

Regeneration, Culture and Environment

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 August 2026

Petitions Report

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Summary

This report advises the Committee of petitions received by the Council which fall within the remit of this Committee including a summary of the responses sent to the petition organisers by officers.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Committee is requested to note the petition responses and appropriate officer actions in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. In summary, the Council's Petition Scheme requires the relevant Director to respond to the petition organiser, usually within 10 working days of the receipt of the petition by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are always advised of any petitions falling within their terms of reference together with the officer response. There is a right of referral of a petition for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the petitioners if they consider the Director's response to be inadequate. Should the Committee determine that the petition has not been dealt with adequately it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to Cabinet and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council.
- 2.2. The petition scheme is set out in full in the Council's Constitution at [Council rules](#).
- 2.3. Any budget or policy framework implications will be set out in the specific petition response.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council's Constitution provides that petitions received by the Council relating to matters within the remit of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be referred immediately to the relevant Director for consideration at officer level.
- 3.2. Where the Director is able to fully meet the request of the petitioners a response is sent setting out the proposed action and timescales for implementation.
- 3.3. For petitions where the petition organiser is not satisfied with the response provided by the Director there is provision for the petition organiser to request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps the Council has taken, or is proposing to take, in response to the petition.

4. Completed Petitions

- 4.1. The response to petitions relevant to this Committee that has been accepted by the petition organiser, with no request for referral to this Committee, are set out below.

4.2. **Subject of petition**

To review and amend the current dropped kerb guidelines, which are overly restrictive for our area.

4.2.1. **Summary of Medway Council's response**

We recognise the concerns raised regarding the current guidelines and the request for greater flexibility to enable residents to create off-street parking where space appears to permit.

The Council's existing vehicle crossing policy was introduced to ensure a consistent and robust approach across Medway. The criteria are designed to balance the needs of individual residents with the Council's wider responsibilities for highway safety, effective network management, drainage, and the protection of on-street parking and amenity.

The dimensional standards applied within the policy are based on established parking guidance and are aligned with those adopted by the Planning service for new residential developments. This ensures consistency across both existing properties and new housing, supporting safe and practical off-street parking arrangements.

At the last review of the policy, the Council gave careful consideration to emerging trends, including the increasing number of enquiries relating to electric vehicles and the need to facilitate off-street charging where possible. As a result, the dimensional requirements were reduced to the minimum acceptable standards, providing greater flexibility while still maintaining safety and usability.

The policy and associated guidelines were last reviewed in 2021, with the current dimensional standards having been in place since 2019. These standards will be reviewed again in due course to ensure they remain appropriate, proportionate, and reflective of local circumstances and changing parking demands.

4.3. Subject of petition

Medway Council to take urgent and meaningful action on issues that are causing serious and lasting harm to our businesses, our livelihoods, and the long-term viability of Chatham as a commercial centre including Parking, restrictions at Clover Street, Chatham, inspection of the trees on High St Chatham, Business Rate relief, access restrictions for businesses, and bus links at the east end of the High St.

4.3.1. Summary of Medway Council's response

Car Park Charges – Rhode Street/Medway Street Car Park

Parking tariffs across Medway, are set through the Council's annual Fees and Charges. This process involves consideration of the level and structure of charges across town centre car parks and takes into account a range of factors, including operating and maintenance costs, enforcement requirements, income needed to sustain parking services, wider transport and regeneration objectives, and the Council's overall financial position.

As part of the most recent review, the impact of previous increases and issues such as affordability and footfall were considered alongside these wider factors, rather than on a car park specific basis. The Council balanced these considerations against sustained financial pressures on local authority parking provision, including rising maintenance, enforcement and operational costs and were reviewed to ensure they remain broadly comparable with similar town centre car parks while maintaining the ongoing operation of the parking network.

With regard to the 30 minute charging band, this was introduced to support short stay parking and to facilitate quick visits. However, the Council acknowledges the concerns expressed by traders the effectiveness of the 30 minute tariff in supporting short retail visits will therefore be considered as part of ongoing monitoring.

The Dockside Outlet Centre is operates as a privately managed retail destination with a different funding and parking model, where parking is used as part of a wider commercial offer. Council operated town centre car parks must be self financing and support a range of statutory and non statutory functions, which limits the Council's ability to mirror private sector parking arrangements directly.

Parking occupancy and usage data across town centre car parks, including Rhode Street, will be monitored during the current financial year to understand patterns of demand and turnover. Observational feedback from businesses and users will be considered alongside this

data. While a mid year change to tariffs at an individual car park is not possible outside the approved Fees and Charges framework, feedback received through this petition will inform future reviews.

No-Entry Restriction on Clover Street

The Council recognises the importance of reliable and convenient access for deliveries and servicing in supporting businesses on Chatham High Street and understands the concerns raised through the petition.

Vehicle access to the High Street has, however, been subject to time limited restrictions for many years, with a pedestrian priority environment in place during the daytime.

Deliveries and servicing can continue to access the High Street between 5:00pm and 10:00am using established routes at Batchelor Street and Military Road. The access gate on Military Road is opened overnight to allow residents and businesses to access the area. Other access restrictions, such as those on Clover Street, have similarly been in place for a considerable period and reflect the physical constraints of the street.

While the Council acknowledges these arrangements may not meet the operational preferences of every business, in our view the current access arrangements continue to provide suitable and appropriate opportunities for business servicing, while maintaining a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians during the busiest parts of the day.

Overgrown Trees on Chatham High Street

We are sorry to hear of the continued nuisance traders have been experiencing. While trees provide our environment tangible benefits, including, but not limited to, carbon sequestration, air quality improvement, water conservation, biodiversity support/promotion and mental health improvements, we do recognise there are some downsides involved with their placement in an urban setting.

Medway Council has a tree management policy that we adhere to. The policy takes into account industry best practice and ensures we take the best approach when managing public trees, in the interest of preserving and promoting our urban forest in the context of biodiversity, public enjoyment, and combatting climate change.

It is essential that we adopt the correct approach when considering pruning and only do so to remedy either an arboriculturally recognised defect, or to resolve an obstruction. In most instances this means that trees will not be heavily pruned. We will continue to inspect the trees of Chatham High Street cyclically every three years and will remedy safety related defects as a priority. We will also raise any nuisance

abatement related pruning works deemed appropriate and in-keeping with Council policy.

Impact of Removal of Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief and Global Economic Outlook – A Recessionary Environment

The only way the Council could award relief to the whole of Chatham High Street would be a Full Council decision to make this determination; otherwise, decisions would be through individual applications.

If the Council were to award discretionary relief due to the loss of Retail Hospitality and Leisure relief, it would distort competition, (3.8c) of the Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Policy as all retail outlets face the same dilemma. There is also help available to those facing large increases in the form of supporting small business rate relief which has been automatically awarded generally limiting the increase each year to £800 although this can be higher in certain cases. To make the change requested, Cabinet would need to instruct officers to conduct a review and any new discretionary relief scheme under Section 47 would need a decision by Full Council.

Delivery Access After 10am to Chatham High Street

The Council understands the reasons behind the request raised and recognises the operational pressures faced by businesses trading on a busy High Street. The Council is always open to considering feedback on how the town centre functions.

However, the pedestrianisation of Chatham High Street during core daytime hours is a central and deliberate principle of the current highway arrangement. The primary objective is to provide a safe, clear, and attractive environment for pedestrians during the busiest periods of the day, supporting footfall, accessibility, and overall place quality. Introducing additional or more flexible vehicle access during these hours would dilute this principle and risk creating uncertainty for pedestrians about when and where vehicles may be present. Such uncertainty can increase the likelihood of conflict and presents particular risks for vulnerable users, including children, older people, and those with disabilities. Clear, consistent, and predictable restrictions are therefore essential to the safe and effective operation of a pedestrianised street.

The Council will continue to keep the operation of the High Street under review as part of its wider town centre management and transport planning activity. Any future consideration of changes would need to be supported by clear evidence and be compatible with the fundamental objective of maintaining a safe and predominantly pedestrian focused High Street. At this time, the Council does not consider that the suggestion to permit additional or more flexible vehicle access during daytime trading hours would be consistent with the objective of maintaining a safe and clearly pedestrian focused High Street.

Re-opening of the Old Bus Station at the East End of Chatham High Street

The bus stop and layby on Chatham High Street, adjacent to the former Go Outdoors building, were closed on a temporary basis to support safety and highway management arrangements associated with redevelopment works on the adjoining site. The closure was originally expected to be required only during the demolition phase of the development but has remained in place for longer than initially anticipated.

The Council recognises the concerns raised regarding the length of time the bus stop has been unavailable and the impact this has had on access to the eastern end of the High Street and surrounding businesses. Officers will liaise with the parties involved in the redevelopment to review the current status of the closure and to establish a timeline for reinstating the bus stop. The Council will seek to reinstate the bus stop as soon as this can be done safely, ensuring that public transport access to the eastern end of Chatham High Street is restored at the earliest practicable opportunity.

4.4. Subject of petition

Petition the council to Open Canal Road bus lane, Strood during busy periods.

4.4.1. Summary of Medway Council's response

The Council recognises that congestion on parts of the network serving Medway City Estate, particularly at peak times and when roadworks are present, can be frustrating for residents and commuters.

The Riverside link forms an important part of Medway's sustainable transport network. It provides a reliable, congestion-free connection between Strood and Medway City Estate for public transport and active travel, and in doing so encourages more sustainable journeys.

The route plays a role in supporting bus journey-time reliability and network resilience, particularly for services accessing a major employment area. Opening the link to general traffic would introduce additional congestion risk, undermining bus reliability and reducing the benefits currently delivered by the restriction.

In addition, the Council must ensure that its highway and traffic management decisions remain consistent with national bus policy and the commitments set out in Medway's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Department for Transport guidance places strong emphasis on maintaining and improving bus reliability through effective bus-priority measures, particularly where public funding is provided to support local bus services. These principles are reflected in Medway's own transport policies, which prioritise public transport, improve reliability and encourage modal shift away from private car use.

The exemptions for some vehicles are necessary to allow the Council and its partners to carry out statutory services and maintain essential infrastructure efficiently and effectively.

The Council keeps traffic conditions on Anthony's Way and surrounding roads under regular review as part of its network management duties. At present, while congestion does occur at peak periods, the available evidence does not indicate a level of disruption that would warrant further investigation under the Council's statutory network management duties.

For these reasons, the Council does not support opening Riverside to general traffic. We will, however, continue to monitor traffic conditions across Strood and Medway City Estate and will take appropriate action if circumstances materially change.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. The Council has a clear scheme for handling petitions set out in its Constitution. This ensures consistency and clarity of process, minimising the risk of complaints about the administration of petitions.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. Any financial implications arising from the issues raised by the petitions will be taken into account as part of the review of these matters. Actions referred to in the officer responses which are not within existing budgets, and any further activity, would require Cabinet and Council approval for budgetary additions if funding was available.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Rule 21.1 (xiv) in the Council's Constitution provides that the terms of reference of this Committee include the power to deal with petitions referred to the Committee under and in accordance with the Council's petition scheme.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None