Jennings and officers reported that this would also be available to smaller operators to help drive improvement.

The Committee noted the importance of infrastructure and bus services being in place from the early stages of new developments and officers reported that this was critical to the work of the Local Plan. Bus franchising and limited funding constraints for this were also discussed as was the limited financial viability of minibus services.

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Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the comments from officers and bus service providers in response to the Member's item.
- b) The Committee requested a briefing note on the impact of achieving net zero for bus services and potential costs of converting all vehicles to electric vehicles.

65 Member's Item: Southern Water Independent Customer Scrutiny Committee

Discussion:

Mr McDonald informed the Committee of his role as Chair of Accountable Water Kent (the independent Scrutiny Committee for Southern Water), that all meetings were being livestreamed and that Southern Water were publicly being held to account.

The Committee were informed that an annual report will be produced showing the recommendations of the scrutiny committee and how they are being acted on by Southern Water and this would be shared with all Members.

Members queried how the public can interact with the scrutiny function and were directed to the Southern Water website. Mr McDonald explained that all feedback is raised at the scrutiny meetings with Southern Water and customer witnesses can be invited to meetings to provide the customer voice. The Committee were informed that the next meeting would be about trust and communication and how this could be improved.

Members queried the costs of the scrutiny committee and were informed that Southern Water provide the room and meeting support and cover volunteers travel expenses.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the comments from Mr Dan McDonald in his capacity as Chair of Accountable Water Kent (a body who scrutinises Southern Water with an independent panel) in response to the Member's item.
- b) Mr McDonald will provide annual reports to Members of the Committee updating them on progress.

66 Medway Developer Contributions and Obligations Guide - Consultation

Discussion:

The Committee were informed that the guide needs updating in advance of the Local Plan to reflect costs and provide better opportunities to secure the best

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outcomes for Medway. The report will go to Cabinet for approval on 30 June as there was a short window of opportunity to get supplementary planning documents signed off.

Members expressed concern about the impact that the costs of bureaucracy could have on the viability of house building and were informed that it was essential to ensure the balance is right.

Members also discussed Section 106 funding and how it was possible to ensure it was directed to assist and improve the local area. Officers explained that contributions must be directly related to a development and offset the impact of it and quarterly meetings with services were held to ensure that contributions are spent on what it should be and spent on time.

Decision:

The Committee noted the content in the updated Guide published for consultation and provided comments in advance of the report to Cabinet.

67 Introduction of Mobile Homes Fee Policy

Discussion:

The Committee were informed that without a fee policy in place it would not be possible to cover the costs of regulating mobile home parks and the costs would fall to the general fund.

Members queried whether the policy included people living in mobile homes permanently on holiday parks, whether discretion would be used when issuing penalties and whether insulation would be checked during inspections. Officers agreed to produce a briefing note in response to Members queries.

In response to a query about whether homes occupied by the travelling community were counted as mobile homes, it was confirmed that gypsies and travellers were exempt from the licence fee.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted and submitted comments on the Mobile Homes Fee Policy to the Cabinet.
- b) Officers agreed to provide a briefing note for Members in response to the queries raised.

**68 The One Medway Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and
Strategic Risk Summary - Quarter 4 2025/26**

Discussion:

Members noted the change in some key risk profiles regarding overall government funding and an increase of risk in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff.

Decision:

- a) The Committee considered the Quarter 4 2025/26 progress of the performance indicators used to monitor progress of the Council's priorities, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) The Committee noted the Strategic Risk Summary, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

69 Petitions Report

Discussion:

The report was taken as read and Members did not have any queries.

Decision:

The Committee noted the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

70 Work programme

Discussion:

The report was taken as read and Members did not have any queries.

Decision:

- a) The Committee noted the report and changes set out in section 4.2 of this report and agreed the Work Programme as set out at Appendix A to the report.
- b) The Committee noted the action log as set out at Appendix B to the report.

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June 2026**

Chairperson

Date:

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