



*making local matter more*

# News

Chatham ■ Rochester ■ Gillingham ■ Rainham ■ Stro

In a new drive to rid our streets of violent robberies and prostitution, one councillor proposes the unthinkable...

# 'Free heroin for addicts'

Report by **George Nott**  
george.nott@krmmedia.co.uk

**HEROIN** addicts in Chatham should be given hits for free on the NHS, according to a councillor.  
Tory Cllr Craig Mackinlay is calling for heavy users to be given two doses of pharmaceutical-grade heroin a day, at an annual cost of £15,000 per addict.

It is hoped the controversial, taxpayer-funded scheme would cut crimes like theft and prostitution, often committed to fund users' addictions.

The Randomised Injecting Opioid Treatment Trial is already being piloted in Brighton, London and Darlington and has cut the number of crimes users commit.

Cllr Mackinlay said: "The only downside is the cost - three times the cost of usual Methadone treatment. This is a small price to pay. If the additional annual cost of £10,000 per



user under treatment is equated to the 300 crimes saved per year per user, this represents unbelievably good value to the community."

Among the trial group of 127 "entrenched" users, weekly spending on street drugs fell from £300 to £50 in six months. Crimes to fund their habits fell from 40 per month per user to just 13.

Marty Brogan sees the damage the Class-A narcotic can do to people's lives every day. He is manager of outreach centre Caring Hands in New Road Avenue, Chatham, at the heart of Medway's red-light district.

He said: "If the plan was to round up all the heroin addicts and shoot them, there would be outrage. It's as good as that. Giving them free drugs will lead to their death. It's not a treatment - it doesn't help them in any way.

"The physical drug addiction is only part of the problem. You have to focus on these people's

To page 3



**Drug danger:** A user injects into his groin in Chatham. Inset left, Cllr Craig Mackinlay wants heavy users to receive drugs on the NHS