



**MAIDSTONE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
BUSINESS PLAN 2004-05**

Executive Summary

This Business Plan identifies that the fundamental issues for the economy in the Borough of Maidstone, which are to improve the quality of jobs within the area through the attraction of investment and up-skilling of the workforce to ensure higher earnings levels and better prosperity, to improve the sites available for inward investment to generate these high quality jobs through the release of land around the motorway junctions on the M20. Improvements to road, rail and communications infrastructure to ensure that the area is accessible and therefore attractive for investment and indigenous growth. The quality of the areas image and environment are also crucial not only in attracting visitors to the area, but also in attracting business and investment to the area. The area also has a number of more deprived areas, which need improvements to ensure a better quality of life for residents within the Borough.

These issues are the key priorities that this Business Plan aims to improve in 2004/05. These issues can be summarised in six priority themes for activity. These are:

- **Targeted improvements to conditions in areas of deprivation;**
- **Improvements to the Town Centre to enhance its role for the area;**
- **Transport and communications improvements to unlock the areas potential;**
- **Better quality jobs**
- **Better quality development sites**
- **Better quality Image.**

Targeted improvements to conditions in areas of deprivation – With the Borough of Maidstone's success in its partnership with Ashford Borough Council, Shepway District Council, and Kent County Council (Channel Corridor Partnership), the Borough is now in the position to benefit from the £700,000 of Single Pot Funding for the Channel Corridor area in 2004/05. The crucial aspect to this will be the development of a performance plan and action plan for the area, and the development of projects to take forward improvements in the Channel Corridor and Maidstone areas. This is an exciting time for the regeneration of Maidstone's more deprived areas.

Housing is an important element in assessing deprivation, and as is the case in many areas of the South East, affordable housing is being raised as an increasingly essential element as house prices continue to rise above the rate of inflation and key workers are finding it more and more difficult to live within their means in this region. Balancing the Housing Market has therefore been recognised as one of the Council's seven key corporate priorities, and is a key aspect affecting the ability of local companies to recruit staff.

Improvements to the Town Centre to enhance its role for the area – With over £200 million of investment going into the town centre, through office, retail and residential developments, the town is in a period of change. This investment is represented well by the new £100 million Fremlin Walk Retail Development, which is due to be completed in spring 2005. The town centre is one of only 23 pilot Business

Improvement District (BID) areas in the Country, providing the opportunity to take forward improvements that businesses want to see within the town centre area. The success of the BID hinges on the development of a business plan with actions and activities that businesses want to invest in. This provides a considerable challenge for Town Centre Management and the Council. Bringing forward key sites such as Maidstone East Station will also help to provide opportunities for investment as well as improvements to the station itself. The Council will seek to bring forward this site to further improve the Town Centre. The formulation of a strategy for the town centre in 2004/05 will assist in driving forward the town's ambitions over the next 5 years. This theme clearly demonstrates that retail is an important sector for the Borough of Maidstone as a whole, and the vitality of Maidstone Town Centre.

Transport and communications improvements to unlock the areas potential – The Council has been campaigning for the development of the All Saints Link Road and Leeds Langley Bypass for a number of years. These road projects are crucial in improving access to the South of Maidstone and the Borough, and in improving the environment in the Southern part of Maidstone Town Centre. These projects will also open up new opportunities for the development of commercial land south of the town, and will make existing allocations more attractive to investors. These schemes will provide greater access to the rural areas of the Borough, enabling employment generation and commercial development in the major rural towns to support the rural economy. The Council is also campaigning to improve rail access from Maidstone East and West Malling stations to central London, through improved travel times and rolling stock, and the retention of services on the Maidstone to Ashford line and Medway Valley line, serving rural areas of the Borough. These will all add to the attractiveness of the area to inward investment, and the accessibility to services in rural areas.

Better quality jobs – The areas dependency on public sector, retail and hotel and catering, whilst strengths for the area, also create a lower wage workplace earnings level. The Council's aspiration to improve the local earnings levels through the development of quality jobs is demonstrated through the proposals to develop a local Maidstone Media-Net, providing support for local multimedia companies and by encouraging inward investment and the creation of new media and creative industries in the area. A key element to increasing the quality of jobs will be the ability to supply the skilled labour to take up the new employment opportunities. The up-skilling of local residents and the local workforce will therefore be a key element of this theme.

Better quality development sites – Maidstone currently has too few and unattractive sites for industrial development. The area needs good quality well located sites close to motorway junctions to attract high quality inward investment and quality jobs. The review of the Council's Local Plan provides the opportunity to reassess the allocation of commercial land for the period 2006 -2011. A critical element for the improvement of prosperity in the Borough is the allocation of better sites to attract the quality development and ensure the retention of indigenous growth. The review of the Local Plan will need to address the issues of growth in sustainable development, whilst retaining the environmental assets of the Borough.

Better quality Image – A key aspect to the attractiveness of an area is its image. Maidstone’s success in attracting large scale development such as Fremlin Walk and County Gate needs to be built upon to generate a positive image both inside the area and outside the area to potential investors. A positive quality image is also crucial in attracting visitors to the area, through individual attractions and a combined attractive offer. A short breaks campaign offering specialised activities to specific markets will focus the marketing of the area to people with specific interests. The Council will also be marketing the current and new opportunities for office development within the Borough to potential inward investors through a new brochure and direct marketing campaign. These activities along with the other themes will help Maidstone to capitalise on a better image, and therefore attract high spend visitors and high quality investment, ensuring improved prosperity for the area.

A key aspect to the success of the Council implementing this Business Plan will be its effectiveness in working in partnership both at a local, sub-county, county and regional level.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Draft Business Plan has been produced to set out the Council's key economic development and tourism priority activities and the actions that will be undertaken by the Economic Development Section during the financial year 2004-2005. This Draft Business Plan will be implementing the actions to achieve the vision, aims and objectives of the Council as set out in the Maidstone Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2002-2005.
- 1.1.2 This document sets out the state of the local economy, the corporate key aims, vision and priority activity for Economic Development and Tourism, the strategic framework, partnership activity, an action plan for the year, and resource allocations.

1.2 A REVIEW OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

- 1.2.1 Unemployment – Unemployment rates in Maidstone in the past year have fluctuated slightly, but generally not changed significantly, but the total number unemployed is up on figures for this time last year. In the Borough of Maidstone, the number of people registered unemployed is 1,309 (Feb 04) up 101 from a figure of 1,208 in Feb 2003. The resident based unemployment rate for February 2004 is 1.5%. This shows that relatively low unemployment rates have been sustained throughout the last year, however unemployment has increased, which is a result of a number of large companies moving out of the area, such as Syngenta, causing redundancies and therefore unemployment. This 8.4% increase in Unemployment in Maidstone is considerably higher than the 2.2% increase for Kent as a whole.
- 1.2.2 Property Market – Movement in the Maidstone property market has progressed, with the letting of County Gate 2, at approximately £21 sq ft, and good interest in County Gate 1. Fremlin Walk retail development has now started on site, and retail vacancy rates were recorded at 6% in June 2003. The position looks to have positively improved since that time, with additions such as Café Nero and Lush. Springfield, St Peter's Street, Turkey Mill and the Eclipse Business Park (Jct 7, M20) are all being progressed, and a 90,000 sq ft development at 27 Mote Road has received conditional planning permission, adding another opportunity for office based inward investment. These are all positive movements to show strength in the local property market. On the negative side, loss of Industrial land to residential development has created a shortage of industrial sites for relocations or expansions of local businesses. This position is likely to be exacerbated over the next few years with the allocation of the Ecclestone Road area of Tovil, and Hart Street sites next to Lockmeadow, to residential. Existing Office premises are under increasing pressure to be reallocated for residential use, and current plans on the Maidstone East site will also mean loss of potential office development. All of these factors will need to be built into the review of the Local Plan.

- 1.2.3 Retail – With the Fremlin Walk Development now underway and the Chequers Centre having achieved 100% occupancy during periods in the last year, the town centre is looking forward to a positive future and retaining its importance as a regional shopping destination. With the Fremlin Walk development, changes will take place in the town over the next few years with the opportunity of bringing about a more diverse offer and of strengthening the number of independent retailers as well as high street chains. The proposals for a new Waitrose Home and Food store as part of the Maidstone East Development will help to strengthen the town's position further, and with the opening of Fremlin Walk, Maidstone will be lifted into the top 50 retail centres in the Country.
- 1.2.4 Tourism – A report on the Economic Impact of Tourism to Maidstone Borough has been published by the South East England Tourist Board, based on data from 2000. This estimates that tourism contributed £124 million to the local economy, with visitors spending £16m on accommodation, £42m in retail shops, £36m on catering, £19m on transport and parking, and £12m on entertainment. Day visits from outside the local area are an important element, accounting for 3 million trips and £70m in value, whilst the estimated 426,000 over night visits contributed a further £54m. In all, tourism is believed to generate about 3,400 jobs in the Borough. New research methodology has highlighted the importance of the day visitor, which accounts for a major part of the growth from the previous estimate of £77m in 1997. A new report has been commissioned based on 2003 data, and results are expected in Mid 2004.
- 1.2.5 Population and Demographics – The first figures from the 2001 Census have been released showing the population and age breakdown for the Borough. The total population in the Borough of Maidstone rose by 1.4% between 1991 and 2001 to 138,948. It is also interesting but not surprising that the population in the Borough is ageing, with 34.9% of the population over 50 years of age in 2001, up from 30.4% in 1991. This will become an issue both with a more dependent community and issues over the availability of future workforces. Issues over the pressures on and provision of domiciliary care agencies, residential and nursing care in the area have been highlighted as a growing problem by the Primary Care Trust.
- 1.2.6 Index of Multiple Deprivation – The Index of Deprivation 2000 are the latest figures available, the next Index of Deprivation should be published next year, and therefore in using these figures, this document works on the old wards, with Shepway West and Park Wood being the two wards in the top 10% of most deprived wards in the Country. The Coombe Farm estate in the new High Street ward is also a locally recognised area of deprivation, as is the town centre, with Unemployment Rates in the High Street ward reaching 7% in January 2003.
- 1.2.7 Earnings – Maidstone has traditionally had lower average weekly earnings than Kent, the South East and Great Britain. The New Earnings Survey of 2001 does not change this situation, with Maidstone having average weekly earnings of £406.80 compared to Great Britain (£444.30), England (£451.50), South East (£473.00), and

Kent (£419.80). This shows that although Maidstone is still prosperous and performing well, improvements in bringing in value added employment are needed to bring it to the same level as the average for Kent or Great Britain.

1.2.8 Kent Economic Report

The Kent Economic Report 2003 assesses the Kent Economy and evaluates the areas competitiveness within a wider social and Environmental context. The report uses a number of domains that represent key areas of potential progress; these domains are Economic Scale, Dynamism, Workforce, Industrial Structure, Social Cohesion, Small Business and Environment. The Table below represents the local authority district scores, where grades are awarded according to quartile position against Great Britain averages; with an A representing top 20% and E representing bottom 20%.

Local Authority Districts	Scale Composite	Dynamism Composite	Industrial Structure Composite	Small Business Composite	Workforce Composite	Social Cohesion Composite	Environment Composite
Ashford	D	D	C	A	B	B	B
Canterbury	B	E	B	C	C	C	B
Dartford	C	A	D	B	C	C	C
Dover	C	D	C	E	E	D	D
Gravesham	D	C	D	C	D	D	C
Maidstone	B	D	B	A	A	B	B
Medway	A	C	B	D	E	D	E
Sevenoaks	C	D	B	A	A	B	B
Shepway	D	C	C	D	C	D	B
Swale	C	C	E	B	E	D	C
Thanet	D	E	D	D	D	E	D
Tonbridge & Malling	C	B	C	B	B	A	B
Tunbridge Wells	C	D	A	A	A	A	C

The Scale Composite assesses the size of the local economy through population, Business Rateable Value and Workforce. Maidstone is just above the GB average and is the only other area apart from Medway in Kent to achieve a score higher than the GB average.

The Dynamism Composite score measures growth performance in terms of employment, population, and business stock. The score for employment change is in the bottom quartile nationally, with good business stock growth, but poor population growth in comparison to the average. This shows the growth of the economy to be lower than the national average.

Maidstone scores well on all of the other indicators, although under Industrial structure, the percentage of employment in Higher Education and Research and development is lower than the national average at just 0.5%.

Maidstone's performance is a different story in comparison to the south East average, which is assessed in the Channel Corridor Partnership Area Investment Framework analysis.

- 1.2.9 Area Investment Framework Analysis - Table 3.5 (pg 10) is taken from the Channel Corridor Area Investment Framework Strategy, and identifies the key problems for the area in achieving the partnerships vision of convergence with the South East average.
- 1.2.10 This analysis identifies indicators under the Strategy's four core themes of Economy, Quality of Life, Inclusion, and Accessibility. These themes are then broken down into factors, for example Value Added or Health. Each indicator is compared to the South East average, and a required shift is given for those indicators where the area is performing worse than the South East average. These indicators include measures like the number of working age population with Level 1 or no qualifications, where the required shift for the Corridor is to train a further 12,500 people to NVQ Level 2 or above to match the average for the South East, or 5,400 people in the Borough of Maidstone. Each of these indicators is scored 1 to 4, with 4 denoting the greatest disadvantage. Scores are then produced for each of the factors to identify the priorities for each area and the Channel Corridor as a whole. This method shows the key priorities for the Channel Corridor to be Value Added, Education and skills, Labour market balance, Social and Economic Inclusion and Accessibility. In Maidstone Value Added produced the highest level of disadvantage, with Education and Skills, Housing Condition, Social and Economic Inclusion and General Access also being identified as issues in the indicators.
- 1.2.10 The table shows that the key problem areas for Maidstone are under the Economy theme, with issues being the generation of higher work based earnings levels with average earnings currently being £67 per week below the South East Average, as well as the creation of new businesses and development of an entrepreneurial culture with the need for an extra 30 business registrations per 10,000 population.
- 1.2.11 The analysis also shows a shortfall in the required levels of Education and skills, where Maidstone needs to train 3,000 more people to NVQ level 2 and 4,100 people to NVQ level 4 or higher to achieve the average level for the South East. Therefore Maidstone needs to lift its less skilled residents, and also develop people towards the higher levels of qualification to improve the workforce of the area.
- 1.2.12 The Other areas of concern are the housing conditions within the borough, with a large number of unfit dwellings (2,900), and the areas of deprivation as identified in section 1.2.6. An important point not quantified in the table is that of accessibility. Maidstone is identified in the AIF strategy as a key area in need of investment in infrastructure to improve accessibility in the town and open up the town's potential

Theme	Factor	Indicator	Current Level	Req. Shift	Score
Economy	Value Added	Industrial Structure Composite Score	81.6	+?	3
		Business Registrations Per 10,000 head of adult population	465 registrations	+ 30 registrations	
		Small Business Composite Score	120.1	None (better than average)	
		Earnings Workforce Based	£346 per week	+£67 per week	
	Education & Skills	% of pupils with 5 or more GCSE (A*-G)	1,740	None (better than average)	2
		% working age pop qualified to level 4 or higher	18,000 people	+4,100 people	
		% working age pop with Level 1 or no qualifications	44,700 people	-3,000 people	
		% of adults 16 – 60 with poor numeracy	16,900 people	None (better than average)	
		% of adults 16 – 60 with poor literacy	17,400 people	None (better than average)	
		% unskilled / semi-skilled workers	9,200 people	None (on par)	
		Labour Market Balance	% of working age population in employment	69,000 people	
	Unemployment Claimant count as % of working age population		1,200 people	None (better than average)	
	Long term Unemployment: claimant count over 12 months as % of resident working age population.		60 people	None (better than average)	
Quality of Life	Community Safety	Recorded offences per 1,000 population	4,100 offences	None (better than average)	1
	Health	% of population living in health deprived wards	6,600 people	-800 people	1
		% of population with health 'not good'	9,700 people	None (better than average)	
	Housing - conditions	Proportion of households without central heating, sole use of a bath/shower, or both.	3,400 households	None (better than average)	2
		Unfit dwellings as a proportion of total dwelling stock	2,900 dwellings	-660 dwellings	
Housing - affordable	Ratio of house prices to earnings	4.5	None (better than average)	1	
Inclusion	Social and Economic Inclusion	% of wards that are deprived	2 wards	None (better than average)	2
		% of population living in deprived wards	13,200 people	-800 people	
		% of population living in very deprived wards	6,600 people	-4,100 people	
		Proportion of adults receiving income support	6,000 adults	-100 adults	
Accessibility	Rural Access	Proportion of rural population living in access deprived rural wards	1,400	None (better than average)	1

1.2.13 Conclusions – The Maidstone economy is performing well nationally, but still has areas where it is performing poorly against the South East. The Kent Economic Report highlights the areas lower rate of employment growth than the South East as a whole. The Borough still has relatively low workplace earnings levels in comparison to Kent, the South East and Great Britain, but positive movement on key sites and developments offer continued confidence in the areas economy. Key aspects such as local land use issues and the commercial structure of local businesses and employment are of concern in achieving sustained and improved prosperity for the area.

1.3 VISION

1.3.1 The Council's Ambition is to help people live a better life by:

- Increasing opportunity, encouraging education and business confidence
- Reducing dependency and encouraging responsibility
- Fostering community involvement

These are all fundamental to the delivery of the Economic Development and Tourism Business Plan which is seeking to improve the areas prosperity, improve the more deprived areas, and do this by empowering the community to drive these agendas forward.

1.3.2 In partnership the Council will collaborate to:

- Sustain and develop Maidstone's unique cultural identity
- Give people a clean, green safe environment
- Ensure that there are opportunities for an active lifestyle
- Ensure that there is a choice of housing with a decent properly maintained home in a quality environment for everybody
- Improve road and rail services, infrastructure and encourage public transport.

1.3.4 Council's Priorities

- Continuing to improve in all that the Council does
- Improving customer care
- Maintaining a clean and tidy Borough
- Community Safety
- Improving parks, open spaces and play areas
- Improving access to the South of the Borough
- Balancing the Housing Market

A good quality environment and image, and good transport and communications infrastructure are crucial in improving the prosperity and economy of the Borough.

1.3.5 The Council's corporate key aims for Economic Development and Tourism are:

"Communications and Affairs 'The Council will promote the best interests of the Borough and will encourage others to do so, at regional, national and international levels and take advantage of external funding opportunities where they are appropriate.'"

"Housing Strategy and Regeneration 'The Council will seek to balance housing, business and community needs in a sustainable manner.'"

1.3.6 As set out in the Council's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2002-05 (ED&T Strategy 02-05), the Economic Development and Tourism section will be working towards the following vision for the Borough:

To promote and develop Maidstone Borough as a visitor destination and robust, diverse, prosperous and self-sustaining economy, sufficient to meet the current needs and future aspirations of the Borough's businesses, residents, visitors and support organisations.

1.3.7 The ED&T Strategy 2002-05 sets out the Council's key aims and objectives under its Economic Development and Tourism Functions. These are set out under 8 key areas:

KEY AREA 1 – CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

KEY AREA 2 - MARKETING THE BOROUGH

KEY AREA 3 – SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS

KEY AREA 4 – DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF THE WORKFORCE

KEY AREA 5 - TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

KEY AREA 6 - COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KEY AREA 7 – SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

KEY AREA 8 – PROMOTING PARTNERSHIP

1.3.8 These key aims and objectives form the policy framework under which actions are undertaken, and this business plan will set out the key priority activity for the Council in 2004-05 and the action plan for projects to be undertaken.

- 1.3.9 The full key aims and objectives for economic development and tourism can be seen in the Maidstone Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2002-05, and can be viewed on the Council's website (www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk) or by contacting the Economic Development Section.

1.4 PRIORITY ACTIVITY IN 2004/05

- 1.4.1 Looking at some of the key priority projects for the Borough, the Council will be working to stimulate prosperity and growth through the implementation of a number of key projects.
- 1.4.2 These key projects will be implementing the Council's core vision and the core focus for regeneration activity identified for the Maidstone area in the Channel Corridor AIF Strategy. These Themes are:
- **Targeted improvements to conditions in areas of deprivation;**
 - **Improvements to the Town Centre to enhance its role for the area;**
 - **Transport and communications improvements to unlock the areas potential;**
 - **Better quality jobs**
 - **Better quality development sites**
 - **Better quality Image.**

The key projects under these themes are:

THEME: Targeted improvements to conditions in areas of deprivation

- 1.4.3 **Areas of Deprivation** – With the introduction of the Single Pot following the demise of the Single Regeneration Budget, the Council will be seeking to maximise the funding obtained to regenerate the deprived areas of Maidstone through the Channel Corridor Partnership Area Investment Framework. The success of regenerating these areas will also rely on links with community groups within these areas, and through existing projects such as Park Wood Healthy Living Centre, Police Community Support Officers, Community Development Workers, information points and Oldborough Manor School community internet café. The Council will be working with its partners to implement the AIF performance plan for 2004/05.
- 1.4.4 **Balancing the Housing Market** – This is one of the Council's seven key priorities and is an essential element for local employers who are finding it more and more difficult to recruit staff into certain positions due to the affordability of local housing. This priority is set out in the Council's Housing Strategy and identifies that the Council will promote the supply and availability of genuine affordable housing through its planning powers and through partnerships with other housing providers.

THEME: Improvements to the Town Centre to enhance its role for the area

- 1.4.4 **Fremlin Walk Shopping Centre Development** - In conjunction with its partners House of Fraser, Interbrew, Centros Miller and Land Securities, the Borough Council is promoting a new shopping centre aimed at enhancing Maidstone's shopping offer and maintaining its place as one of the South East's premier shopping destinations. The development started construction in March 2003, and two key aims for the coming year are to assist in promoting the development to potential tenants, and to limit where possible the impact of the development on existing businesses in the town centre. The development is due to be opened in the spring of 2005.
- 1.4.5 **Maidstone East Station** - Maidstone East Station is the principal site which the Council will be looking to bring forward in 2004-05. This site is still in the planning stage, Countryside Properties have been identified as the preferred developer in partnership with the John Lewis Group. Early plans include a new Waitrose home and food store, residential development, a new station, and related parking. The Council will seek to assist the site owner and developer to progress their proposals to the stage where a planning application can be submitted.
- 1.4.6 **Maidstone Town Centre Strategy** - The Council will be undertaking in partnership with the Maidstone Town Centre Management (MTCM), the development of a Maidstone Town Centre Strategy. This project will develop a vision and provide policies and proposals for development, outlining the short, medium and long-term actions which will need to be taken to realise the vision. A draft strategy has been produced and will be consulted upon, and will provide an input into the review of the Local Plan.
- 1.4.7 **Business Improvement Districts** – The Council will be working with MTCM to develop a business plan as a pilot Business Improvement District (BID). This business plan will identify key issues in the town centre and propose projects and services to improve the image, environment, economy and quality of life in the town centre. Implementation of a structure for this business plan to be voted upon will be progressed to a ballot on the Business Plan.

THEME: Transport and communications improvements to unlock the areas potential;

- 1.4.8 **All Saints Link Road** - In an attempt to alleviate congestion and provide environmental and economic benefits in the southern sector of the town, the Council is advocating the building of a short stretch of new highway known as the All Saints Link Road. With the project currently seeking planning permission, the key targets for 2004-05 are to obtain planning permission for this development and to lobby relevant organisations to obtain funding to construct this stretch of road.

- 1.4.9 **Leeds Langley Bypass** - This environmentally sensitive village bypass on the B2163 route will be a single carriageway scheme passing close to the edges of the village boundaries. This scheme is a high priority of the Borough Council and will help to improve the environment in the two affected villages, whilst opening up better access to sites south of the town of Maidstone. It is identified in the Kent Local Transport Plan for a bid for government funding in 2004/05.
- 1.4.10 **Improved Rail Services** – Maidstone Borough Council are working in partnership with Kent County Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in lobbying the Strategic Rail Authority to gain improved services between Maidstone East, West Malling and London. Consultants Transport Regeneration has undertaken a detailed study on behalf of the partnership to produce a strategy for the future of the Maidstone East line. The study has now been submitted to the SRA alongside representation for the retention of services on the Maidstone to Ashford line, and Medway Valley line, to retain access to rural areas of the Borough.

THEME: Better quality jobs

- 1.4.11 **Maidstone Media & Creative Industries Sector** - The Media and Creative industries sector has been identified by both Maidstone Borough Council and its partners in the Channel Corridor (Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, and Shepway District Council) as a potential growth industry in the area. A few of the actions recommended in the Media and Creative Industries strategy include the establishment of a Kent wide Media development agency, as well as creation of an Enterprise Hub/Gateway around the Maidstone Studios, Oakwood park campus and Eclipse Business Park. During 2003/04 this sector has seen a number of developments including Maidstone Studios attracting the new Saturday morning show to the studios, but has also seen the planned closure of the Meridian studios at Larkfield, and the threat of no Meridian presence in the area. The Council will seek to establish and develop a Maidstone Media-Net public / private sector partnership to take forward the local development of this sector in 2004/05.
- 1.4.12 **Driving Up Local Remuneration Levels** - The Council will be seeking to attract inward investment and develop projects and skills levels to increase workplace earnings in the Borough of Maidstone. This increase in earnings will assist in developing greater prosperity within the area. A significant element of this priority is to up skill existing residents and the workforce so that they can take up any new opportunities created. The Council will work in partnership with local providers to develop skills programmes and will lobby funders such as the Learning and Skills Council to gain funding for such initiatives.

THEME: Better quality development sites

- 1.4.13 **Review of the Local Development Document** – A crucial aspect for the future prosperity of the Maidstone area is the review of the Local Plan, and the future allocation of commercial land to ensure inward investment and indigenous growth. With declining levels of industrial land in the area, and with the changing fabric of the area, more land will need to be allocated for commercial uses in the next Local Development Document to ensure a more Dynamic local economy. The Kent Economic Report shows that Maidstone's economic growth is in the lower quartiles, and with the need to provide better jobs locally, the allocation of attractive sites around motorway junctions will attract blue chip companies with good jobs and potential for growth. The review of the Local Plan will have a large impact on the potential for improvements to the prosperity of area, and the progression of sustainable development will need to retain the areas rich natural assets and environment, whilst providing economic development opportunity.
- 1.4.14 **Key Sites** – The Council will work to facilitate the development and occupation of a number of strategic sites in the Borough. These sites include Springfield, Eclipse Business Park (Junction 7, M20), Maidstone East Station, 27 Mote Road Office Development, extension to Lodge Road Industrial Estate (Staplehurst), the extension to Turkey Mill, and County Gate (Stacey Street). A number of these sites are currently being developed and the attraction of occupiers to these sites will be a priority to ensure their success. The relocation of the Royal Bank of Scotland and Towergate Estates into County Gate show successful progression in 2003/04.
- 1.4.15 **Syngenta Site, Yalding** – Syngenta Agrochemicals have stopped production at their site in Yalding, and are working with the Council to seek a future use for the site. The Economic Development and Planning Sections have been working with Syngenta to produce a Development Brief for the site. The Economic Development unit will also be working with Syngenta to attract interest from developers, and attract high tech value added employment to the site.
- 1.4.16 **Enhancement of Kent County Showground** – A partnership has been formed of key land-based sector specialists in Kent to revitalise the land-based sector and drive forward the Kent County Showground as a key site for its promotion and marketing. This site will be developed to help the diversification, marketing and promotion of the Kent Land-based sector. This sites importance is recognised by its inclusion in the draft Kent Structure Plan.

THEME: Better quality Image.

- 1.4.17 **Short Breaks Campaign** -A new initiative in 2004/05 will be the development of a short breaks campaign for Maidstone, to attract British visitors for weekend stays in the area. These will be based on various special interest activities such as

golf, gardens, history, health, walking etc. Local hotels will be encouraged to provide special offers as an incentive.

- 1.4.18 **Events Around Maidstone** – The Council is keen to establish an image of Maidstone as a vibrant town where a variety of interesting cultural and leisure activities take place, sponsored by both public and private sector organisations. To this end we will further develop our events marketing campaign launched in 2003, to include the production and wide distribution of quarterly events leaflets, a poster campaign, and promotion of the events listings updated every week on www.tour-maidstone.com.
- 1.4.19 **Green Rural Tourism** – The Borough of Maidstone has a wealth of natural attractions throughout its rural areas. This project will promote walking, riding and cycling in the rural areas of the Borough of Maidstone bordering the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, through the development of printed and online material. The project will be undertaken in partnership with rural attractions, local parishes, other countryside organisations/agencies and other boroughs and districts in the Chamber Gateway and Channel Corridor areas. External funding to maximise the resources and benefits of this project is being sought through a recent submission to the Leader + funding programme.
- 1.4.20 **Promotion of Tourism and Leisure use of the River Medway** - The River Medway is still under-exploited as a tourism resource for the Borough. Our promotional activities will feature the Maidstone Millennium River Park, the two new commercial boat trip ventures due to come into operation in 2004, guided walks, and day-out itineraries which encourage wider tourism and leisure use of the River as one of the unique selling points of any visit to Maidstone.
- 1.4.21 **Visitor Information Centre** -The Council is looking to develop the concept of a “One Stop Shop” Emporium for Council services in the Town Centre. As the first step in this process, the Town Centre TIC was relocated into the Town Hall in May 2003. New technology and associated training has been put in place to enable VIC staff to respond to a wider range of tourism and Council enquiries quickly and accurately.
- 1.4.22 **Office Marketing** – The Council will be developing a brochure for office development opportunities in the Maidstone area in partnership with Cluttons, Locate in Kent and Maxim PR. This brochure will be distributed to potential inward investors, promoting Maidstone as the Commercial Heart of Kent and as an ideal business location.
- 1.4.23 These projects form the priority activity of the Economic Development and Tourism Unit in the next financial year and are the essential elements of this Business Plan to develop tourism and economic development in the Borough of Maidstone.

1.5 THE FRAMEWORKS FOR ACTION

1.5.1 **Regional Context** – The review of the South East England Regional Development Agency’s (SEEDA) Regional Economic Strategy (RES) took place in 2002/03. The RES identifies the key objectives of Competitive Businesses, Successful People, Vibrant Communities, Effective Infrastructure, and Sustainable use of natural resources, as the drivers for Smart Growth in the South East. These key objectives include priorities such as entrepreneurship, international business activity, skills and participation in learning, Urban renaissance, community infrastructure, affordable housing, sustainable transport networks, and sustainable land use management.

1.5.2 A new draft regional tourism strategy was published for consultation in December 2003 by Tourism South East. Called “Tourism ExSEllence – The Strategy for Tourism in the South East,” it identifies 14 priorities under three key objectives:-

1. Creating a region which people aspire to visit, through excellent branding and marketing.
2. Providing an unrivalled visitor experience, through investment in training and product quality.
3. Effective management and organisation of tourism support, to clarify roles and responsibilities at local and regional level.

Maidstone Borough Council will take these priorities into account when drawing up its Economic Development and Tourism strategy 2005-2008.

1.5.3 SEEDA in association with the Countryside Agency has also gone out to consultation on the ‘Rural Tourism in the South East – A Strategy for Future Action’, this year. This draft strategy sets out a raft of ‘strategic priorities for action’, specific to the needs and opportunities of the South East, under the following headings:

- Influencing and Enabling Visits
- Enriching the Tourism Experience
- Fostering rural tourism enterprises
- And, Improving the management of rural destinations

This draft strategy looks to strengthen the estimated £1 billion (2000) South East rural tourism sector, in partnership with local organisations and authorities. The consultation exercise has been undertaken and SEEDA are liaising with partners to develop the finalised strategy that should be published in early 2004.

1.5.3 During 2004-05, the Regional Assembly (SEERA) is undertaking a comprehensive review of RPG9 in as far as it applies to the South East. This will extend the time period covered to 2026. The resulting new Regional Spatial Strategy will not only be restricted to matters that can be implemented through the planning system or local transport plan process. It will also take account of a wide range of activities and programmes which have a bearing on land use including

health, education, culture, economic development, skills and training, social inclusion, crime reduction and the impact of climate change.

- 1.5.4 **County Context** – Kent Structure Plan has been out to public consultation, with policies on land allocation concentrating on the North Kent, East Kent and Ashford areas. In the Fostering Prosperity section, an emphasis on high quality office and commercial development within central Maidstone has been identified to strengthen the areas role as one of the key commercial centres in Kent. The Structure Plan does not identify any need to release any major new Greenfield land within the Maidstone/Malling area. With the redevelopment of existing areas of the borough from Industrial to residential without the replacement of these industrial sites, this is causing problems with the relocation of existing companies within the area, or the growth of existing industrial companies. These issues if precipitated will result in loss of Industrial employment within the Borough.
- 1.5.5 The Kent Tourism Partnership Framework is a draft consultation document published in 2003 which sets out a vision to establish Kent as a centre of excellence for tourism within ten years. This is to be achieved in four ways:-
- through Research, to raise the quality, reliability and consistency of tourism research across Kent
 - through Product Development, to improve the quality of existing visitor facilities and raise awareness of tourism development opportunities in Kent
 - through Education and Skills, providing training in tourism and hospitality, as well as business support and quality standards
 - through Marketing and Branding, raising the profile of Kent as a visitor destination and increasing the volume and value of tourist stays.
- Maidstone Borough Council is an active participant in supporting these goals.
- 1.5.6 Kent Prospects is Kent County Council's strategic framework for economic development and regeneration in Kent. It was launched in 1996 as a ten year plan after in-depth studies with local authorities and over 20,000 businesses and organisations in the county. It was reassessed during 2001, to ensure it remained relevant to the county's economic conditions. This process of reassessment identified a scenario that best expressed the future potential of the county Kent - a mosaic economy.
- 1.5.7 The Government's aviation White Paper announced in December 2003 identifies that there are no plans to locate a new airport at Cliffe (Hoo peninsula). This therefore no longer has a potential impact on the Maidstone economy and environment for the foreseeable future.

1.5.8 Sub-County Context – The Channel Corridor Partnership Area Investment Framework (AIF) has been developed by the Channel Corridor Board. The Area Investment Framework (AIF) Strategy was updated during 2003/04. The Vision for the Channel Corridor is:

“Over the next ten years, the economy of the Channel Corridor will grow faster than that of the South East Region as a whole, so that the gap in prosperity between the Corridor and the Region will disappear.”

The particular focuses for improvements in the Maidstone area included:

- Targeted improvements to conditions in pockets of deprivation;
- Improvements to the Town Centre to enhance its role for the area;
- Highways improvements to unlock the town’s potential;
- Better quality jobs

The AIF identifies similar complementary themes to Maidstone Borough Council’s Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. This partnership working will enable Maidstone to lobby regional and central government with greater strength through joint activity to maximise the investment into the area, and bring forward key projects.

1.5.9 Local Context – With the development of both the Community Strategy Action Plan and the review of the Local Plan, the local context of this Business Plan will change through the year with research being undertaken on the economic development aspects of the Local Plan, and with the Community Strategy Action Plan due to be published in Spring 2004. In addition to these documents the Economic Development Unit will work with the Local Strategic Partnership where appropriate to ensure that all of the Key local public, private and voluntary service providers are engaged in assisting the development of the priority activity of this Business Plan.

1.5.10 Other key strategies that will influence this Business Plan are the Council’s Community Strategy, Best Value Performance Plan and Corporate Plan 2004/2005, the Cultural Strategy, Local Plan, Car Park Strategy, Community Safety Plan, Community Development Strategy, Social Inclusion Strategy, Housing Strategy, and the Council’s Asset Management Strategy.

1.5.11 The Council’s Economic Development and Tourism Strategy also highlight the need for Maidstone Borough Council to improve the quality of its services to provide a better environment for visitors and businesses. The need for cleaner streets, better highways and signage, available commercial and industrial land, good car parking, a safe environment, and a good branded image, are all important aspects in creating a vibrant and prosperous area and an improved quality of life. This shows the cross cutting nature of the Economic Development and Tourism Functions of the Council.

- 1.5.12 The Council's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will be reviewed in 2004/05 with a new three year strategy being produced by April 2005. This strategy will drive forward prosperity in the Borough, reflecting the vision and priorities of the Area Investment Framework Strategy and the findings of the Local Plan Review – Economic Report.

1.6 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- 1.6.1 The Economic Development and Tourism Unit will work with a number of partners around the County, including Kent County Council, other local authorities, Tourism attractions and operators, the Heart of Kent Consortium, Kent Tourism Alliance (KTA), Kent Tourism, Conference Kent, the Learning and Skills Council, Kent Learning Partnership, Locate in Kent, Business Link Kent, Kent County Constabulary, educational establishments and a wealth of other economic development and tourism agencies and voluntary and community groups. A key partnership is the Channel Corridor Partnership, with Ashford and Maidstone Borough, Shepway District, Kent County Councils, and a number of public and private sector organisations. This Partnership has developed an Area Investment Framework for the area, identifying the key priorities and needs for gap funding.
- 1.6.2 At the Regional level there are also a number of partners that the Council will be working with to bring forward the activities of this Economic Development and Tourism Business Plan and those of the partner organisations. These organisations include the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), and Tourism South East.
- 1.6.3 At the local level there are 4 key organisations that are crucial in the development of this business plan and partnership working. These are Maidstone Town Centre Management Ltd (MTCM), Maidstone Chamber, the Maidstone Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses, and Marketing Maidstone: Town & Country, an industry association for local tourism businesses. These membership organisations are a valuable source of business views, and are key partners in taking forward some of the schemes identified in the Priority Activities and the Action Plan for this Business Plan.

1.6 ACTION PLAN 2004-05

Key Area 1 – Creating the right conditions for economic growth

AIM: To provide the right “environment” to attract, generate and sustain business growth and employment opportunity in sectors capable of prospering in the foreseeable future.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
1(a)	1	ED	Construct the Fremlin Walk retail scheme.	On course for completion in April 2005.	High	Interbrew, Centros Miller, Land Securities, House of Fraser and MBC (Project Leader: Property Services)
1(b)	1 and 3	ED	To promote the development of the Maidstone East Station site.	Planning Application submitted by end of 2004	High	Development Services, Network Rail, Countryside Properties and KCC
1(c)	2	ED	Support the improvement of signage in the less frequented parts of the town centre.	New scheme for 4 th area to be completed in 2004/05	High	MTCM, KCC, Private sector landlords and retailers
1(d)	1 and 2	ED	To work with TCM to develop the Town Centre Strategy.	Strategy in Place by Summer 2004.	Medium	TCM, Planning Policy
1(e)	1	ED	Update the Sites and Property Directory for the Borough of Maidstone	Updated Quarterly	High	Local Property Agents, Locate in Kent
1(f)	2	Tourism	Analyse recent signage audit and implement plan for improved Town Centre signage	Implement first year plan by Sept 2004	High	Highways Authority, TCM, ED and Visitor Attractions.
1(g)	1	Tourism and ED	Lobby for the development of the	Ongoing	High	KCC, TCM, Chamber, FSB,

			All Saints Link Road and Southern Sector improvements.			Development Services.
1(h)	1	ED	Develop a Business Plan for a Maidstone Town Centre Business Improvement District	Draft Plan in place by Summer of 2004	High	MTCM
1(i)	1	ED	Feasibility Study to identify the viability of the Laboratory space on the Syngenta site as an Enterprise Hub/ Incubator space.	Feasibility study completed by Summer of 2004	High	SEEDA, Business Link Kent, Syngenta.
1(j)	1	ED	Review the Economic Development section of the Local Plan	Study undertaken by Summer 2004	High	Planning Department
1(k)	1	ED	Support the development of the Kent County Showground as a site for marketing and promotion of the land-based sector.	Ongoing	High	Kent County Agricultural Society, Kent County Council, HRI, Imperial College Wye.

Key Area 2 - Marketing the Borough

AIM: To promote the area as an attractive place for visitors, businesses and residents, ensuring protection of our cultural assets, and maximum employment opportunity, investment and spend.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partner
2(a)	1, 2, 5, and 6	Tourism	Produce the Heart of Kent 2005 Holiday Guide	Guide published by end of November 2004	High	Heart of Kent Consortium.
2(b)	1, 2, 5, and 6	Tourism	Develop a new Short Breaks promotional campaign	Brochure printed by Nov 2004	High	MMTC,TCMI,
2(c)	1 and 2	Tourism	Provide well targeted advertising and PR for	Ongoing	High	Press and media organisations.

			all Cultural and Tourism activities when required.			
2(d)	1 and 2	Tourism	Advise on management of Town Hall VIC	44,000 visitors to the Centre in 2004/05	High	Customer Service Section
2(e)	7	Tourism	To enhance the new Tourism website , and keep all information up to date	5,000 hits per month.	High	IT
2(f)	1 and 2	Tourism	Reprint updated Day & Night Entertainment Guide	New guide printed by September 2004	High	
2(g)	1, 2 and 9	Tourism	Produce new quarterly editions of the What's On Guide for the Borough	4 quarterly editions in 2004/05	High	KCC Arts and Libraries.
2(h)	1,2 and 9	Tourism	Investigate production of a series of new themed leaflets on walks around the Town and Borough.	Investigation to be completed by the end of May 2004.	High	Visitor Attractions
2(i)	2 and 6	Tourism	Produce new Carriage Museum leaflet	New leaflet printed by June 2004	Medium	Museum Mgmt; Cultural Mktg
2(j)	9	Tourism	Provide marketing support for the July events programme	Production of Posters and PR.	Medium	Voluntary Sector, Cultural Mktg.
2(k)	9	Tourism	Organise familiarisation visits by journalists	Visits by 10 journalists in 04/05	Medium	Heart of Kent, KTA, TSE
2(l)	9	Tourism	Promote and market events at the Maidstone Millennium River Park.	3 events to take place during summer of 2003.	Medium	Hazlitt Management, Cultural Mktg.
2(m)	4 and 7	ED	Produce a brochure promoting Maidstone as an office location for Inward Investment, printed and online.	Brochure produced by September 2004.	High	Locate in Kent, Cluttons, Maxim PR
2(o)	9	Tourism	Organise and prepare marketing for the local activities of the National Heritage Days Initiative.	350 Visitors to the events in Sept 2004	Medium	Heritage Venues, Tourism operators.

2(p)	3	Tourism	Manage Conference Kent.	£10,000 worth of income through commission.	High	KCC, Medway Council, other district Councils and Private sector partners.
2(q)	1, 2, 3, and 6	Tourism	Attend exhibitions to promote Maidstone as a tourist destination.	Attend 2 exhibitions in 2004/05.	Medium	SEETB, BTA, KCC
2(r)	1, 2, 3, and 10	Tourism	Organise a Familiarisation visit for tour operators to attract more group travel to the Borough.	Organise a familiarisation visits in 2004/05.	Medium	TCMI
2(s)	1, 6 and 10	Tourism	Develop the promotion of rural attractions through new publications and online marketing.	Produce new pocket guide.	Medium	Marketing Maidstone, KCC, Rural attractions and operators.

Key Area 3 – Supporting Local Businesses

AIM: To work in partnership with the business community to develop a local economy, which stimulates the formation of new businesses, and encourages the growth and expansion of existing businesses.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
3(a)	2 & 3	ED	To update and monitor the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Maidstone Chamber, to provide key business support services	Updated SLA agreed by May 2004	High	Maidstone Chamber
3(b)	2 & 3	ED	Produce the Maidstone Business Update (Business Newsletter).	2 editions to be produced during the financial year 2004-05	High	Chamber, FSB and TCM
3(d)	1	ED	Establish Maidstone Media Net partnership to develop the Media and creative industries sector locally.	By April 2004	High	KIAD, Mid Kent College, KCC, and Private Sector Companies
3(e)		ED	Support the provision	250 entrepreneurs		Maidstone

	1		of start-up advice to local companies and social enterprises.	assisted, 35 start-up companies.	High	Enterprise Agency, Business Link Kent, and Private Sector companies.
3(f)	2	Tourism	Undertake a networking event to gain the views of tourism and cultural providers.	30 providers to attend.	High	MMTC, Private Sector Businesses.
3(g)	2	ED	Promote a Series of evening meetings on different issues in conjunction with the Chamber, FSB, MTCM and LSP.	3 events within the financial year 2004-05	Medium	Maidstone Chamber, FSB, MTCM, and LSP
3(h)	2	ED	Visit local companies to assess their needs and engage them in the development of future policy.	20 company visits in 2004-05	High	Local Businesses
3(i)	5	Tourism project in partnership with ED	Develop Green Tourism promotion for the North Downs Way area.	Production of a Walking, riding, and cycling promotion for summer 2004	High	Visitor attractions, other authorities and transport operators.
3(j)	4	Tourism	Support the twinning committee to initiate and Maintain cultural and economic links with Maidstone's twin town of Beauvais.	Organising two visits per year to Maidstone.	Medium	Maidstone Twinning Committee, Beauvais Twinning Association, Beauvais town Council.
3(k)	3	ED	Maintain the Maidstone Business Directory online.	Ongoing	Medium	Burrows Communications
3(l)	5	ED and Tourism	Assist in the diversification of rural businesses to ensure sustainable employment in rural areas.	Ongoing	High	KCC (Rural Revival), Kent Countryside Commission.
3(m)	2 and 3	ED	Develop a Maidstone	30 business	High	Maidstone

			Annual Business Awards scheme.	applications.		Chamber, TCM, FSB.
3(n)		ED & Tourism	Prepare new Economic Development & Tourism Strategy 2005-2008, using new Cambridge model data	January 2005	High	
3(o)	4	Tourism	Carry out joint promotion of conference business opportunities in Kent and Nord regions through Interreg partnership	End March 2005	High	Conference Kent members; Lille Grand Palais
3(p)		ED	Undertake an event to promote Maidstone as a location to set-up and produce broadcast content.	Event in September 2004.	High	KCC, BLK, Screen South, and private sector.

Key Area 4 – Developing the skills of the Workforce

AIM: To encourage all sections of the community to improve their skills by making use of training and development opportunities.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
4(a)	1 & 2	ED	Support the Maidstone Schools Careers fair.	Event to take place in February 2005	High	Kent Careers Service, KCC, Maidstone Education Business Partnership, Mid Kent College, Connexions, Maidstone Chamber, Local Schools and Business
4(b)	1&2	ED	Support the development of Basic Skills and IT training in deprived areas.	Ongoing	High	Oldborough Manor School, Mid Kent College,

						Local community groups
4(c)	1&2	ED	Promote the mobile IT suite managed by Mid Kent College, especially to rural businesses.	3 businesses engaged in 2004/05	<i>Medium</i>	Mid Kent College
4(d)	1&2	Tourism	Support the work of the Kent Tourism Academy in developing training courses for local businesses	10 local organisations signed up in 2004/05	<i>Medium</i>	KCC, Christchurch College
4(e)	2	ED	Develop training courses in Retail and Customer Care to ensure that the local unemployed and residents can take up the job opportunities in the new Fremlin Walk Retail Centre.	30 local people successfully completing the course.	<i>High</i>	Mid Kent College, Centros Miller, Land Securities, and Job Centre Plus
4(f)	2	Tourism	Provide software and ICT support to enable small accommodation businesses to handle online booking inquiries	12 businesses on-line by end of 2004	<i>Medium</i>	IT

Key Area 5 – Tourism Development

AIM: To promote and develop Maidstone Borough as a visitor destination and thereby increase the contribution tourism makes to the local economy, through income generation and employment opportunities, its social and environmental prosperity and residents' pride in the area.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
5(a)	2	Cultural Mktg	Develop plans to improve the Carriage Museum facilities.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Museum Mgmt.
5(b)	1 and 2	Tourism and ED	Liaise with private sector tourism providers in the development of new initiatives and facilities	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	Private sector developers and site owners.

			e.g. Hotel and conference provision in the town centre.			
5(c)	2	Tourism	Support applications for B&B and self-catering property developments in the borough of Maidstone.	Ongoing	Medium	Landowners, entrepreneurs and the Planning Dept

Key Area 6 - Community Economic Development

AIM: To reduce the disparities between the strongest and weakest parts of the Borough, by improving the performance of the weaker areas.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
6(a)	1	ED	Submission of external funding bids for eligible urban and rural areas of the Borough.	Assistance in developing 5 bids in 2004/05	High	Kent County Constabulary, KCC, Mid Kent Health Authority, Local Community Groups, YMCA, Parish Councils, Schools, other local organisations and MBC cross departmental involvement.
6(b)	1	ED & Tourism	Develop and support bids through the Leader + Initiative for areas of the Borough that are eligible, and through the Interreg III rural towns initiative.	Identification of three projects with one project receiving Leader + Funding.	Medium/High	Parish Councils, KCC, Kent Leader + partners, Community groups, Kent Countryside Commission,

						and Kent Rural Community Council.
6(c)	1	Social Inclusion	Promote the Savings and Loan Partnership Scheme for financially excluded residents of the Borough.	35 savings accounts 2004/05	Medium	Kent Reliance Building Society, Community Groups, Shadow Housing Trust and Hyde Housing.
6(d)	1	Social Inclusion	Support the development of the work of the Children's fund in the more deprived areas of the Borough.	Ongoing	High	Ashford BC and Shepway DC, and SEEDA
6(e)	1	Social Inclusion	Identification of funding for a community development worker in High Street ward to assist in establishing community projects for the area.	Funding identified by September 2004	High	Channel Corridor Partnership

Key Area 7 - Sustainable Economic Development

AIM: To safeguard the environment by promoting economic expansion through improved business environmental performance and the development of an environmental technology industry.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
7(a)	1 & 2	ED	In conjunction with Partners, undertake a 4 half day training programme for local businesses on the Environmental Simple Utilities Resource Efficiency (ENSURE)	5 local companies involved.	Medium	GOSE, KSBP and MBC Environmental Co-ordinator, Business Link Kent

			scheme.			
7(b)	3	Tourism	Promote sustainable tourism uses of River Medway	Maintain high promotional profile for Millennium River Park and boating trips	<i>Medium</i>	Environment Agency, PR Dept and Boat Operators.
7(c)	3	Tourism	Promote Green Accreditation for Tourism Businesses in the Kent Downs Area.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Private Sector Businesses

Key Area 8 – Promoting Partnership

AIM: To maximise the use of resources, in addressing the economic needs of the Borough.

No.	Objective	Lead Council Unit	Action	Target	Priority	Partners
8(a)	1	ED and Tourism	Develop strategic alliances with adjoining Local Authorities.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Kent District and Borough Councils, KCC and Medway Unitary Authority.
8(b)	2	ED	Improve links with other economic development service providers.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Economic Development organisations in Kent.
8(c)	1 & 2	ED	Work to incorporate business views into the Council's major policy documents through consultation and liaison with businesses.	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	FSB, MTCM, Chamber and other local Business organisations.
8(d)	1	Tourism	Provide a partnership approach through Heart of Kent, to Tourism and marketing development	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Ashford and Sevenoaks local authorities.
8(e)	3	Tourism	Work with TSE to			TSE and Visit

			maximise resources and avoid duplication of activity.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Britain
8(f)	1 and 3	Tourism	The Council will work with Kent Tourism and Kent Tourism Alliance to maximise resources and achieve joint objectives.	Ongoing	<i>Medium</i>	Kent Tourism Alliance (KTA), and Kent Tourism.
8(g)	1	ED	Develop and Implement the joint Area Investment Framework Strategy (AIF) for the Channel Corridor area.	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	SEEDA, KCC, GOSE, Ashford BC and Shepway DC, BLK, LSC KMEB, PCTs, CVS and Gateway Chamber.
8(h)	2 and 3	ED and Tourism	Work with partners of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to achieve the objectives of this Business Plan	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	LSP partner organisations
8(i)	2 and 3	Tourism	Work with Marketing Maidstone Town & Country and TCM to jointly develop the local tourism industry	Ongoing	<i>High</i>	MMTC, Chamber of Commerce, TCM

1.7 RESOURCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM ACTIVITY 2004 – 05

This section sets out the planned estimated expenditure for economic development and tourism activities in 2004-2005, these figures are subject to final decisions on Council budgets.

1.7.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Salaries and internal recharge costs: £55,420

Revenue Budget: £95,070

Total cost: £150,490

1.7.2 TOURISM

TOURISM BUDGETS 2004/05

<u>Account</u>	Salaries and Internal Recharge costs	Revenue Budgets	Less Income Received	Total
Tourism Development	114,910	73,400	0	188,310
Twinning	8,550	2,200	0	10,750
Conference Kent	92,770	53,140	-80,420	65,490
Total	216,230	128,740	-80,420	264,550