

Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

22 October 2026

Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways & Enforcement

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alex Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways & Enforcement

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways & Enforcement in respect of Digital Services (including Medway 2.0) and Licensing (Executive Functions only). It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways & Enforcement, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- Digital Services (including Medway 2.0)
- Licensing (Executive Functions Only)

3. Background

3.1. I remain proud to have Portfolio Holder responsibility for Licensing and Digital Services, including the Medway 2.0 programme. During this reporting period, the programme has continued to deliver practical improvements for residents, staff, and the Council, whilst strengthening our financial resilience, digital capability, and readiness for future change.

3.2. I have maintained active oversight of the programme through regular engagement with senior officers and the Medway 2.0 Programme Board. I have focused challenge on delivery, benefits, risks, and value for money, whilst ensuring that activity remains aligned with the One Medway Council Plan and the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT)

Plan. The programme is increasingly concentrating its resources on changes that can improve services, reduce avoidable demand, prevent unnecessary expenditure, and deliver sustainable savings.

- 3.3. Medway 2.0 has contributed to savings across the Council within the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan, which has achieved savings/additional income of £24,350,859 in 2024/25, £28,817,000 in 2025/26 and has a target of £16,421,060 for 2026/27; giving total savings of £70m over the last 3 years. Projects directly attributable to Medway 2.0 have already achieved over £370,000 of savings in 2026/27.
- 3.4. The Licensing Team have been part of the Gravesham and Medway Shared Licensing Service since 2019. They are responsible for discharging Medway Council's licensing functions in terms of administering and regulating the licensing regimes in respect of:
 - Premises licences, Club Premises Certificates, Personal licences and Temporary Event Notices under the Licensing Act 2003
 - Taxi and Private Hire driver, vehicle and private hire operator licences
 - Gambling licences, registrations and permits
 - Sex establishment licences
 - Scrap metal licences
 - Charitable collection permits
 - Pavement Licences
 - Street trading consents
- 3.5. The team works collaboratively with internal departments such as Environmental Health, Public Health and Trading Standards and external partners including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and Home Office Immigration to ensure effective consultations and joined-up interventions.
- 3.6. Licensing has a Service Level Agreement in place with Medway's Environmental Enforcement Team, who carry out the compliance checks and enforcement in relation Scrap Metal and Street Trading. They work extremely hard to ensure that correct the advice is given to enquirers, and the appropriate enforcement is carried out against those not adhering to the law, their conditions and any policy requirements.
- 3.7. The Licensing Team have also started to work more closely with the Environmental Enforcement Team in relation to the enforcement of pavement licensing. Under this joint working arrangement, initial visits are carried out by Licensing Officers, with Environmental Enforcement Officers following up where non-compliance continues, drawing on the work they already undertake with businesses and their experience of Medway's high streets.
- 3.8. The team also liaise closely with other professionals across the Council and other Kent authorities through attendance at such groups as the Safety Advisory Group and Kent & Medway Regulatory Licensing Steering Group.
- 3.9. Officers ensure that licensable activities are appropriately licensed and compliance with licence conditions, through pro-active inspections and

reactive inspections following receipt of complaints; taking appropriate action when issues are identified. Over the last 6 months the team has taken a more focused enforcement approach which has seen an increase in licensing inspections within the Medway Towns, helping to drive up standards and compliance with licensing conditions.

3.10. The team continue to do a fantastic job of ensuring that licence applications are processed quickly and reliably, with 100% of applications often being issued within the targeted periods as reflected in their Key Performance statistics.

3.11. The team have carried out a several enforcement operations over the past year to ensure the safety of the public. These have included: specific joint operations with Kent Police supporting the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG) initiative and joint visits to problem venues with Kent Police and Medway's Environmental Protection Team.

4. Providing political leadership and challenge

4.1. I have continued to champion a joined-up approach to transformation, bringing together service design, data, technology, customer services, content, and operational expertise. This multidisciplinary model is enabling the Council to solve service problems as a whole, rather than treating technology as a standalone answer.

4.2. Governance has remained strong, with a formal Medway 2.0 programme board maintaining oversight, tracking progress, identifying and managing risks and issues, and capturing the benefits delivered.

4.3. Following changes to the timetable for Local Government Reorganisation, I have ensured that Medway 2.0 remains focused on the Council's immediate priorities whilst retaining a strong foundation for future reorganisation. Workstream governance, service discovery, and system-mapping activity have strengthened our understanding of dependencies, and discussions are continuing with neighbouring authorities where there may be opportunities for collaboration, particularly in relation to resident contact.

4.4. I have bi-monthly meetings with the Licensing Manager; Emily Lane-Blackwell, the Regulatory Services Manager; Emily Whittaker and the Head of Community Protection, Mark Lees, to discuss any new developments within the department, updates on policy reviews, enforcement activity and the status of the performance of the team. I have found these meetings to be very informative, and I have been able to provide political leadership and support in relation to the activities they are carrying out.

5. Championing the Interests of service users and Medway residents

5.1. A number of significant services have moved successfully into live operation. The Adult Social Care Online Financial Assessment Estimator is now fully live, giving residents a clearer and more accessible way to self-serve to understand potential care costs and improving the quality of information

available before a formal assessment. The Planning Historical Applications Portal has also gone live, improving access to historic planning records, while new houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing content and MetaStreet-enabled application processes are making applications clearer and easier to complete.

- 5.2. The Medway 2.0 programme has continued to improve how residents report issues and communicate with the Council. Following the completion of the legacy Customer Relationship Management system “lift and shift” project, further improvements are being made to online forms, confirmation messages, workflows, and customer journeys. Most internal customer service forms have now been retrofitted with a street-search facility, making it easier for staff to submit accurate reports on behalf of residents. Work on corporate complaints has also progressed through co-design with complaint handlers, helping to shape a more consistent and efficient end-to-end process.
- 5.3. Customer call volumes remain approximately 45% below the 2019/20 baseline, demonstrating that the major reduction achieved through Medway 2.0 is being sustained. Talkative AI is now embedded within customer services providing a voice AI facility and a stronger platform for the next stages of resident contact transformation. Development is progressing on improved call routing, automated abandoned vehicle reporting, customer self-service, and voice-assisted completion of online forms. Together, these developments have the potential to make services easier to access whilst reducing avoidable manual activity.
- 5.4. Current Licensing figures
- 5.5. The Licensing team currently look after some 2384 licences for Medway, as broken down in the table below:

	Currently issued	Currently suspended
LA03 Premises	770	62
LA03 Club Premises Certificates	48	1
GA05 Premises Licence	35	0
GA05 Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permit	27	0
GA05 Club Machine Permit	28	0
GA05 Club Gaming Permit	0	0
GA05 Notification of two or less machines	59	0
GA05 Small Society Lottery Registration	70	0
Prize Gaming Permit	2	0
HC&PH Driver Licence	552	25
HC&PH Vehicle Licence	549	32
HC&PH Temporary Vehicle Licence	3	0
PH Operator	53	1
Pavement Licence	21	0
SMDA Site Licence	8	0
SMDA Collector Licence	14	0

- 5.6. The impressive scale of these figures goes some way to demonstrate the significant amount of processing, compliance and enforcement activity that Licensing undertake.
- 5.7. Premises licence and Club Premises Certificate suspensions are issued following non-payment of annual maintenance fees, and the suspensions are lifted only once the debt is cleared. Chasing payment of outstanding fees is a necessary, ongoing and time-consuming task.
- 5.8. Licensing receives weekly reports which show licensees that have failed to provide a document that is required to continue to stay licensed. These reports are processed and suspensions issued where required.
- 5.9. Driver licence suspensions are issued for a variety of reasons including non-compliance with policy requirements such as failure to provide: a medical, valid Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate and valid DVLA driving licence.
- 5.10. Vehicle licence suspensions are usually issued for non-compliance with vehicle specifications often due to damage incurred following an accident, failure to obtain an MOT and failure to provide a valid insurance certificate.
- 5.11. Private hire operator suspensions are usually issued for failure to submit public liability insurance.
- 5.12. This list is not exhaustive.

6. Modernising technology, data, and decision-making

- 6.1. I am pleased with the continued progress in strengthening the Council's technology and data foundations. Access PaySuite Phase 1 was implemented successfully, replacing the legacy ICON platform and modernising online, telephone, and face-to-face income collection with minimal disruption. Phase 2 is now progressing, including work to support secure card payments while customers remain in conversation with an adviser.
- 6.2. The in-house developed Orion insurance and asset management solution is now live and is being positively received by the service. This demonstrates the value of using our internal ICT development capability where it offers a better and more proportionate solution. Speech Scribe has completed final user acceptance testing and is moving towards wider organisational rollout, providing a solution for all staff to record, transcribe, summarise and minute meetings utilising AI. Early use has been highly positive, showing strong potential to reduce administrative effort and improve productivity across a range of services.
- 6.3. The Single View of Child has completed user acceptance testing, establishing the foundations for improved multi-agency insight and earlier intervention. The wider data platform has also progressed through the development of its reporting architecture and knowledge transfer. Nexa Performance has gone

live, with positive feedback from Members on the Q1 Performance reporting, and the next phase will introduce improved risk reporting. These capabilities will support more consistent performance management and better-informed decision-making and scrutiny.

7. Strengthening resilience and delivering value

- 7.1. The Medway 2.0 programme has delivered important improvements to cyber security and infrastructure. Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation has been achieved for Kyndi, and the annual ICT Health Check recorded fewer vulnerabilities than the previous year across every category. This provides clear evidence that remediation activity and stronger technical controls are in place. The upgrade of our Microsoft licencing arrangements has also further improved the Council's cyber security posture and resilience.
- 7.2. The long-running decommissioning of the legacy Strood Civic Centre CCTV Control Room, often referred to as "the bunker", has also now been completed. This is a significant achievement that removes outdated infrastructure, improves resilience, and has increased the strategic property value of this site.
- 7.3. I have placed increased emphasis on identifying transformation-led savings and avoiding unnecessary expenditure. Opportunities are being developed across highways, waste, customer contact, housing, property and asset management, and income management. I have also supported stronger challenge before new systems are purchased, ensuring that the Council considers existing products, shared capabilities, and in-house development first. This approach protects public money and helps concentrate scarce resources on the areas of greatest benefit.

8. Support for key service areas

- 8.1. **Adult Social Care:** delivered the online Financial Assessment Estimator and progressed opportunities for AI-assisted customer contact and document handling.
- 8.2. **Children and Families:** completed user acceptance testing for the Single View of Child, creating a platform for stronger insight and earlier intervention.
- 8.3. **Customer Services:** sustained the significant reduction in call volumes, embedded Talkative AI, and developed further automation and self-service opportunities.
- 8.4. **Finance and Income:** successfully implemented Access PaySuite Phase 1 and began the next phase of secure payment improvements.
- 8.5. **Waste and Highways:** completed frontline observations and service reviews, identifying opportunities to improve customer journeys, reduce failure demand, and support future efficiencies.

- 8.6. **Performance and Risk:** launched Nexa Performance, progressed Nexa Risk, and strengthened the data platform that supports organisational reporting.
- 8.7. **Technology and Cyber Security:** Supported with achievement of Cyber Essentials Plus for Kyndi, improved ICT Health Check results, and completed the legacy CCTV control room decommissioning.
- 8.8. **Archives and Digital Access:** progressed the World War II archives work and continued the programme of SharePoint site development and migration.
- 8.9. Licensing
- 8.10. Following the implementation of the Taxi Tariff Review Policy in July 2025, a review of the tariff was carried out. This included a consultation with all of Medway's hackney carriage and private hire licence holders. Responses received through the consultation and a lack of objection during the public consultation resulted in an increase in the tariff and inclusion of Christmas and New Year as a permeant component of the tariff card. The new tariff took effect from 10 December 2026.
- 8.11. A review and public consultation on Medway's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy took place at the beginning of 2026. Responses received through the consultation resulted in amendments to the policy going forward, and the revised policy was implemented in May 2026.
- 8.12. Work has progressed on the review of Medway's Cumulative Impact Assessment, including consideration of the effectiveness of the current arrangements. Views are currently being sought on possible changes to those arrangements, as well as on alternative strategies, to inform the next stage of the review.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. Medway 2.0 continues to demonstrate that well-governed transformation can deliver practical improvements, strengthen resilience, and support the Council's financial sustainability. During this period, we have moved major products into live service, improved access for residents, modernised core technology, strengthened cyber security, and built better data and reporting capability.
- 9.2. I will continue to provide clear political oversight and challenge, ensuring that the programme remains focused on measurable outcomes, value for money, and the needs of Medway residents.
- 9.3. I would like to thank the officers and partners whose expertise, commitment, and collaborative approach have made this progress possible. The programme has strong foundations, a clear focus, and a growing record of successful delivery, and I remain confident that it will continue to make a significant contribution to a more efficient, accessible, and sustainable

Council.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None