

# AMENDED AGENDA

## CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 7 April 2009  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors: Mrs Stockell (Chairman), Butler (Vice-Chairman), Bradshaw, Hotson, Marshall, Mrs Marshall, Mortimer, Parr and Mrs Wilson

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Page No.

1. Apologies.
2. Notification of Substitute Members.
3. Notification of Visiting Members.

**Continued Over/:**

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**Issued on 1 April 2009**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Victoria King on 01622 602525**.

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**David Petford, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

**4. Disclosures by Members and Officers:**

- a) Disclosures of interest.
- b) Disclosures of lobbying.
- c) Disclosures of whipping.

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**5. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.**

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**6. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 3 February 2009. 1 - 6**

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**7. Cabinet Member for Corporate Services: Progress During 2008/09. 7 - 30**

Interview with Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Richard Ash.

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**8. Leader of the Council: Progress During 2008/09. 31 - 42**

Interview with Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland.

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**9. Draft Strategic Plan 2009 - 12. 43 - 96**

Interview with Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland and the Policy and Performance Manager, Georgia Hawkes.

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**10. Draft Whole and Partial Council Elections Report. 97 - 130**

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**11. Consultation Process. 131 - 138**

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**12. REISSUE OF REPORT: 139 - 156**  
**Constitutional Changes**

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**13. AMENDED AGENDA ITEM: 157 - 168**  
**Annual Report.**

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2009

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Stockell (Chairman), Bradshaw, Hotson, Marshall, Mrs Marshall, Mortimer, Parr and F Wilson.

**APOLOGIES:** None.

#### **102. Web-Casting**

**Resolved:** That all Part I items on the agenda be web-cast.

#### **103. Notification of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members.

#### **104. Notification of Visiting Members**

It was noted that Councillor FitzGerald was a visiting Member who wished to speak on Agenda Item 8, "Property and Procurement", and Agenda Item 9, "Visiting Member and Call-In Procedure Rules". Councillors Ash, Garland and Wooding were visiting Members who wished to keep a listening brief on all items.

#### **105. Disclosures by Members and Officers**

There were no disclosures.

#### **106. Exempt Items**

The Chairman highlighted that the "report to follow" for Agenda Item 10, "Budget Strategy 2009/10: Proposed Revenue Savings" was exempt and therefore proposed that the item be taken in private.

**Resolved:** That Agenda Item 10, "Budget Strategy 2009/10: Proposed Revenue Savings" be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

#### **107. Amendment to the Order of Business**

It was proposed that Agenda Item 10, "Budget Strategy 2009/10: Proposed Revenue Savings" be taken last on the agenda in order to take all public items first.

**Resolved:** That Agenda Item 10, "Budget Strategy 2009/10: Proposed Revenue Savings" be taken after Agenda Item 12, "Future Work Programme".

## **108. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2009 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **109. Property and Procurement**

The Head of Business Improvement, Alasdair Robertson, informed Members that the report on the agenda outlined recommended criteria for the assessment of asset performance. It was proposed that the Council's assets be scored according to their contribution to corporate priorities, the benefits produced, the value added to other parts of the property portfolio, the potential to exploit further and their practicality of disposal. The asset list provided listed the capital values using the approach to valuation approved by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy). This gave the 'book value' rather than the market value and depended on the type of asset. Market values had not been added at this stage given the difficulties of accurately establishing a value in the current economic climate. The annual running cost listed was the cost of running a whole service, e.g. Parks and Open Spaces, divided by the number of assets managed by that service which followed standard accountancy practice. The running cost therefore related to more than just the direct running costs for that asset. Finally, an exercise had been undertaken using GIS (Geographic Information System) to map all of the land owned by the Council across the Borough, including very small parcels of land.

A Councillor asked what response had been received from Parish Councils with regard to land owned by the Council within parishes. The Property and Procurement Manager, David Tibbit, informed Members that 10 of the 39 parish councils had responded to the Council's request for information and the response had been varied. Some stated that the Council was aware of all of its landholdings in that parish, while others requested meetings with the Council to discuss potential usage of Council-owned land by the Parish Council.

Councillors raised concerns that the figures outlined in the asset list were not clear and requested a full breakdown of the income and expenditure related to each asset, with expenditure broken down further to explain the direct costs and the associated service costs. Some Councillors also stated that there appeared to be mistakes in the asset list, for example there was a Multi Use Games Area in Clare Park but this was not listed, and requested that the list be checked and verified by officers. Members also requested that explanations be given to clarify the Council's interest in each of the assets held, for example putting an 'L' next to leasehold properties, and that the date an asset was valued be included in the list.

In response to a question, Mr Robertson explained that due to the current economic climate, accurate asset values would not be obtained for some time. However, the exercise to determine the overall benefit to the Council of each of its assets was nearly complete.

With regard to the criteria for assessing the value of properties, a Councillor asked how this had been developed. Mr Robertson stated that some of the criteria were from the existing capital programme assessment methodology and the others had been developed specifically for this exercise. The same methodology was not used by any other Local Authorities as it needed to be area-specific and had a political aspect, for example different Cabinets might weight each criterion differently. The methodology was being brought to Members for approval for this reason. In response to further questions, it was explained that the Audit Commission would not be able to endorse the criteria due to its subjectivity; however the Council would be looked on favourably for putting criteria in place. Mr Robertson emphasised that the criteria would only be the first step in assessing assets and any action would have to be agreed through the political process. Members agreed that the suggested criteria was appropriate and should be introduced.

A Councillor highlighted that the GIS mapping exercise could be useful in terms of possible income as it could identify land that the Council could sell or develop. Mr Robertson confirmed that the exercise meant that analysis of the Council's landholdings could now be undertaken for the first time. Councillors requested a list of all of the Council's landholdings.

In response to concerns over the need for significant capital expenditure on the Council's two gypsy sites, Mr Tibbit stated that grant money was being sought to cover this and information on the progress towards this would be forwarded to Members.

A Councillor asked who took the decision to sell land or assets and Mr Robertson confirmed that this was a Cabinet Member decision.

**Resolved: That**

- a) A list of the Council's assets be provided with a breakdown of the income, direct costs and indirect expenditure related to those assets;
- b) The list of the Council's assets be verified by officers;
- c) The asset list include a key to explain the Council's interest in relation to each asset;
- d) The date an asset was valued be included in the list;
- e) The criteria for the assessment of asset performance be approved;
- f) The Committee be provided with a list of the Council's landholdings; and
- g) Members be informed of the progress of the application for grants to renovate the gypsy sites.

**110. Visiting Member and Call-In Procedure Rules**

Louise Smith, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer, gave a brief introduction to the Call-In and Visiting Member Procedure Rules report. The key proposals of the report suggested that:

- The two members presenting a call-in had a maximum of five minutes each to present the reasons for call-in unless they had sought the prior agreement of the Chairman to extend this time limit; and
- Visiting members should be allocated three minutes to address the Committee.

The Committee raised a number of concerns with regard to these proposals:

- They could deter visiting members from attending future meetings;
- Overview and Scrutiny was very different to Planning and therefore to follow the same approach to visiting Members as the Planning Committee would not be appropriate;
- A prescriptive approach could hinder, as a result of a loss of flexibility, the high reputation the Overview and Scrutiny department currently held; and
- The time required to address the Committee depended upon the discussion topic.

The Committee agreed that it was the role of the Chairman to ensure that committee time was managed effectively, however that it would be reasonable for the Chair to be given guidance as to appropriate speaking times as the proposed times in the report were sufficient in most cases. This could be included in the Members' Overview and Scrutiny Handbook and a letter could be sent to all Members at the start of the Municipal Year highlighting this.

**Resolved:** That

- a) Advisory time limits be added to the "Members' Overview and Scrutiny Handbook";
- b) A letter be sent to all Members at the start of the Municipal Year highlighting the advisory time limits.

### **111. Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and agreed that this should be a standing item on the agenda to ensure important issues were dealt with in a proactive, rather than reactive, manner.

**Resolved:** That

- a) The Forward Plan of Key Decisions be included as a standing item on Committee agendas; and
- b) The Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

### **112. Future Work Programme**

The Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that the Leader of the Council and the Policy and Performance Manager would be in attendance at the next meeting to discuss the Strategic Plan.

A Councillor suggested that when discussing the Strategic Plan it would be helpful to have given an understanding of the link between the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Committee also requested that the revised asset list be presented to the Committee by the end of the Municipal Year.

**Resolved: That**

- a) The revised list of the Council's assets be presented to the Committee by the end of the Municipal Year 2008/09; and
- b) The Future Work Programme be noted.

**113. Exclusion of the Public from the Meeting**

**Resolved:** That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business due to the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified under schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:-

	<b>Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description</b>
Budget Strategy 2008/09: Proposed Revenue Savings	3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding this information).

**Public Minute of the Budget Strategy 2009/2010: Proposed Revenue Savings**

The Committee considered the current proposals for revenue savings during 2009/10.

**Resolved:** That the proposed revenue savings 2009/10 be noted.

**115. Duration of the Meeting**

6:35 p.m. to 8:05 p.m.

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## Maidstone Borough Council

### Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 7 April 2009

#### Cabinet Member for Corporate Services: Progress During 2008/09

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding to account those Cabinet Members whose portfolios fall within the remit of the Committee.
- 1.2 The key Cabinet Members whose portfolios relate to the Committee are the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

#### 2. Cabinet Member for Community Services

- 2.1 The areas of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services' portfolio that are relevant to the Committee are as follows:
  - **Corporate Services:** to oversee the development, review and application of the Council's personnel policies including staff structures, training and health and safety policies; to oversee the operation of the legal advice service and corporate financial advice service to the Council; to be responsible for the operation and administration of the Council Tax and Housing Benefit systems.
  - **Risk Management:** to be responsible for and report to the Cabinet on all matters relating to risk management.
  - **Property, Procurement and Projects:** to oversee the operation of the Property, Procurement and Projects section in the provision of its support to all sectors of the Council; to be responsible for the development and implementation of the Procurement Policy and Strategy and to act as a service's member's champion.
  - **Asset Management:** to be responsible for the disposal, acquisition and management of all the Council's land and property.
  - **Delivery:** Ensuring that the Council meets its objectives under the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
  - **Customer Contact:** to improve existing methods of customer contact.
  - **Complaints:** to be responsible for the development, review and application of the Council's Complaints Procedure.  
E-Government: to be responsible for the development of e-government within the Council; to be responsible for the development, review and application of the Council's IT and Communications Strategy.
  - **Democratic Services:** improving electoral turnout and participation.
  - **Land Charges:** to oversee the operation of the land charges function.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2008, Members interviewed the Cabinet Member for

Corporate Services with regard to his priorities for the Municipal Year 2008/09.

2.3 Members also considered a written statement by the Cabinet Member, which is attached at Appendix A to this report.

2.4 The relevant extract from the minutes of the 1 July 2008 meeting is below:

“The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Richard Ash, informed Members that the recent introduction of WiMax wireless internet in the town centre had received national press coverage and could potentially help to manage the CCTV operation. It could also result in £40,000 savings as the Council would no longer need to rent optical fibre cables from BT to connect the CCTV cameras to.

Councillor Ash stated that a recent exercise in the Chequers Centre now meant that 1400 residents had signed up to e-billing or e-citizen. A Councillor asked whether discounts could be offered to encourage people to sign up to e-billing. The Director of Change and Support Services, David Edwards, explained that there had been a prize draw for those who had registered in a certain time period. E-citizen was considered as more important than just e-billing at this time because it allowed the Council to more effectively communicate with residents.

A Councillor asked whether the Council would look to work with the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership on IT issues, as Ashford had a better planning webpages than Maidstone. Councillor Ash agreed that this was an area that should be looked at.

It was pointed out that this was a good time to consider purchasing land and property as prices were falling. Councillor Ash stated that this had not been discussed with officers yet, and Members highlighted that it was important not to miss out on an opportunity that could be financially beneficial.

With regard to the Cabinet Member’s proposed review of corporate assets, a Councillor asked what the timescale for this was. Councillor Ash stated that it had already begun but there was no timetabled end date. The Head of Business Improvement was currently compiling a new, more detailed asset register. The Councillor emphasised that it was important to know what the Council owned and what it wished to acquire, particularly in light of falling prices. Another Councillor highlighted that some land in Coxheath was owned by the Council but was not on the current asset register. The Cabinet Member was therefore recommended to contact all parish councils to establish whether they held land owned by the Borough Council.

A Councillor requested that the Cabinet Member review the amount of documents sent to Councillors in hard copy, as many of these were available online or by e-mail and the duplication was unnecessary.

With regard to the new offices, Councillor Ash stated that he had visited the offices several times to speak with officers to ensure that any problems were being rectified. The contact centre had moved successfully, and the Gateway would be opened in October.

A Councillor stated that they believed that there had been some problems in the legal department for 2-3 years, and asked that this be investigated, particularly as it was potentially impacting upon planning enforcement. Mr Edwards stated that some joint work with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was being considered on sharing senior management. Joint working would also increase capacity, particularly for dealing with peaks in workloads as legal work could be more effectively distributed.

A Councillor referred to risk management and asked that the Committee be informed if there were areas that needed more work. The Councillor highlighted that there were risk management issues that were wider than those outlined in the strategic risk register."

### **3. Asset Management**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 3 February 2008 members interviewed the Head of Business Improvement, Alasdair Robertson, the Property and Procurement Manager David Tibbit and the Corporate Property Manager Chris Finch. The relevant extract from the minutes is as follows:

"The Head of Business Improvement, Alasdair Robertson, informed Members that the report on the agenda outlined recommended criteria for the assessment of asset performance. It was proposed that the Council's assets be scored according to their contribution to corporate priorities, the benefits produced, the value added to other parts of the property portfolio, the potential to exploit further and their practicality of disposal. The asset list provided listed the capital values using the approach to valuation approved by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy). This gave the 'book value' rather than the market value and depended on the type of asset. Market values had not been added at this stage given the difficulties of accurately establishing a value in the current economic climate. The annual running cost listed was the cost of running a whole service, e.g. Parks and Open Spaces, divided by the number of assets managed by that service which followed standard accountancy practice. The running cost therefore related to more than just the direct running costs for that asset. Finally, an exercise had been undertaken using GIS (Geographic Information System) to map all of the land owned by the Council across the Borough, including very small parcels of land.

A Councillor asked what response had been received from Parish Councils with regard to land owned by the Council within parishes. The Property and Procurement Manager, David Tibbit, informed Members that 10 of the 39 parish councils had responded to the Council's request for information

and the response had been varied. Some stated that the Council was aware of all of its landholdings in that parish, while others requested meetings with the Council to discuss potential usage of Council-owned land by the Parish Council.

Councillors raised concerns that the figures outlined in the asset list were not clear and requested a full breakdown of the income and expenditure related to each asset, with expenditure broken down further to explain the direct costs and the associated service costs. Some Councillors also stated that there appeared to be mistakes in the asset list, for example there was a Multi Use Games Area in Clare Park but this was not listed, and requested that the list be checked and verified by officers. Members also requested that explanations be given to clarify the Council's interest in each of the assets held, for example putting an 'L' next to leasehold properties, and that the date an asset was valued be included in the list.

In response to a question, Mr Robertson explained that due to the current economic climate, accurate asset values would not be obtained for some time. However, the exercise to determine the overall benefit to the Council of each of its assets was nearly complete.

With regard to the criteria for assessing the value of properties, a Councillor asked how this had been developed. Mr Robertson stated that some of the criteria were from the existing capital programme assessment methodology and the others had been developed specifically for this exercise. The same methodology was not used by any other Local Authorities as it needed to be area-specific and had a political aspect, for example different Cabinets might weight each criterion differently. The methodology was being brought to Members for approval for this reason. In response to further questions, it was explained that the Audit Commission would not be able to endorse the criteria due to its subjectivity; however the Council would be looked on favourably for putting criteria in place. Mr Robertson emphasised that the criteria would only be the first step in assessing assets and any action would have to be agreed through the political process. Members agreed that the suggested criteria was appropriate and should be introduced.

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In response to concerns over the need for significant capital expenditure on the Council's two gypsy sites, Mr Tibbit stated that grant money was being sought to cover this and information on the progress towards this would be forwarded to Members.

A Councillor asked who took the decision to sell land or assets and Mr Robertson confirmed that this was a Cabinet Member decision.”

3.2 Following this interview members resolved that:

- a) A list of the Council’s assets be provided with a breakdown of the income, direct costs and indirect expenditure related to those assets;
- b) The list of the Council’s assets be verified by officers;
- c) The asset list include a key to explain the Council’s interest in relation to each asset;
- d) The date an asset was valued be included in the list;
- e) The criteria for the assessment of asset performance be approved;
- f) The Committee be provided with a list of the Council’s landholdings; and
- g) Members be informed of the progress of the application for grants to renovate the gypsy sites.
- h)

3.3 The Head of Business Improvement, Alasdair Robertson has;

- Responded to these recommendations, this response is attached at Appendix B.

#### **4. Recommendation**

4.1 To consider the statement made by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.

4.2 That the Committee review the responses given to recommendations concerning the asset management information and make recommendations as appropriate.



## **Cabinet Member for Corporate Services**

### **Priorities for 2008-09**

Councillor Ash, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, has identified the following areas of his portfolio to discuss with the Committee:

- The movement away from Council elections whereby a third of Councillors are elected in 3 years out of 4 towards 4 yearly elections where all councillors are elected on block every 4 years.
- Increasing democratic engagement with the public in light of decreasing percentage turnouts in recent elections:
  - 2004: 39.3%
  - (County Council elections 2005)
  - 2006: 37.3%
  - 2007: 37.68%
  - 2008: 35.58%
- Review of all corporate assets. We have a revised Corporate Asset Management Plan 2008-11 which needs monitoring.

#### On-going Initiatives

1. Complaints procedure.
2. On-going monitoring of the move to the new offices, the contact centre and the Gateway. Need to ensure the temporary (until October 2008) facilities are working well.
3. On-going work with the web-site.
4. Watching brief on benefits section.
5. On-going monitoring of the Procurement Strategy 2007-10.

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**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**7 April 2009**

**REPORT OF HEAD OF BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT**

**Report prepared by Alasdair Robertson**

**1. Asset Management Review**

**1.1 Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To provide a progress update on the above review and response to queries raised.

**1.2 Recommendation of Head of Business Improvement**

1.2.1 That the Committee note the response to the queries raised.

**1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked to be kept informed of progress with the asset review.

1.3.2 Specifically the Committee asked for confirmation that the asset list be verified and that valuation dates be added. The attached list is the summary of the land and property from the audited asset register as at April 2008.

1.3.3 In addition details of asset costs was requested. The previous list followed the normal accounting practices for apportioning costs to provide an indication of running costs. The objective was to guide where further assessment was warranted. However the Committee requested greater detail. Alternatives have since been examined which would meet this requirement.

1.3.4 The current allocation of costs for all council budgets is based on cost centres in line with auditing requirements. For some services a single asset is associated the provision of a service and is therefore included within the relevant cost centre. In these instances it is more straight forward to assess the cost of providing the asset. However many cost

- centres are associated with a number of assets which are all involved in supporting the provision of the service to different degrees, various buildings and structures within parks are an example. In addition, some support costs are associated with a range of assets, for instance the costs of condition surveys will be allocated over all the assets within the cost centre rather than to each asset separately based, for example, on floor area or time taken. Data is therefore not readily available in all cases that would permit apportioning costs to the level of individual assets.
- 1.3.5 To produce a greater level of detail based on assets rather than costs centres would require a detailed assessment of the time allocations for all activities in the service. The resulting figure would still not necessarily provide a guide to the cost savings that would be achieved if the asset were disposed of or retained. For example, if reactive maintenance costs had been high over the last few years this could indicate that the future costs may be lower or that persistent problems may occur. Similarly, it is not always possible to provide core running costs such as utilities since metering may be based on a group of assets.
- 1.3.6 In sum, a fully detailed assessment of all operating costs on an asset by asset basis would be expensive and time consuming and would in effect require a full review, business case and options appraisal for each asset. Such an assessment would be of limited value if there was no realistic prospect of disposal which is likely to be the case for most assets. For this reason the recommended approach is to identify a short list of assets which are warrant further exploration and views are welcome on which assets should be included.
- 1.3.7 The Committee has requested a list of the Council's land holdings. This list includes over 3000 individual plots and has therefore not been attached in full but is available for review on request.
- 1.3.8 The majority of the areas are small but sizes range from 2 metres square to 5000 meters square. On an indicative benchmark value of £120 square metre as development land some areas could potentially realise £100k-£200k if sold for development. Other small areas as additions to adjacent gardens could realise £300-£500 if this were suitable and acceptable (with possible minor reductions in costs such as mowing).
- 1.3.9 The overwhelming majority of these sites will not be suitable for alternative use. However a limited number, possibly as many as 10, could warrant further consideration. This list is being prioritised for a site by site consideration and a report for the Cabinet Member Leisure and Culture will be produced in due course.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

Further work could be postponed until after the recession but this may eliminate some options to provide funding for corporate priorities.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 All corporate objectives are directly linked to the proposed approach

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The current property market is in a considerable state of flux and any purchases or sales must be considered as high risk at the present time and should be assessed on a case by case basis.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

1.7.2 The capital programme is in part dependent on an effective disposals and acquisitions.

**NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED**

Is this a Key Decision?      Yes            No     

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?      Yes            No

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SCRAIP)****Committee:** Corporate Services**Meeting Date:** 3 February 2009**Minute N<sup>o</sup>:** 109**Topic:** Property and Procurement

<b>Resolution<sup>i</sup></b>	<b>Chief Officer<sup>ii</sup></b>	<b>Response<sup>iii</sup></b>	<b>Timetable<sup>iv</sup></b>	<b>Lead Officer<sup>v</sup></b>
A list of the Council's assets be provided with a breakdown of the income, direct costs and indirect expenditure related to those assets.	Alasdair Robertson	This will be provided, however it should be noted that there are difficulties allocating the costs where these are incurred by a number of assets. Alternative ways to the current approach of dividing the total costs by the number of assets that is consistent with accounting practice are being considered.	End March	David Tibbit
The list of the Council's assets be verified by officers.	Alasdair Robertson	A further check is underway	End March	Paul Holland
The asset list include a key to explain the Council's interest in relation to each asset.	Alasdair Robertson	This can be added to the list but it should be noted that the Council's interests are already reflected in asset values and income	End March	David Tibbit
The date an asset was valued be included in the list.	Alasdair Robertson	This information can be provided	End March	Paul Holland
The criteria for the assessment of asset performance be approved.	Alasdair Robertson	Noted	N/A	

<b>Resolution<sup>i</sup></b>	<b>Chief Officer<sup>ii</sup></b>	<b>Response<sup>iii</sup></b>	<b>Timetable<sup>iv</sup></b>	<b>Lead Officer<sup>v</sup></b>
The Committee be provided with a list of the Council's landholdings.	Alasdair Robertson	As per the response and previous report, consolidating the records for some very minor land holdings is still underway but information on the work completed so far will be provided.	End March	David Tibbit

### **Notes on the completion of SCRAIP**

<sup>i</sup> Resolutions are listed as found in the minutes of the relevant meeting.

<sup>ii</sup> Insert in this box the Chief Officer whose service the resolution falls within.

<sup>iii</sup> The Officer responsible for responding to the resolution should indicate in this box an explanation of the action to be taken to implement the resolution. Please also complete the 'timetable' and 'lead officer' boxes.

<sup>iv</sup> The Officer responsible for responding to the resolution should indicate in this box when the action indicated in the previous box will be implemented.

<sup>v</sup> The Officer responsible for responding to the resolution should indicate in this box the Officer responsible for the implementation of the action highlighted in the 'response' box.

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

CODE	AREA	PROPERTY	PROPERTY TYPE	COST CENTRE/ASSET TYPE	Date Asset Last Revalued	CURRENT COST NBV @ 31/3/08
A86	Marden	Gypsy Site	Gypsy Site	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	118,259
B08	Archbishops Palace	Gate House	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	107,700
B10	Maidstone Museum	Museum & Art Gallery	Museums & Galleries	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	3,535,953
B12	Archbishops Stables	Carriage Museum	Museums & Galleries	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	863,506
B15	Penenden Heath	Garage & Tool-shed	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	10,700
B15	South Park	Tool-shed	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	8,400
B15	South Park	Teen Shelter		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	10,542
B15	North Ward	Kickabout Area	Parks and Open Spaces	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	65,258
B15	Maidstone	BMX/Skateboard Facility		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	50,825
B15	Maidstone	Multi-Use Games Area		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	113,883
B15	Staplehurst	Changing Rooms		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	0
B15	Brenchley Gardens	Messroom	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	5,000
B15	Clare Park	Tool Store		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE	5,000
B15	Mote Park	Car Park		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	0
B20	Mote Park	Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre & Pools	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	12,377,464
B32	Cobtree	Golf Clubhouse Messroom/Garage	Cobtree Golf Course	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	37,805
B32	Cobtree	Golf Clubhouse	Cobtree Golf Course	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	425,289
B64	Hazlitt Theatre	Theatre Complex	Theatres	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	2,630,472
B65	Corn Exchange	Theatre Complex	Theatres	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	1,339,554
B70	Parkwood	Heather House	Halls	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	429,405
B73	Archbishops Palace	Undercroft		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	0
B73	Archbishops Palace	Heritage Centre Complex	Old Palace Complex	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005	784,880
C20	Allington	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	64,375

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

C20	Bell Lane Staplehurst	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	85,501
C20	Brenchley Gardens	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	106,626
C20	Church Street Maidstone	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	96,064
C20	Clare Park	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	71,417
C20	Fairmeadow	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	170,001
C20	Headcorn	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	48,531
C20	Lenham	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	71,520
C20	Lockmeadow Market.	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	170,001
C20	Marden	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	64,375
C20	Mote Park Lakeside	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	78,458
C20	Mote Park Pavilion	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	127,751
C20	Palace Avenue	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2003	0
C20	Parkwood	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	57,334
C20	Penenden Heath	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	74,938
C20	Shepway	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2003	0
C20	South Park	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	27,406
C20	Staplehurst Library	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	36,209
C20	Yalding	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	88,932
C20	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	Public Conveniences	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	20,321
C55	Cemetery	Messroom	Cemetery & Crematorium	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	246
C55	Cemetery	Toilets		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	0
C55	Cemetery	Toilet & Store		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	36,209
C55	Cemetery	Tractor store		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007	53,908
C55	Cemetery	Dead House or Store		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-	0
C55	Cemetery	Portable Building		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April	6,160





Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

D11	Waterside East	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	DISPOSED		0
D11	Well Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		165,199
D11	Wheeler Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		761,591
D11	Brewer Street East	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		776,707
D11	Brewer Street West	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2007		675,396
D11	Havock Lane	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	DISPOSED		0
D11	Museum Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	DISPOSED		0
D11	Palace Avenue	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		577,513
D11	Old College Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		372,570
D11	Mill Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		775,627
D11	Barker Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		721,361
D11	Lucerne Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		136,213
D11	Sittingbourne Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		297,808
D11	Union Street West	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2003		156,780
D11	Union Street East	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		206,922
D11	Brooks Place	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		118,197
D11	Mote Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		327,570
D11	Brunswick Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		277,146
D11	Brunswick Street	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	WRITE-OFF		0
D11	Queen Anne Road	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		373,056
D11	Upper Stone Street (Brunswick St.)	Public Car Park	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2003		291,430
D25	Yeoman Lane Bearsted	Car Park ( N P )	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		34,736
D25	Library/High St Marden	Car Park ( N P )	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		138,641
D25	Bell Lane Staplehurst	Car Park ( N P )	Off Street Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		20,939
D26	Mote Park	Park & Ride Car Park	Park & Ride Car Park	700709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE		672

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

D26	Sittingbourne Road	Park & Ride Car Park	Park & Ride Car Park	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	EXCLUDE		57,561
F05	Town Hall	Town Hall	Town Hall	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		1,403,667
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Block C Offices	Industrial Estate	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Block D Workshops		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Block F Stores		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Stores J1		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Stores J2		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Stores K		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Stores L		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		0
G12	Armstrong Road Depot	Open Storage		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		787,765
G20	Acquisition of Land for new Depot	Langley Park Farm		700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-		1,454,133
G20	Youth Café			700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	-		4,471
G55	Tonbridge Road	Office No 26	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2006		413,227
G57	London Road	Offices 13 A/B (Now a staff car park)	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2003		281,250
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block A	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		0
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block B	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		0
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block C	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		0
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block D	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		0
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block E	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		0
G58	Tonbridge Road	No 13 Block F	Offices	700/709/731 - Op.(OLB)	1 April 2005		2,186,995
B15	Brenchley Gardens	Band Stand	Band Stand	703 - Community	COMM.		4,991
B15	Clare Park	Tennis Changing Room	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	703 - Community	COMM.		15,001
B15	Grove Green	Paths	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.		8,643
B15	Mote Park	180.00 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.		1,169
B15	South Park	10.16 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.		1
B15	Penenden Heath	5.17 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.		1

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

B15	Mangravel Recreational Ground	4.23 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B15	Shepway Green	4.40 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B15	Parkwood Recreational Ground	9.16 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B15	Gatland Lane	3.29 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B15	Giddyhorn Lane	4.33 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B16	Maidstone	Riverside Park	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B30	Mote Park	Mote House (+ stables etc)	Listed Building	703 - Community	COMM.	0
B33	Cobtree	Elephant House	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B33	Cobtree	Ranger Station		703 - Community	COMM.	1
B33	Cobtree	Sandling Farm	Domestic	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B33	Cobtree	Tyland Barn	Office	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B33	Cobtree Rural Park	96.15 hectares	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	Barming Heath	Playleader Hut	Halls	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	Barming Heath	Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	8,696
B35	Clare Park	Lower Bowls Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	Clare Park	Upper Bowls Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	Gatland Lane	Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	Mote Park	Volunteers Memorial Hall	Halls	703 - Community	COMM.	5,803
B35	Penenden Heath	Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B35	South Park	Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B45	Giddyhorn Lane	Pavilion	Pavilion	703 - Community	COMM.	1
B55	Allotments	18 sites	Allotments	703 - Community	COMM.	1
C60	Crematorium	Not in B/S notes	Books of Remembrance	703 - Community	COMM.	1
C60	Crematorium	Not in B/S notes	Memorial Plaques	703 - Community	COMM.	1
C65	Lockmeadow	Pump House	Pumping Station	703 - Community	COMM.	1
F01	Brenchley Gardens	War Memorial	War Memorial	703 - Community	COMM.	1
F01	Broadway	War Memorial	War Memorial	703 - Community	COMM.	1
F01	Queens Monument	War Memorial	War Memorial	703 - Community	COMM.	1
F01	Town Hall	Not in B/S notes	Com. Silver & Civic Regalia	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G14	Holy Trinity	Urban Park	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Maidstone Bridge	Clock Tower	Clock Tower	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Old College	Gateway	Listed Building	703 - Community	COMM.	19,072
G20	Old College	Masters House	Listed Building	703 - Community	COMM.	0
G20	Old College	Masters Tower	Listed Building	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Old College	Quarterdeck	Listed Building	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G63	Farleigh Hill	Waste Land	Parks and Open Spaces	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	8 Quarry Square	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

G20	Sunningdale Court	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Hartnup St/Tonbridge Rd	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	20 Hampshire Drive	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Former Cambridge House	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	SOLD	0
G20	71 Woolley Road	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	35 Bicknor Road	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	104 Wallis Avenue	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Camp Road/Grove Road	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	33 Beaumont Road	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	16 North Street, Barming	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	65 Cross Keys, Bearsted	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	18 Hurstwood Road, Bredhurst	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Gallants Lane, East Farleigh	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	1/2 Chapel Cottage, Laddingford	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	77a/b Eyhorne St, Hollingbourne	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	SOLD	0
G20	22 Cornwallis Avenue, Linton	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	1 Gordon Court, Loose	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	George Marsham House, Loose	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	Winches Garth, Staplehurst	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	1 Lyngs Close, Yalding	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	30 Woodford Road, Barming	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G20	7 Woodford Road, Barming	Land	Ex-HRA land transferred to GF	703 - Community	COMM.	1
G59	Maidstone House	Offices	Office Equipment	704/708 - Fixtures & Fittings	EXCLUDE	455,804
B15	Mote Park	Nursery	Nursery	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	EXCLUDE	50,000
B15	Penenden Heath	Kiosk	Kiosk	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	6,200
B15	Maidstone River	Undercliffe Boat House & Kiosk	Kiosk	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	19,000
B15	School Lane	Willington School Annex	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	LEASED	0
B15	Willington Street	Otham Mill & Willington House	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	DISPOSED	0
B30	Mote Park	7 School Lane	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	53,100
B30	Mote Park	The Old Bothy	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	DISPOSED	0
B30	Mote Park	Boxley Lodge	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2002	50,658
B30	Mote Park	Forge Lodge	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	97,660

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

B30	Mote Park	1 Forge Lodge Bund.	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	97,400
B30	Mote Park	1 Keepers Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	202,690
B30	Mote Park	2 Keepers Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	76,465
B30	Mote Park	1 Mansion Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	161,185
B30	Mote Park	2 Mansion Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	161,185
B30	Mote Park	Nursery Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2004	80,000
B30	Mote Park	Raigersfeld	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	0
B30	Mote Park	Raigersfeld House & Barn	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	238,500
B30	Mote Park	Raigersfeld Lodge	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	56,000
B30	Penenden Heath	1 Penenden Heath Cottages P.H.	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	89,900
B30	Penenden Heath	2 Penenden Heath Cottages P.H.	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	66,700
B30	South Park	1 South Park Cottage S.P.	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	64,700
B30	Mote Park	Mote Lodge	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2004	44,275
B35	Mote Park	Restaurant & Kiosk	Kiosk	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2005	77,124
B35	South Park	Hockey Pavilion	Pavilion	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2005	11,200
B70	Fant Lane	Fant Hall	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	20,840
B70	Mangravet Avenue	Hillary Hall	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2005	9,955
B70	Downswood	Community Centre	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	LEASED	0
B70	Grove Green	Village Hall	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	3,500
B70	Howard De Walden	Youth Centre	Halls	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	0
C55	Cemetery	No 1 Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	TO BE SOLD	32,207
C55	Cemetery	Foremans House	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2004	50,568
C60	Crematorium	No 1 Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April 2003	60,400
C60	Crematorium	No 2 Cottage	Domestic	734/730/732 - Inv. Props.(NOLB)	1 April	44,368

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

D11	Upper Stone Street (Brunswick St.)	Car Sales Premises (Land)	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	2004 1 April 2003	96,530
G10	Parkwood	Industrial Estate	Industrial Estate	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2006	6,626,900
G11	Fairfax (Units 6 - 7)	Starter Unit	Business Starter Units	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	79,520
G11	Spectrum (Units 9-15)	Starter Unit	Business Starter Units	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	414,450
G12	Armstrong Road	Block E Cottage 1 Arm. Rd Depot	Domestic	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	54,840
G12	Armstrong Road	Block E Cottage 2 Arm. Rd Depot	Domestic	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	100,000
G12	Armstrong Road	Block E Cottage 3 Arm. Rd Depot	Domestic	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	59,720
G20	Station Road Harrietsham	No 15 Station Rd	Domestic	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	119,160
G20	Station Road Harrietsham	No 17 Station Rd	Domestic	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	119,160
G20	Upper Stone Street (Brunswick St.)	Car Sales Premises	Shop	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	187,500
G20	Broadway	Ferryman Public House	Shop	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	213,300
G20	Broadway	Newsagent kiosk	Shop	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2003	58,000
G20	Elizabeth Close	Waste Land	Shop	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	DISPOSED	10,129
G20	Maidstone	34/35/36 High Street	Shop	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	-	1,222,000
G20	Manor Young Peoples Club	Youth Centre	Offices	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2005	84,310
G20	107 Wallis Avenue	Petrol Filling Station	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2005	33,220
G20	111 Tonbridge Road	Care Home	Parks and Open Spaces	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	1 April 2005	206,071
G57	London Road	London Hse Offices (leased)	Offices	Inv. Props. (NOLB) 734/730/732 -	LEASED	0
B15	Mote Park	Sailing Club	Depots, Workshops & Toolsheds	Surp. Resale (NOLB) 735/730/732 -	1 April 2002	29,365
B15	Buckland Hill	Wildlife Conservation Area	Parks and Open Spaces	Surp. Resale (NOLB) 735/730/732 -	1 April 2002	3,000
B30	Mote Park	Mote Cottage	Domestic	Surp. Resale (NOLB) 735/730/732 -	1 April 2003	181,100
G20	Coxheath	Westerhill Road	Land	Surp. Resale (NOLB) 735/730/732 -	EXCLUDE	0
G20	Coxheath	Glenfarg	Adjacent Land	Surp. Resale (NOLB) 735/730/732 -	EXCLUDE	0

Current Assets within the Review and the Associated Values

G20	Mote Park	Old Botry	Adjacent Land	735/730/732 - Surp.Resale(NOLB)	EXCLUDE	0
G20	Lordswood	Cadapatra/Brushwood	Woodland	735/730/732 - Surp.Resale(NOLB)	EXCLUDE	0



## Maidstone Borough Council

### Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 7 April 2009

#### Leader of the Council: Progress During 2008/09

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding to account those Cabinet Members whose portfolios fall within the remit of the Committee.
- 1.2 The key Cabinet Members whose portfolios relate to the Committee are the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

#### 2. Leader of the Council

- 2.1 The areas of the Leader's portfolio that are relevant to the Committee are as follows:

- **Policy Development:** To oversee and co-ordinate the framework of all policy framework documents and to ensure that they interrelate and reflect agreed Council policies.
- **Budget:** To take responsibility (in collaboration with the rest of the Cabinet) for drawing up initial proposals for the Council's budget ensuring that corporate priorities are matched by appropriate financial resources.
- **Performance Management:** To establish, implement and monitor the Council's Performance Management System and have overall responsibility for data quality.
- **Value for Money:** To ensure that the Council achieves Value for Money in its services.
- **Delivery within Portfolios:** To ensure that the Cabinet Members are delivering priorities within their own portfolio structures.

- 2.2 At the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 August 2008, Members interviewed the Leader of the Council with regard to his priorities for the Municipal Year 2008/09.
- 2.3 Members also considered a written statement by the Leader, which is attached at Appendix A to this report.
- 2.4 The relevant extract from the minutes of the 5 August 2008 meeting is below:

"The Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Garland, stated that the driving force for the Council in the coming years would be economic prosperity; this would be fundamental in ensuring the Council met its

other corporate priorities. The Council needed to ensure that there was the right environment for prosperity. This would include the political will and drive to deliver prosperity and attract new businesses. Councillor Garland's other priorities were:

- Improving the skills of the Borough's workforce through lobbying Kent County Council (KCC) and using external organisations;
- Ensuring Maidstone was attractive to businesses and ensuring these jobs went to Maidstone residents;
- Park and Ride: there had previously been an ad-hoc approach to park and ride in the Borough, however the Cabinet Member for Environment was now producing a park and ride strategy which would be available by the end of the year. This was important in view of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and Growth Point Status. Park and Ride was a vital tool to tackle congestion, which would otherwise deter businesses and visitors.
- Joint working was needed to help deliver the Council's priorities and the new thematic approach to the Local Strategic Partnership was key to this; and
- The environment was a vital part of ensuring the Borough's attractiveness to businesses, visitors and residents and was therefore key to achieving economic prosperity.

The Committee then questioned the Leader on his plans.

### Transport

- The Cabinet was working with rail companies to improve rail services for the town as this would help to ease congestion.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment was liaising with KCC and the Highways Agency to seek transport solutions for the Borough.
- Due to Maidstone's projected growth over the next 20 years, it was vital to ensure that the Council's approach to park and ride was correct. Ideally, park and ride would eventually be self-financing but in the short to medium term the Council would need to subsidise it.
- The 'Master Planning' exercise for the development of a strategic approach to the long term provision of park and ride was being undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Environment along with officers. The project brief for the exercise was to ensure that the new park and ride sites would be appropriate to the housing land allocations in the LDF and were large enough for at least 1000 parking spaces at each site. The exercise would also consider where visitors to the Borough could access park and ride sites, and would address all variations of park and ride.

### Economic Development

- The South East Plan stated that 129,000 m<sup>2</sup> of employment land needed to be provided in the Borough, although due to Growth Point Status this was likely to increase. Land allocations for this

would need to be agreed by Full Council as part of the LDF. The Leader would provide more details as they arose.

- The Council needed to work with its partners to establish what skills employers required in the workforce. A key problem in Maidstone was that fewer pupils achieved A\*-C grades at GCSE than in comparable districts and KCC needed to be lobbied about this. Previously unavailable statistics on the performance of the Borough's schools had now been obtained.
- The Leader was working to bring employers into schools to educate pupils about business.
- Currently, 60% of Maidstone residents of working age commuted out of the Borough. This needed to be reduced, and the average wage for Maidstone-based jobs needed to increase in order for the town to be sustainable.
- Figures were being produced on how many new jobs would be needed to allow for the projected growth in the population of the Borough. The process for establishing these figures could be explained in detail by officers.
- While it was acknowledged that a range of jobs was needed to provide for a mixed workforce, the Leader emphasised that it was important not to underestimate people's aspirations when presented with opportunities.
- The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Economic Development Manager were working to forge closer links with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and the Maidstone Economic Forum. The Leader was keen to see the membership of the Maidstone Economic Forum widen to include a variety of businesses.

### Capital Projects

- The Council was receiving significant funding as part of its Growth Point Status and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration was now pursuing capital projects as part of this. In Councillor Garland's opinion, many capital projects had been delayed for too long. He intended to take these forward and cited the example of the All Saints Link Road.
- The Leader believed that if the Council contributed some of its capital resources to major projects its partners would also move forward on those projects.
- Aside from the All Saints Link Road, other key capital projects that the Leader wished to progress were the regeneration of the river front and the redevelopment of Upper Stone Street.
- The Leader confirmed that he was prepared to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers in order to deliver projects if this was necessary.

### Local Development Framework (LDF)

- The LDF was currently on hold due to the Kent International Gateway (KIG) planning application; this was expected to be considered by the Planning Committee in the Autumn. Despite this,

a number of sections of the LDF, for example the Green Spaces Strategy and the Gypsy and Traveller Policy, could still be taken forward. It was vital to look forward where possible as the full LDF, including land allocations, would not be agreed for 2 or 3 years.

### Economic Conditions

- The Leader agreed that the credit crunch was likely to have a short term impact on his vision for the Borough, for example houses were unlikely to be built at the same rate as they had been previously. This meant that the Council was unlikely to meet its housing targets for the next 1-2 years. Despite this, it was important to proceed with the long-term vision beyond the credit crunch.

### Other

- KCC had a similar vision to the Council and was a valuable partner. In response to concerns that KCC might be obstructive in providing information, the Leader confirmed he would be prepared to use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain information if necessary.
- The Leader confirmed that the new recycling scheme would be rolled out across the entire Borough."

## **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 Members are recommended to consider the statement made by the Leader at the beginning of the year and ask questions with regard to progress that has been made on those issues highlighted as priorities.

## **LEADER'S PRIORITIES & PLANS 2008/09**

### *1. Introduction - Strategic Approach and Themes*

I take as the starting point for my cabinet's approach to the next year the 6 themes that the council has already adopted in its strategic plan namely:

- A healthy environment
- Sustainable Communities
- Prosperity
- Lifelong learning
- Quality Living
- Quality Decent Homes that People can afford

These are themes that the previous Conservative administration under Eric Hotson pursued and ones that the current Conservative administration will continue.

These themes cannot be achieved in isolation from one another and must be pulled together. We cannot have prosperity without the requisite skills set in our communities, and we cannot have sustainable communities without prosperity. Equally, we cannot have quality living without prosperity and a healthy environment. All these areas are required to be delivered and acted upon in order to achieve a vibrant, prosperous, dynamic and quality driven town and borough.

In addition, we cannot achieve this alone and we must work with effective partners, be they specific groupings dealing with specific tasks (such as Locate in Kent) or neighbouring local authorities and our own County Council. To this end, we must build effective partnership working and not partnership working for its own 'tick box' sake. The vehicle for this is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

However, in order to begin one must have a starting point and that starting point must be economic prosperity – quality jobs and economic skills sets are the lynchpin, which will help deliver the rest of the themes and priorities.

Statistics demonstrate all too clearly that failure to engender the right environment for prosperity - whether it be for individuals or businesses or indeed towns - leads to lack of health, poor quality living, poor environment, poor housing and rising crime.

The council has accepted, cross party, the need for growth point status – now we must balance this acceptance of housing numbers with business generation and up skilling of the indigenous workforce.

### *2. Achieving Economic Prosperity*

Maidstone has a distinct comparative advantage to most other towns in Kent with our retail offering and this must be maintained. However, in order to achieve *prosperity*

and reduce outward flows of commuters to London and elsewhere we must become a beacon of opportunity to other tertiary businesses that can provide a higher Gross Value Added(GVA) to the borough.

This will be achieved by the following:

- Encouraging Iconic economic projects into the borough, such as the Kent Clinic and associated ancillary services.
- Continuing to welcome into the borough outside businesses that will add value and raise average wages in the borough, such as Eclipse Park.
- Using the LSP and County Council to investigate and action plans for the skilling of the workforce and improvement to the statutory provision of education in the borough.
- Engendering an environment where indigenous small businesses can grow and foster a long term ability to survive and remain resilient in a challenging economic environment through support of small business 'incubator' units.
- Working closely with Kent Invicta Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to deepen encourage better links between businesses in the borough.
- Enhance the importance and activity of Maidstone's Economic Forum and to widen its membership to ensure greater participation from the wider business community and use this as a vehicle to deliver a Core Strategy that will balance up the housing numbers accepted by the council
- Develop the economic aspects of the Core Strategy, in conjunction with partners and business forums and wider consultations, in a sensitive and pragmatic manner for economic development.
- Ensure that the emerging Core Strategy accepts and lays down policies for the correct balancing of housing numbers and business growth.
- An acceptance that the borough council and its partners cannot 'buck the market' but can create an environment where the market will wish to operate.

Whilst I am clear that economic prosperity is the engine room for the delivery of the council's other priorities we must protect the nature and environment of our town and borough. ***Economic Prosperity strategies that do not protect and secure the rural and environmental charm and character of the borough will lead to the reverse of what we are trying to achieve.***

Emphasis, through the Core Strategy, the planning system and widening of Area Character Assessments, will be given to ensuring we maintain our historic reputation that comes with our market town, our status as the County Town, and the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Equally though we need an economy where people can continue to live and enjoy what Maidstone as a borough has to offer.

### *3. Transport*

Transportation has an affect on how the borough will flourish and remain attractive for living in and accessing.

We have direct influence only over one tool for tackling congestion and that is Park & Ride. All other aspects of transport and road provision are with Kent County Council and the Highways Agency.

Park & Ride is still heavily subsidised by the council and for the long term survival of the scheme this cannot be allowed to continue. However, I am clear that Park & Ride is and will be a central feature for tackling congestion in the town and borough.

We will therefore:

*Begin a 'Master Planning' exercise for the development of a strategic approach to the long term provision of Park & Ride; developing a programmed implementation of sites, on a business case approach, to cater for projected growth in population, housing and car usage over the life-cycle of Growth Point status. This will bring to an end the ad-hoc approach that historically has been taken to Park & Ride. It will also assist in reducing and ultimately eliminating the heavy subsidisation of the past. This will ensure its long-term survival and viability.*

#### *4. External Affairs & Joint Working*

In the preamble to this document, I mentioned that it was not possible for the council to work in isolation and will need to embrace and work with other key effective partners. The principal forum for this will be the Local Strategic partnership and work has already started in turning this into a more robust thematically focused group and I will continue to build upon this as its importance increases over time as it becomes the likely vehicle for government funding. The LSP is central in assisting the borough council on working towards the six themes it has outlined. We cannot, by ourselves, achieve our aims and objectives.

We are currently seeking agreement to joint working practices with Swale, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford Boroughs but the overriding priority for me is to agree only where clear benefits can be accrued by Maidstone Borough without detriment to current provision of services - then there is merit in joint working.

#### *5. Provision of Council Core Services and Finance*

I am clear that despite the governments emphasis on council's being 'Place Shapers' the public expect the provision of certain core services at a level that they deem acceptable and appropriate.

The new waste collection regime will continue to be rolled out and I am adamant that the maintenance of weekly collection of residual waste and the fortnightly collection of recyclables currently remains the most appropriate system when balancing the need for increased recycling rates with reputational integrity of the council.

Cost savings can be made once the roll out has been completed and I am certain that the additional financial burden resulting from this new system as opposed to the so-called 'Alternate weekly Collection' method needs to be mitigated where possible. This includes considering the possibility of Saturday collections and, perhaps, joint working initiatives. Savings need to be made and will be made where appropriate.

The Conservative administration, in the face of real cuts in grants from central government, is well aware of the need to maintain council tax rates at a comparatively low level. I am clear that the council, as before, must pursue a policy of value for money in everything we do, balancing this with the need to provide core services at a level deemed acceptable by the public. Savings to the detriment of core services is not acceptable and savings must be sought through better working practice and joint working where it can be proved there are real service and financial benefits from doing so.

### Conclusion

The worst evil that can confront any authority is to preside over a declining town and borough, with increasing housing numbers and population, for therein lays an ever-declining circle of an inability to deliver on the other priorities that the council has set itself along with the human misery that results from declining economic prosperity.

*Therefore, the 'golden thread' of this administration is to deliver, with our partners and through the Local Strategic Partnership, an agenda of quality economic development, a proper transport strategy through Park & Ride and provision of quality jobs and skills. Only this can ensure that the themes of affordable housing, quality living and a healthy environment, together with tackling deprivation, can be delivered.*



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## Maidstone Borough Council

### Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 7 April 2009

### Strategic Plan 2009 – 12

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution states, in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, that "the Executive's initial proposals [for the budget and policy framework] shall be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for further advice and consideration". The Committee must report to the Executive on the outcome of its deliberations, which the Executive must consider prior to submitting the proposals to Full Council.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 3 February 2009 the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee also agreed that an update on the Strategic Plan and how it links to the Sustainable Community Strategy would be beneficial. The Plan will be considered by Council on 22 April 2009.

#### **2. What is the Strategic Plan**

- 2.1 The Strategic Plan sets out how the Council will work to achieve its objectives and the goals established within the Sustainable Community Strategy, over the next three years. It is a rolling three year document which is updated annually. The Strategic Plan defines what the Council's priorities are whilst ensuring that they align with the borough's priorities as outlined within the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
- 2.2 The Budget Strategy and the Strategic Plan are the key corporate planning documents for the Council. The Key Objectives in the Strategic Plan have informed the Budget Strategy so that resources to deliver the Strategic Plan were included in the budget.
- 2.3 The Plan focuses upon the economy in the short to medium term and the main changes aim to attract investment within the Borough and maintain out County Town profile.
- 2.4 The Strategic Plan shares the vision for Maidstone established within the SCS, this is;
- 2.5 *We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, high quality environment with high quality education and employment where people can realise their aspirations.*

2.6 To support the delivery of this vision the Council has ensured the eight key themes of the SCS are integrated and linked to the Council's priorities in the Strategic Plan. The eight key themes of the SCS are outlined below:

- Economy and Prosperity
- Sustainable and Integrated Transport
- Crime and Safety
- Health and Older people
- Children Young People and Families
- Homes and Communities
- Sport Creativity and Culture
- Environmental Excellence and Climate Change

2.7 The plan is supported by a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure progress on the Key Objectives. Consultation has been carried out with officers and Cabinet to ensure that KPI's are outcome-focussed.

### **3. Consultation**

3.1 The draft Strategic Plan was considered by Cabinet on 17 December 2008. Consultation was then carried out with the public and partners, including Councillors, Parish Councils, Community Groups, Partners through the LSP, the Councils website and with members of the public in the Gateway. The results of the consultation are attached at appendix A.

### **4. Production of Summary Document**

4.1 The Policy and Performance team are now developing a summary document, in leaflet form, of the Strategic Plan. At its meeting on Monday 1 September 2008 the Overview and Scrutiny team held a workshop for all Scrutiny Members to consider the presentation and content of the Strategic Plan. **Recommendation two** of the report resulting from the workshop stated that:

4.2 "Limited hard copies of the detailed Strategic Plan should be produced – this should be accessed primarily online by officers. The budget should be focussed on producing a readable, attractive Summary Plan for residents."

### **5. Recommendation**

5.1 Members are recommended to interview the Leader of the Council and the officers with regard to the Draft Strategic Plan 2009-12 and make recommendations as they see fit.

5.2 The Committee should consider the results of public consultation detailing what the public consider to be the most appropriate design of the Strategic Plan in leaflet form, and recommend the information / elements that should be contained within the document. (The design of the leaflet will be based on the design of the current plan).

**APPENDIX A**

**Strategic Plan – Document Presentation Consultation – February 2009**

What do you think are the 5 main things that Maidstone Borough Council should concentrate on over the next 3 years?	Respondents	Percent
Anti-social behaviour and crime	145	73%
Housing	118	59%
Activities for young people	89	45%
Traffic congestion	85	43%
Parking	73	37%
Rubbish collection & recycling	66	33%
Litter and keeping the streets clean	61	31%
Road safety	57	29%
Local economy and prosperity for the borough	47	24%
Parks & open spaces	45	23%
The town centre	37	19%
The environment	37	19%
Sport and leisure activities	32	16%
Planning issues	25	13%
Park & Ride	13	7%
Tackling inequality	12	6%

We are producing a short leaflet of the Strategic Plan. What do you think we should include?	Respondents	Percent
What the Council's aims are for the next 3 years	128	64%
Where the Council's money comes from and how it's spent	116	58%
How the Council works to provide value for money	97	49%
What Maidstone, Kent and parish Councils are responsible for	92	46%
What the Council achieved in 2008/09	87	44%
The positive outcomes for the people of Maidstone	83	42%
How the Council is performing	82	41%
The vision for the borough of Maidstone	79	40%
Explanation of how the Council works and makes decisions	79	40%
Customer care and engagement	71	36%
Priority services for the Council to provide	58	29%
How The Council will monitor progress on the Strategic Plan	53	27%
The Council's values	50	25%
How the Council manages risks	43	22%
How the Council address equalities issues	36	18%
Pictures, responsibilities and contact details of the Cabinet members	34	17%
How the Council manages staff, IT, assets and natural resources effectively	34	17%
Foreword from the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council	26	13%

**APPENDIX A**

**Strategic Plan – Document Presentation Consultation – February 2009**

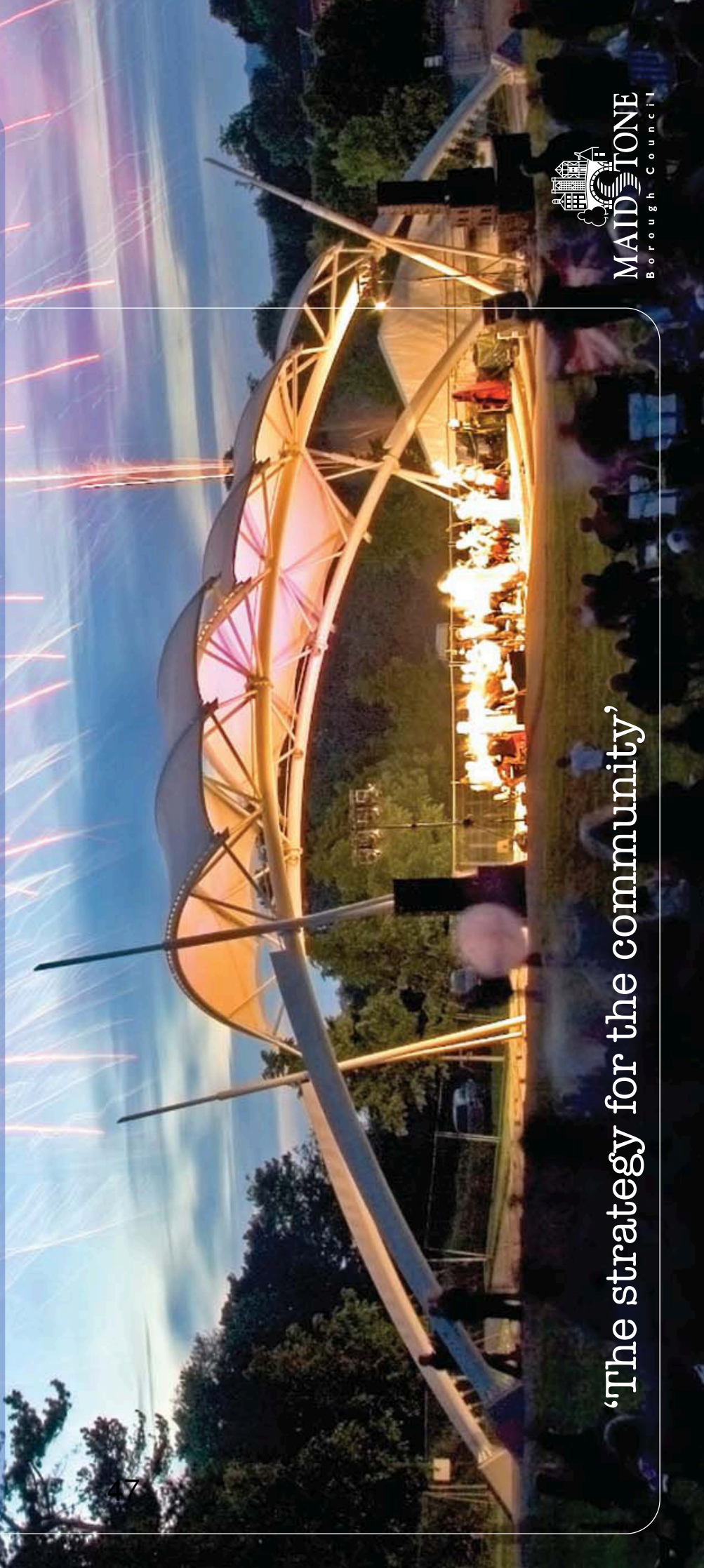
What would make you pick up and read a leaflet?	Respondents	Percent
Pictures and photographs	124	62%
A summary of key issues / priorities	122	61%
Full colour	78	39%
Lots of diagrams	37	19%
Lots of words	35	18%

In what format would you like to see the Strategic plan published?	Respondents	Percent
On the internet	116	58%
Short paper leaflet	108	54%
DVD	70	35%
Large print	43	22%
Long paper version	27	14%
Audio CD	25	13%
Translations	11	6%



Maidstone Borough Council

# Strategic Plan 2009-12

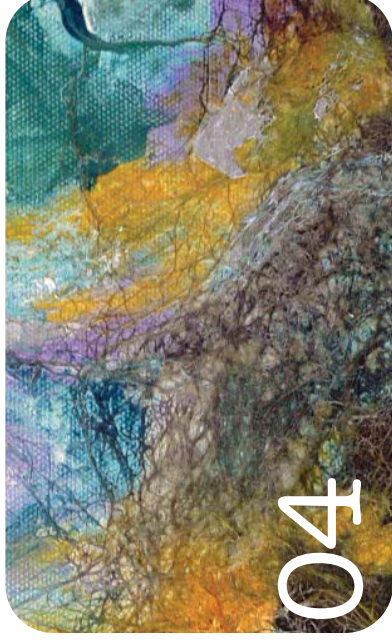








# Contents



2 **Foreword**  
By Cllr Chris Garland and  
David Pefford

4 **Section 1**  
**Our vision**  
strategic themes and values

12 **Section 2**  
**The context**  
in which the Council works

14 **Section 3**  
**How the Council works**

18 **Section 4**  
**Progress**  
and Performance

20 **Section 5**  
**What we will deliver**

22 Economy and Prosperity

24 Sustainable and Integrated  
Transport

26 Crime and Safety

28 Health and Older People

30 Children, Young People and  
Families

32 Homes and Communities

34 Sport, Creativity and Culture

36 Environmental Excellence and  
Climate Change

38 **Section 6**  
**Making it happen**  
How we'll deliver our priorities



# Foreword

## by Cllr Chris Garland and David Petford

**Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan sets out how the Council will work to achieve its objectives and how it will contribute to the goals in Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) over the next three years. This work is set against the backdrop of our achievements over the previous year.**

Not surprisingly, given the world recession, the focus will be on our economy in the short to medium term. The main challenges will be to continue to attract investment to our borough and to maintain our County Town profile. There will be a shift in demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn. Already there has been a significant increase in the number of benefit and homelessness applications and the Council has taken the opportunity to secure additional affordable housing at a very competitive price.

Council finances will be tight over the next few years, with less income due to the economic downturn and predicted rises in government funding of just 0.5% per annum. The Council will have to find significant savings in order to deliver balanced budgets.

Value for money is important to us all and the Council will continue to find new ways of working to provide quality services in a cost effective way. In particular, the Council is working with the neighbouring boroughs of Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells, and with Kent County Council (KCC), to look at how services can be jointly provided to improve them and reduce costs.

The Audit Commission assesses how councils manage and use their resources. In 2008 Maidstone achieved the top score of 4, "Performing Strongly" for its Use of Resources and scored top marks in all elements of Value for Money. The Council had already achieved an "Excellent" rating for its Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Although we are not complacent and there is still room for improvement, this does show that we are



Top: Cllr Chris Garland  
Leader of the Council  
Above: David Petford  
Chief Executive

getting most things right.

Good progress has been made on the key objectives set out in the Strategic Plan for 2008-11. We have:

- Worked with the Youth Forum to promote positive activities for children and young people such as Peace One Day, which attracts thousands of young people every year;
- Reduced the number of families living in temporary accommodation;
- Moved offices and opened the purpose-built Maidstone Gateway to provide a single point of access to public services;
- Submitted a bid for £2 million of lottery funding to make improvements to Mote Park;
- Increased levels of recycling;
- Entered into a shared Benefit Fraud and Visiting service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, saving £50,000; and
- Held a number of musical and cultural activities including - Radio One's Big Weekend, the re-enactment of the Battle of Maidstone and the Maidstone Mela.

Towards the end of 2008 more than 2,400 Maidstone residents responded to the Place Survey. They told us what they thought of the services that are delivered locally and what they thought of their local area. Eight out ten people said that they were satisfied with their area as a place to live. It is important that we engage effectively with communities, share information, listen to views and then plan and deliver services that people want and can easily access.

Over the next three years we will continue to maintain key public services at the best possible price with a sustained focus on performance, partnership working and shared services.

Our key objectives and priorities for the borough are ambitious and demanding, but we are confident that through the continued dedication of Councillors, staff and partners, we will continue to provide leadership in the community and deliver the services local residents need.

**Cllr Chris Garland**  
Leader of the Council

**David Pefford**  
Chief Executive





# Our vision

## strategic themes and values

We share the vision for Maidstone taken from the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)::

**We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, high quality environment with high quality education and employment where people can realise their aspirations.**

We believe the priorities for Maidstone are also our priorities and this Strategic Plan explains how we will contribute towards the priorities for the borough.

To support this vision and ensure the objectives for Maidstone are delivered the Council has identified 5 priorities that explain the issues we will concentrate on to help deliver the vision for Maidstone in the SCS:

- 1 **A place to achieve, prosper and thrive**
- 2 **A place that is clean and green**
- 3 **A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities**
- 4 **A place to live and enjoy**
- 5 **A place with efficient and effective public services**

These priorities are based on the objectives for Maidstone in the SCS and have been developed following consultation with local residents and partners. The Council has also agreed a number of key objectives and specific actions or next steps showing what we will do to help deliver the priorities for the borough. These are outlined in Section 5 and have been aligned with the eight Sustainable Community Strategy topics.



### A place to achieve, prosper and thrive

To be successful the borough must be prosperous and innovative. Economic development and regeneration initiatives are essential and we will work with partners to attract new and existing businesses with high quality jobs to the area, whilst ensuring that all residents have access to the training and education required to provide a skilled local workforce.

Town centre improvements (Public Realm); initiatives include :-

- Eclipse – new business park;
- Affordable homes;
- Decent homes for venerable people;
- Skills Centre;
- SE Maidstone Strategic Route; and
- Re-design of the Locate in Maidstone site.

### A place that is clean and green

Having a clean and green environment is important to us all. We want to ensure Maidstone has clean streets and well maintained parks and green spaces. We will always work to minimise climate change and make the best use of natural resources through:-

- Borough wide doorstep recycling;
- A Litter free borough – with clean sweeps and a crack down on fast food litter;

- Improvements to Mote Park;
- River improvements; and
- Continue to monitor air quality.

### A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities

People want to be healthy, feel safe where they live and feel that they belong. The borough needs to be a place where people of all ages, faiths and cultures can live and work together, priorities include:-

- A Public multi-agency Community Safety Unit;
- A robust CCTV network;
- The Choosing Health Programme; and
- Neighbourhood Plans to empower communities.

### A place to live and enjoy

We want people to choose to live in Maidstone. The borough must have high quality homes that people can afford and a variety of sporting, leisure and cultural activities that meet the needs of local people, these included:-

- A revitalised Leisure Centre;
- Expansion of the Museum;
- Maidstone Youth Café; and
- The Partnership Venture for an Athletics Track at Sutton Valence School



### A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities

Maidstone Council is one of highest performing councils in the country. We will continue to seek innovative ways of delivering excellent services that provide value for money, as well as working with our partners in the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure all local public services are high quality and joined up

- Expanding the range of services available in the gateway
- Continuing a programme of Business Transformation to review service in order to ensure value for money; and
- Reviewing higher cost services to improve efficiency and service standards.

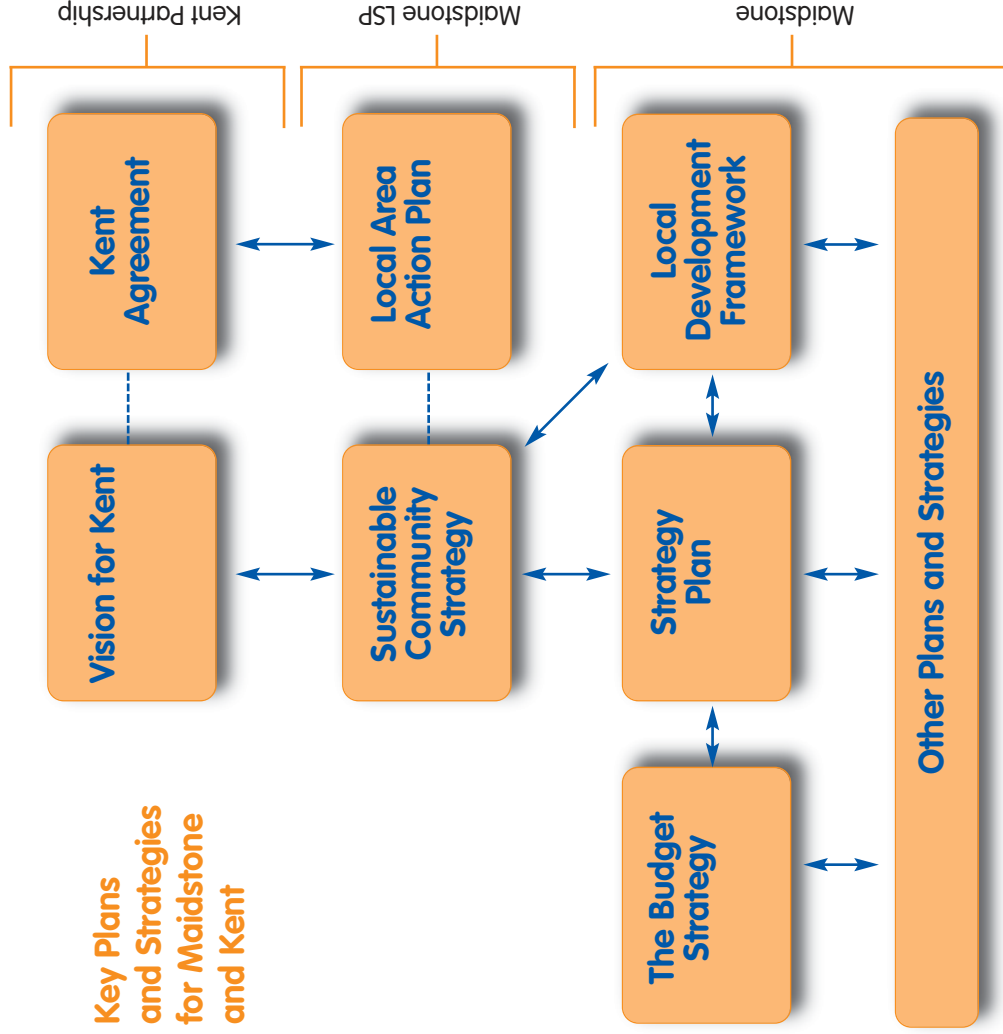


### Working in partnership

More gets done if people and organisations in an area work together. There are elements of the vision and improvements the Council would like to see but which it does not directly deliver. The Government expects councils to be community leaders and broaden their remit to tackle long term challenges such as public health, climate change and changes in the local population.

We are working with other partners in the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership - like the Police, Primary Care Trust, voluntary sector and local business - to ensure the priorities for Maidstone are delivered. Where this is the case we have tried to say so in our key objectives.

### Key Plans and Strategies for Maidstone and Kent





## Local Area Agreement – Kent Agreement 2

At the highest level the link between Government and local priorities is also made through Local Area Agreements. Kent Partnership is the countywide local strategic partnership and is responsible for overseeing the community strategy for Kent, the Vision for Kent. The Kent Agreement 2 (KA2) is the Local Area Agreement for Kent. It includes key targets agreed jointly between the Kent Partnership and central government and takes forward the ambitions contained in the Vision for Kent.

Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is one of nine in Kent which have developed their own sustainable community strategies. The priorities for Kent are reflected in Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy.

### Maidstone Local Action Plan

Maidstone LSP's Local Action Plan (LAP) is based on the priorities and targets for Kent set out in KA2 and sets out how Maidstone will contribute to meeting the targets for Kent and progress the priorities of Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy.

## Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) provides a framework for all the agencies involved in the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and details the priorities and targets for Maidstone for the next 10 years. The Maidstone LSP brings partners - public sector agencies as well as representatives from business and the community sector- together to agree the priorities for Maidstone, coordinate service delivery and improve outcomes for the residents of Maidstone.

The SCS includes eight specific and two cross-cutting objectives for Maidstone.

The cross-cutting objectives are extremely important and are incorporated throughout the whole of the SCS.

### Specific objectives

- Develop a vibrant skills based economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all;
- Develop Maidstone Borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living;
- Build stronger and safer communities;
- Healthier communities and happier, more active older people;
- Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all;
- To develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system;

- Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character;
- Make Maidstone Borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations;

### Cross-cutting objectives

- Reduce inequalities within the borough; and
- Establish Maidstone Borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate change.

Actions to be delivered in the SCS are laid out under eight topics. These are:

- 1 Economy and Prosperity
- 2 Sustainable Integrated Transport
- 3 Health and Older People
- 4 Children Young People and Families
- 5 Crime and Safety
- 6 Homes and Communities
- 7 Sport Creativity and culture
- 8 Environmental Excellence and Climate Change

We have detailed the Councils objectives under the eight SCS topics to show how we will be contributing to the overall vision and objectives for the Maidstone borough.

The eight chapters of the SCS, which we have adopted as our strategic themes, explain how these objectives will be delivered.



## Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out the authority's strategy for development in the borough. The South East Plan will require considerable growth across the South East with modest levels in Maidstone. The nature of development is limited by a number of factors by such as agricultural land and limits of the local transport infrastructure.

As it deals with the physical development of the borough there is a large degree of overlap between the LDF and the Strategic Plan because both deal with the development of the borough.

The Council's aim must be to secure an effective planning framework that delivers growth and takes account of environmental considerations. Development Plan Documents relating to two key areas – Affordable Housing and Open Spaces – have already set the priority context for dealing with the Governments key challenges identified as part of the development of the LDF.

## Budget Strategy

To ensure that the Council's priorities are met, the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is aligned with the authority's corporate planning process, identifying issues over a three to five year period. The MTFS sets the context for delivering a balanced budget

and identifies the required medium term annual savings.

The Council also undertakes an annual budget consultation using a variety of methods including the 'budget simulator' which allows local residents to make policy decisions and see financial consequences. The consultation which took place in November and December 2008 on the budget for 2009-10 saw more than 200 residents take part.

## Equalities

The Council has a Corporate Equality Plan which ensures that every service and department of the Council is working to increase access to services and reduce inequality.

Is committed to the Sustainable Community Strategy cross-cutting objective of reducing inequalities within the borough. We have ensured that under each of the eight strategic themes we have plans in place to tackle inequality where it exists. We also

## Consultation and Involvement

The strategic themes and objectives contained within this plan were developed during the formulation of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Extensive consultation was carried out to ensure that the priorities are focussed on what residents feel is important. We used

a number of methods of involvement including resident focus groups, local surveys and a new campaign entitled 'Stick up for Maidstone'. There was a good response to the involvement exercises, more than 600 people participated and more than 2,400 comments were received.

The Council also undertook consultation on the Strategic Plan. The draft Strategic Plan was available on the website for comment and copies were distributed to Councillors, parish councils, partners, community groups and Maidstone Borough Council staff. We also carried out a week long consultation event in the Maidstone Gateway, meeting nearly 200 customers and asking their opinions. The feedback and comments received plus the recent results from the Place Survey have been reflected in the final version of the Strategic Plan and have informed the development of the Council's priorities.

## The Council's Values

Our six core values were developed with our staff and are at the heart of everything we do. We always STRIVE to deliver services in accordance with them.



**SUPERB** customer service

**TEAMWORK**

**RESPONSIBILITY** to deliver our promises

**INTEGRITY** and high standards of corporate governance

**VALUE** for money and efficiency

**EQUALITY** in a diverse organisation



## Customer care and engagement

The Council's core values of Superb customer service and Responsibility to deliver our promises reflect how important our customers are to us. We have a customer care policy that sets the standards and expectations in relation to delivering quality services. We undertake regular customer satisfaction reviews to ensure that we identify what our customers want and make improvements accordingly. We have a corporate complaints system to ensure that we respond to customers quickly and correctly. We always try to get things right first time, but when this does not happen we make sure we learn lessons to improve customer service in the future.

As a customer-focussed organisation we want to ensure our customers can access our services easily and in a way which suits them.

We opened the new Maidstone Gateway in King Street at the beginning of 2009, replacing our offices on London Road and Tonbridge Road. This now means all of our services are delivered from one office right in the centre of town. Many of our partners also deliver services from the Gateway (e.g. Kent County Council, Citizens Advice Bureau) creating a 'one stop shop' for customers.

We have a dedicated telephone contact centre to ensure that when people call the Council their queries are dealt with quickly at first point of contact wherever possible.

We have also improved our website greatly to allow people to make enquiries and fill in forms on-line. Customers can still write or email us with enquiries.

Whatever method people choose to contact us, we aim to respond as quickly as possible with the right information.

We plan to keep improving by looking at innovative approaches to service delivery.

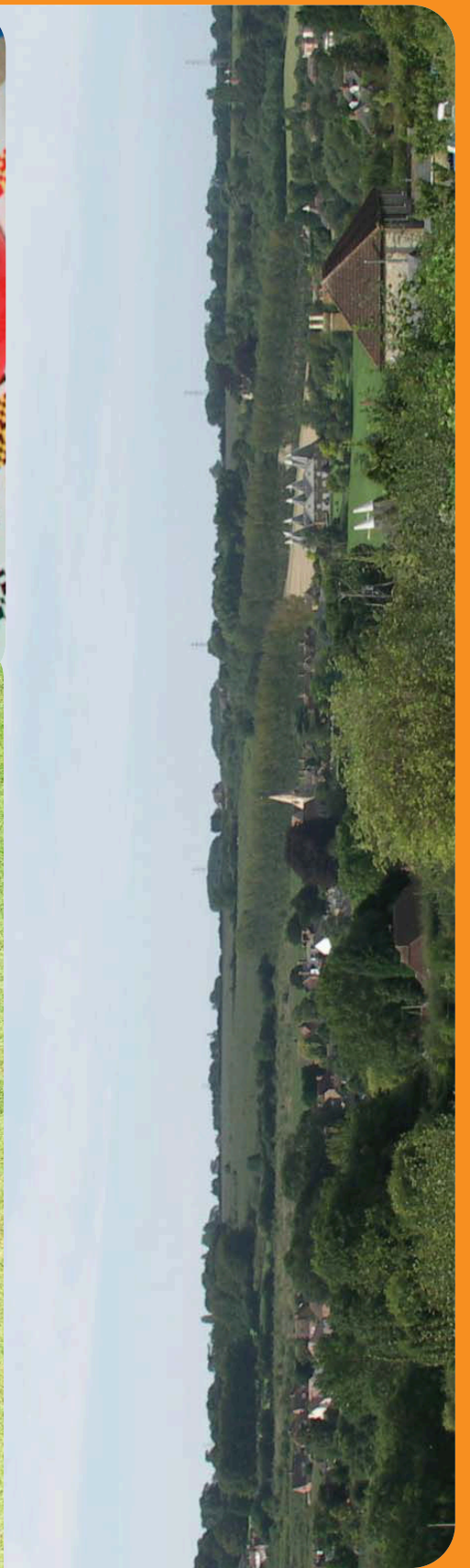
For example, we have introduced a benefits hub at the new Maidstone

Gateway, where customers can speak to one person who will be qualified to help them with all their applications for

benefits. This means they will not have to visit a number of different organisations to apply for all the benefits available to them. We also recognise how important it is that our customers have more

opportunity to influence the services we provide. We are committed to shifting the power to local people and will look at new ways of engaging successfully with local communities.

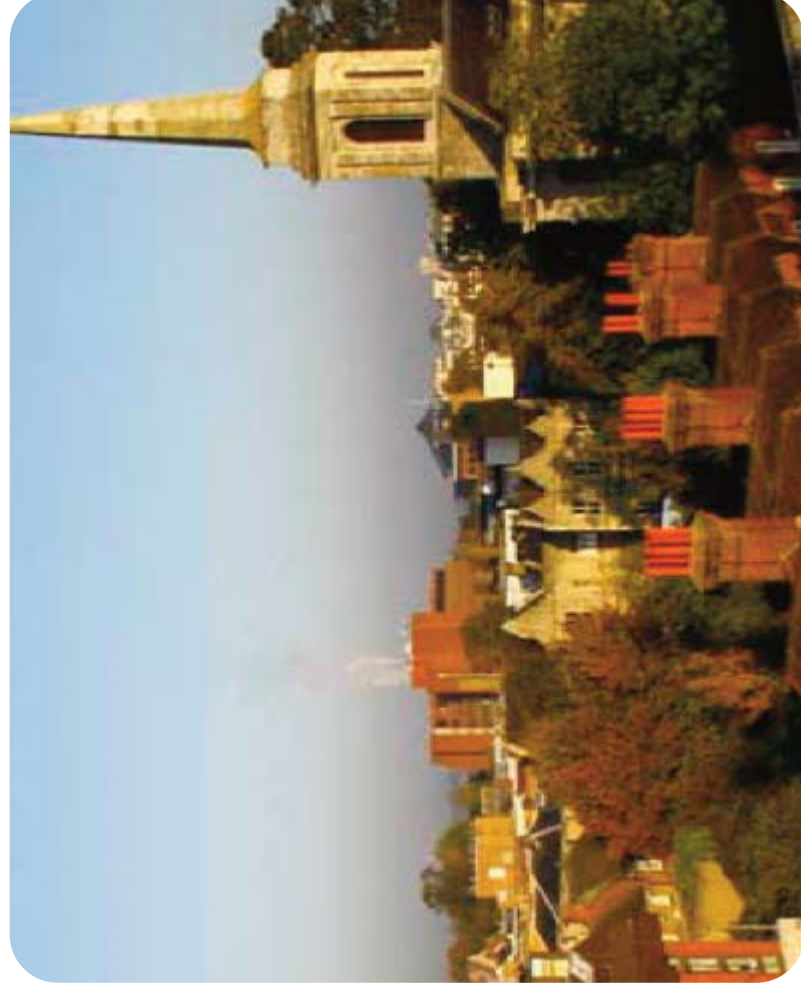






# The context in which the Council Works

Kent has a two tier council system. Kent County Council covers the whole of Kent (other than Medway) and Maidstone is one of the 12 district councils . This means that Maidstone Council delivers some services to the residents of Maidstone e.g. waste collection and Kent County Council delivers others e.g. road and pavement repairs.



**What Maidstone Council is responsible for**

- Housing including Housing and Council Tax benefits
- Planning and Development Control
- Council Tax collection and non-domestic rates
- Waste collection
- Electoral registration
- Local Land charges
- Food and Safety
- Environmental enforcement
- Building control
- Museum
- Theatre
- Crematorium and cemetery
- Leisure centre
- Parks and open spaces
- Street cleaning
- Abandoned vehicles
- Community safety including provision of CCTV
- Arts and sports
- Public conveniences

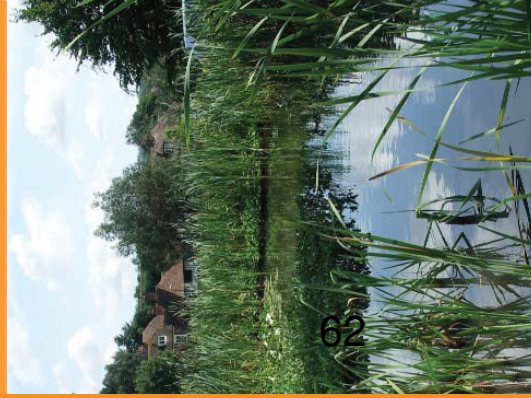
**What Kent County Council is responsible for**

- Footpaths and bridleways
- Highways maintenance including road safety and street lighting
- Trading standards
- Social Services including adult and children's services
- Education including adult education
- Libraries
- Registration of births, marriages and deaths
- Transport planning
- Waste disposal

**What Parish Councils are responsible for**

- Different parishes are responsible for different functions, but they have the powers to spend money on the following:
- Allotments
  - Open spaces and playing fields
  - Community halls
  - Roadside verges
  - Seats and shelters
  - Footway lighting
  - Crime prevention e.g. installation of CCTV
  - Litter – bins and anti-littering campaigns

The borough of Maidstone is made up of the unparished town and 41 parishes, 35 of which have parish councils. The services provided in parished areas by parish councils are provided by Maidstone Borough Council in the town. Because parish councils are physically closer to the community, they tend to focus more closely upon the priorities of the residents of a particular area.



# How the Council works

## Council

The Council has 55 elected Councillors or Members. The Council is elected by thirds over three years with the next local elections in 2010. Every fourth year there are no Borough Council elections. The full Council meets every two months and sets the budget and overall Council policy as well as the level of Council Tax. The Council chooses the Council Leader, who then selects the Cabinet.

## Cabinet

Since May 2008 the Conservative party have held the majority of seats on the Council and six Councillors make up the Cabinet. The Cabinet makes key decisions on Council services, which must be in line with the overall policy and budget frameworks set by the Council. Each Cabinet Member has their own portfolio area which they make decisions on. Matters that concern two or more portfolios are dealt with by the whole Cabinet, which meets monthly.

## Overview and Scrutiny

The Cabinet is held to account by four Overview and Scrutiny committees which meet every month. These committees ensure the decisions of the Cabinet are properly monitored and examine the Council's policies, services and expenditure. They also carry out investigations and research into relevant topics and make recommendations to Cabinet on their findings.

## Other committees reporting to Council

There are a few other committees that meet and these are an

- Planning Committee – makes decisions on planning applications;
- Licensing Committee – makes decisions on licence applications;
- Standards Committee – helps ensure the Council promotes and maintains high standards of conduct and

- corporate governance; and
- Audit Committee – ensures the Council's risk management framework is adequate and reviews the authority's financial and non-financial performance.

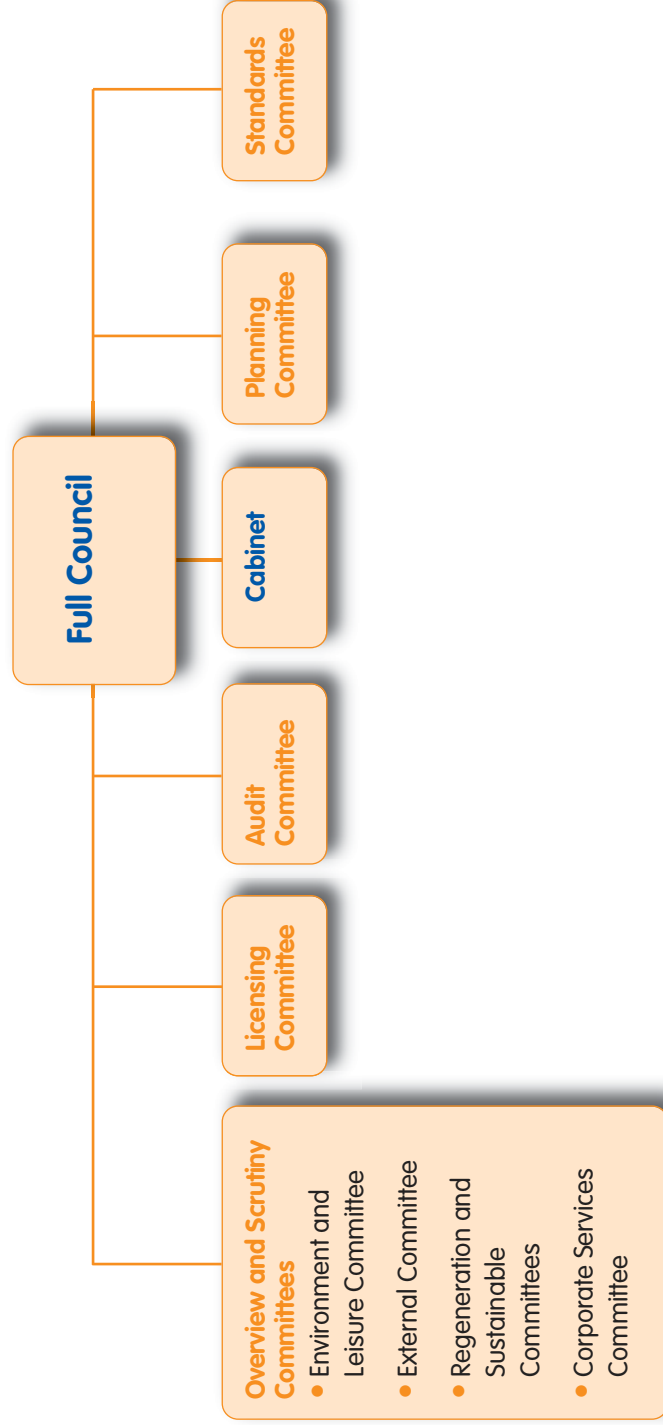
Copies of all the agendas, minutes and reports as well as further information on the Committees can be found on the Council's website. The decision making structure is set out in the chart below







## Decision Making Structure



### Corporate Management Team

consists of the Council's Chief Executive, Directors and Chief Monitoring Officer and is responsible for the day to day management of the Council and all its staff. Management team ensures that the Council's policies are implemented and that the Council's key objectives are delivered.

### Member training

In 2008 the Council was awarded the 'Charter for Member Development' by South East employers. This national Charter recognises the Council's commitment and performance in providing effective and comprehensive induction, development and support to our 55 Members this enables them to successfully fulfil their varied and challenging roles as elected Councillors for the borough and to help them contribute to the achievement of the strategic priorities and objectives. Members are actively involved in setting the learning and development programme annually and individual learning needs are addressed through personal development planning. The Council has also run information sessions for local people who may be considering becoming a Councillor to highlight what is involved and the expectations placed on members.

### The Cabinet – Roles and Responsibilities



Leader of the Council (Strategic Leadership)

#### Cllr Christopher Garland

- Communications
- External affairs
- Performance management and data quality
- Value for money
- To ensure that the Cabinet Members are delivering priorities within their own portfolio structures
- Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership



Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

#### Cllr Richard Ash

- Legal and Human Resources departments
- Land Charges
- Council Tax and Housing Benefit systems
- Property, Procurement and Projects
- Customer contact and complaints
- Democratic services
- ICT and e-Government





**65** Cabinet Member for Environment

**Cllr Mark Wooding**

- Highways
- Public transport and Park & Ride
- Climate Change
- Parking
- Waste collection and street cleansing
- Environmental health
- Public toilets



Cabinet Member for Regeneration

**Cllr Malcolm Greer**

- Planning
- Economic Development Strategy
- Sustainability
- Housing
- Regeneration and Growth Point Status
- Achieving close links with the business community



Cabinet Member for Community Services

**Cllr Marion Ring**

- Health and community health
- Community safety and social inclusion;
- External relationships with parish councils, KCC and other levels of local government.
- Representing young people
- Lifelong learning



Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

**Cllr Brian Moss**

- Museum
- Cemetery and crematorium
- Tourism
- Parks, open spaces and allotments
- Market
- Theatre and arts development
- Leisure Centre and Sports and leisure

# Progress and Performance



Maidstone is a high achieving council. We know through comparing our results with others because the Audit Commission, the independent organisation who review how well Councils are performing, have said so when they have assessed us.

## Comprehensive Performance Assessment

2008/09 is the last year councils will be assessed using the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Maidstone Council was rated as "Excellent" under CPA in 2004 and has continued to receive positive inspection assessments on the use of resources, data quality and direction of travel. The Council was awarded the top score of 4 in our most recent 2007/08 assessments for data quality and use of resources.

## Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the new annual inspection

process introduced by the government which comes into effect in April 2009. CAA is different from CPA in that it is much more focussed on outcomes for local people and consists of two main elements:

- An Area assessment; and
- An Organisational assessment

### Area Assessment

This assessment will look at how the different public services in Kent are working together, how well the services they provide are being delivered and, most importantly, whether local services are improving outcomes for citizens, particularly those groups who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded. The area assessment will be Kent wide and the starting point will be the Local Area Agreement for Kent: Kent Agreement 2 (KA2).

### Organisational assessment

Councils will receive a score of between 1 (poor) and 4 (excellent) for the

organisational assessment. There is much more emphasis on delivery of outcomes for local people and achievements in value for money rather than on council processes.

### National Indicators (NIs)

The Government has also introduced in 2008/09 a national indicator set consists of 188 performance indicators which will measure how local authorities and partnerships are delivering on the national priorities agreed by Government. They provide important evidence for both area and organisational assessments. As Maidstone is a district Council, it is judged on only 64 of the NIs, but all of the 188 NIs will be collected at a county level.

The Government understands that priorities will be different in different areas on the country, so inspectors will pay most attention to the NIs adopted as priorities in the Local Area Agreement for Kent, KA2.







# What we will deliver

The Council is committed to its lead role within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Strategic Plan has been developed alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and explains how the Council will contribute to the delivery of the priorities for the borough. We have set out our key objectives under the eight topics in the SCS to show how the Council's priorities fit with the wider aims for the borough.

- **Economy and Prosperity**
- **Sustainable and Integrated Transport**
- **Crime and Safety**
- **Health and Older people**
- **Children Young People and Families**
- **Homes and Communities**
- **Sport Creativity and Culture**
- **Environmental Excellence and Climate Change**





## Economy and Prosperity



“Develop a vibrant skills based economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all”

### National Context

There are over 7000 businesses within the borough of Maidstone, 30% of which are located in rural areas. Financial and business sectors, the public sector, retail and construction comprise the bulk of Maidstone's economy. The borough also has a large tourist industry, supporting around 3500 jobs. Maidstone town is the largest shopping centre within Kent, with approximately 700 shops and 75 cafes and restaurants. The town has a vibrant night-time economy, which is also the largest in Kent. Although the average earnings of those living in Maidstone are higher than the South East average, those who work in Maidstone earn less. This suggests many people who live in Maidstone commute out of the borough to work in higher paid jobs.

The percentage of unemployed people in the Borough is below the Kent and the South East averages but is starting to rise. It is important to retain businesses currently based in Maidstone and attract new businesses, particularly those offering high value, skilled and well paid employment in high growth sectors and to encourage specialisms. Regeneration, renewal and redevelopment are important in achieving this and several areas in the town centre, including poorly occupied secondary office stock, mixed use sites around Upper Stone Street and Wrens Cross, are key areas for regeneration, as are other areas in the South of the borough. Crucially, regeneration must tackle issues of social and economic exclusion.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

The national economic picture is challenging. The UK's economy is in recession, consumer confidence has reduced, house prices have fallen and increasing numbers of people have found themselves without jobs as businesses have had to cut costs or have failed. The Government have taken a number of steps to stimulate the economy and the Bank of England has cut interest rates. However, reduced bank lending means people are finding it difficult to get loans

or mortgages. Regeneration is a high priority with greater emphasis on Economic Development powers devolved to local authorities (Sub National Review) and a focussed approach to worklessness (Transforming Places, Changing Lives, a Framework for Regeneration) Ensuring everyone has access to education and skills training remains a top priority for the government in terms of narrowing the equality gap and ensuring the UK has a workforce that has the skills required to meet the needs of the economy.

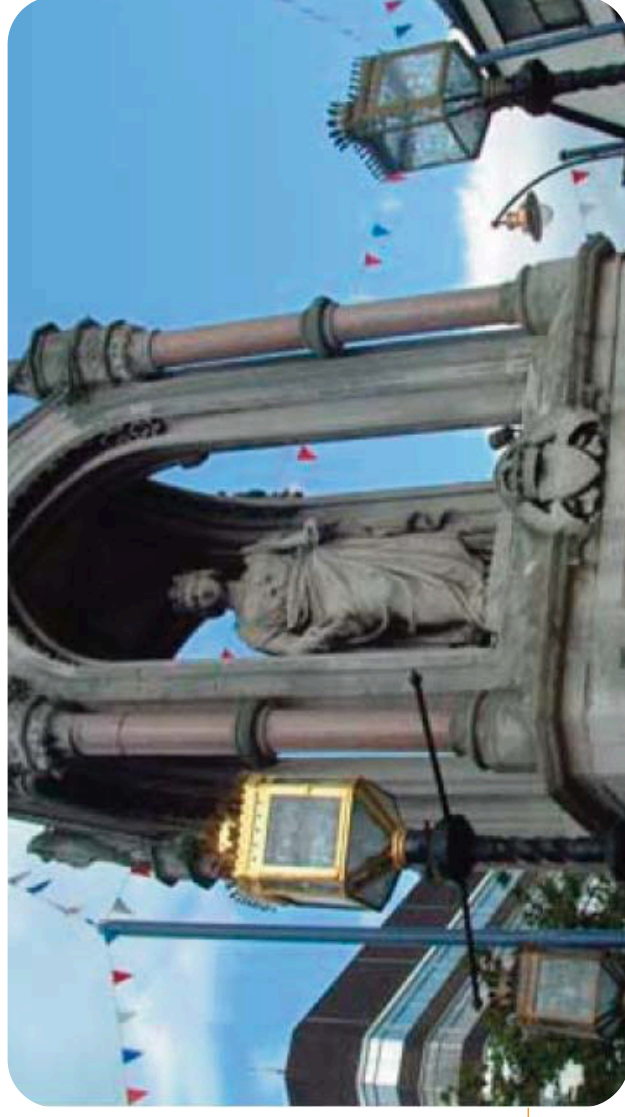


## Economy and Prosperity



### In 2008/09 we .....

- Worked with partners to introduce an education programme to rehabilitate offenders held at Maidstone Prison.
- Publicised Maidstone to businesses using a range of different methods e.g. [www.locateinmaidstone.com](http://www.locateinmaidstone.com)
- Worked to develop the tourist and business economies.
- Won two awards for Kent conference Bureau which is run by the council's tourism team: "Best Brochure" in the Meeting Industry Marketing Awards and the gold award for "Business Tourism" at the Tourism ExSEllence Awards.
- Developed Economic Development and Tourism Strategies to help Maidstone to grow complimentary with the neighbouring areas of the Thames Gateway and Ashford, where massive investment is planned.
- Developed an online guide to Maidstone for the disabled to help disabled visitors plan their trip more efficiently and encourage them to shop in the town.
- Facilitated through the planning process the completion of phase 1 of Eclipse Park, attracting a number of businesses to move their head quarters to the business park.





### Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Actively promote the commercial benefits of Maidstone to new businesses to increase the prosperity of the area, diversify the economy and encourage existing businesses to grow.
- Continue to develop our offer in terms of retail, cultural leisure and tourism accordingly to make Maidstone more attractive to investors.
- Work with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partners to deliver and support key regeneration projects.
- Strive to expand the range of learning opportunities, education and skills provision available in the Maidstone

borough to provide a highly skilled workforce and improve productivity.

- Work with key higher and further education partners to increase access opportunities to education and training, improving outcomes for disengaged and vulnerable groups and reducing worklessness.

- Continue to review the services the Council provides to ensure they meet the needs of local people and provide value for money.
- Monitor and manage the impact of the credit crunch and economic downturn to ensure that key services are protected, help is available to those affected by the downturn and to ensure that the Council is best placed to move forward when the upturn comes.



### What this means for Maidstone...

- More businesses offering employment specialisms.
- More higher paid high quality jobs.
- Increased opportunities for education and training for all.
- Increased tourism.
- New jobs for the borough
- A better, more easily accessible town centre.

- Help will be available for the increasing numbers of those affected by the recession who may find themselves homeless or unemployed.
- Town centre public realm improvements providing better facilities and an attractive business location.
- A vibrant economy and prosperity in Maidstone.



## Sustainable and Integrated Transport



“To develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system”

### National Context

The Eddington study was commissioned in 2005/06 to examine the long-term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability. The Government published their objectives in November 2008 based on the results of this study. These are:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;

- To contribute to better safety security and health and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport;
  - To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and
  - To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.
- To support these goals the Government is developing policies on safety and emissions reduction. There is also a greater focus on maintaining and improving the connections within the national transport infrastructure.



### Why it is important to Maidstone

Maidstone is the county town of Kent and is a centre for business, retail and administration. The borough is advantageously situated on the main transport routes between London, which is only 37 miles away, and the channel ports, just 35 miles away. Rail services to London run regularly and take around an hour. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link station of Ashford International is only a 20 minute rail journey away and Ebbsfleet International can be reached in 30 minutes by car. The town is located close to the County's motorway and trunk road

network and therefore has good links to the rest of the UK and to the coast via the M20. As a result localised traffic congestion and poor journey time reliability is increasingly common on many local roads, particularly if Operation Stack is implemented. It is predicted that the town will be gridlocked within four years. Quality of life of local residents and the future economic prosperity of the town are therefore reliant on the development of a sustainable and integrated transport system for Maidstone.

Maidstone has a good Park & Ride scheme, enabling commuters travelling into the town centre to park their cars and catch a bus into the town. This helps to reduce traffic in the town and reduce emissions from cars.

Following the implementation in April 2008 of free bus travel throughout England for those over 60, it was predicted that Maidstone Council would have significant increased cost, due to the high visitor rates to the borough and excellent links to other towns. Maidstone Council also chose to continue to provide discretionary extras as part of the scheme, which have remained popular.

### In 2008/09 we .....

- Achieved a small decrease in traffic flows at peak times.
- Worked with partners on the first Maidstone in Town Without Your Car Campaign in September.
- Re-introduced the companion bus passes which enables those receiving a higher rate of mobility component to take an un-named escort with them to help on journeys.
- Introduced a new disabled travel voucher scheme in liaison with Age Concern.
- Re-rendered the Park and Ride scheme.

### What this means for Maidstone...

- Improved accessibility.
- Better, more joined up public transport.
- Reduced congestion in the town.
- Improved parking and car parks.
- A good Park & Ride service.

### Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Work to reduce congestion and support economic growth through development of the transport infrastructure including seeking improvements to public transport.





## Crime and Safety



“Build stronger and safer communities”

### National Context

The risk of becoming a victim of crime has fallen sharply in recent years. While in 1995 the risk was 40%, by 2008 it had fallen to 22%. Antisocial behaviour is often a major priority for the public, particularly in the most deprived communities. Last year the Government introduced a three year strategy on cutting crime with focus on reducing rates of re-offending, tackling anti-social behaviour, designing out crime and increasing public confidence.

The economy influences crime rates with evidence showing that when the economy performs well, crime generally falls. However, deprivation and

disadvantage exist for some even when the economy is performing strongly. There is a correlation between the area in which people live and their involvement in crime.

Road safety has become an increasingly important and recognised issue as the number of people killed or seriously injured on the UK's roads, whilst reducing, is still too high.

‘Tomorrow’s roads: safer for everyone’ is the Government’s strategy for improving road safety over the next decade, setting out the target to reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured by 40% by 2011 compared to the period 1994-1998.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

On a local level violent crime, burglary and vehicle crime are all reducing. Maidstone has an extensive CCTV network that covers the town centre and some other areas of the borough e.g. Mote Park, that helps to discourage crime and anti-social behaviour and has helped to catch offenders in the act and secure convictions.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires public bodies to work together in reducing crime and disorder through forming partnerships and devising strategies for

crime reduction and action plans to ensure effective delivery. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in Maidstone is the ‘Safer Maidstone Partnership and involves several agencies working together to reduce crime and make Maidstone a safer place for all.

In contrast to the national trend Maidstone has seen a year on year increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads between 2005 and 2007. During 2006/07 97 people were killed or seriously injured on the roads of Maidstone, which is the highest number in Kent.



**In 2008/09 we .....**

- Improved the CCTV system and made it more cost effective.
- Were chosen for a national pilot of WiMax. This wireless internet service will lead to quicker responses to fires and crimes. It will also be used to link CCTV cameras to Maidstone Council's control room, potentially saving £40,000.
- Trained all of our Community Safety Officers to NVQ level 3 to give them the skills needed for the identification of crime and suspicious behaviour.

- Worked with the Police on 'Operation Safer Summer' which resulted in several arrests for drug offences and increased enforcement activity in the alcohol control areas. This was followed up with work from Turning Point the drug out-reach agency. Extra patrols were also carried out in key areas such as Mote Park and Brenchley Gardens to help tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Continued a scheme to restrict vehicle parking on grassways and verges in the Parkwood area with the aim of improving pedestrian safety.

**What this means for Maidstone**

- Increased feeling of safety for local residents.
- Fewer incidents of anti social behaviour fewer crimes committed.
- Improved reputation of the night-time economy.
- Better responses and more effective action taken in response to reports of anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Increased road safety.

**Over the next three years our key objectives are:**

- Work in partnership to address issues of road safety.
- Take a preventative approach to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour.
- Work with the police and other partners to reduce crime and ensure that our residents feel safe.



## Health and Older People



“Healthier communities and happier, more active older people”

### National Context

The NHS has limited resources and has to use them as wisely as possible. In 2008 the Government decided that patients would be allowed to pay privately for treatment with expensive drugs without losing their entitlement to NHS care. There has also been a shift in recent years away from treating people when they become ill to preventing them getting ill in the first place. Prevention is better and cheaper than cure. Prevention is also seen as key to reducing health inequalities. Smoking, alcohol abuse and obesity are all major factors in poor health. They are also more common in more deprived communities.

Britain has an ageing population. In 2007 for the first time, the population of those aged 16 and under dropped below the percentage of the population of state pensionable age. The number of older people is increasing because those born in the post World War Two baby boom are reaching pensionable age and because more people are living longer: the fastest growing age group are those aged 80 and over, who now make up about 5% of the population. There is a need to ensure services are tailored to meet the needs of increasing numbers of older people to ensure they lead healthy, active and independent lives.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

The health of people living in Maidstone is better than the England average, but health inequalities remain an issue e.g. men from the most deprived areas of Maidstone will live on average 5 years less than men from the most affluent areas. In 2007 Maidstone Hospital was heavily criticised for its failure to control infectious diseases. There are plans to move emergency and orthopaedic surgery to the Kent and Sussex Hospital

in 2009 and make Maidstone Hospital a centre for excellence in cancer surgery. From 2005 to 2020 it is predicted there will be a 30% increase of over 65 year olds in West Kent. Half of the adult population will be over 50 by the early 2020s and many will live in areas of deprivation. Therefore it is particularly important to ensure the services are in place to support older people to live independently and to ensure that older people have a voice.



**In 2008/09 we .....**

- Appointed a new joint Primary Care Trust/Maidstone Borough Council Healthy Lifestyles Co-ordinator to develop Maidstone's Choosing Health plan and programme.
- Reviewed mental health services across the borough, working in partnership with Tunbridge Wells through the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report is intended to help healthcare providers inform their service delivery and development.

- Continued to progress Maidstone Older Persons Forum to ensure older people in the borough have a voice and are listened to.
- Secured PCT funding for Choosing Health and set up a multi-agency Health Action Team for Maidstone to lead on the implementation of the Choosing Health initiative.

**What this means for Maidstone**

- More support to help older people continue to live in their homes for as long as they can.
- Increased life expectancy across all areas of Maidstone.
- Easier ways of accessing health care e.g. clinics in some schools.

**Over the next three years our key objectives are:**

- Harness the Council's Services to help partners, promote healthier lifestyles, improve the health of residents and hold healthcare providers to account.
- Continue to build an effective partnership with the Primary Care Trust and other healthcare providers to improve public health and reduce health inequalities in the borough.





## Children, Young People and Families



**“Make Maidstone Borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations”**

### National Context

‘Every Child Matters’ is a Government-led approach that aims to ensure every child and young person, whatever their background and circumstances, is protected from harm and is given access to the resources they need to achieve their life choices. It was introduced alongside the Children Act 2004 after the investigation into the death of Victoria Climbié. It has meant that all organisations involved with providing services to children – from councils, schools and hospitals, to police and voluntary groups – now share information and work together through Children’s Trusts to protect and support children. In the wake of the baby P case it is likely that the way children’s services are provided across the country will again be examined.

The Government places a high priority on reducing child poverty, aiming to ensure no child is living in poverty by 2020. Since 1998/99 approximately 600,000 children have been lifted out of poverty, but numbers living in poverty have risen over the past two years. The Government has recognised that a culture of dependency on benefits can pass from generation to generation and believe children suffer when they grow up in a home where nobody works. This is one of the drivers behind the initiative to support people, including lone parents and disabled people, to move from claiming benefits into work. Certainly children from deprived areas where more people are not in work tend to underachieve at school in comparison to their peers.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

Kent has a Children’s Trust, but in order to ensure services work together at an even more local level there are 23 Local Children’s Services Trusts. Maidstone is covered by two multi-agency Local Children’s Services Trusts. Kent County Council provides social services for children and young people, but as a district council Maidstone has some responsibilities under the Children Act, including effective working relationships within the Council and with other agencies, providing appropriate training

for staff and using the views of children and young people to help shape services. Percentages of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A\*-C grade are higher in Maidstone than the Kent and national average, but there are clear differences in the performance of schools in the borough. Maidstone has a relatively high level of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) but some wards have much higher levels than others. Reflecting the national picture, pupils who come from less affluent backgrounds perform significantly lower than others in all key stage examinations.





### In 2008/09 we .....

- Promoted the availability of benefits through the Kent Benefit Partnership and through local initiatives.
- Doubled turn out for the Youth Forum elections compared with the previous year. This year the Youth Forum also received the 'Spirit of the Try Angle Award, Recognising the Efforts and Achievements of Young People in Our Community' for their dedication to Switch Town centre youth café and other projects.
- Worked with KCC Social Services to fund 87 free places on play schemes and provided a further 108 places for children from low income families.

- Introduced a new sports club for disabled children called DMAX. Over 50 young people attended the launch.
- Continued to develop a new teenage pregnancy action plan and supported a Teenage Pregnancy Outreach Worker to work with vulnerable young people in local schools and youth clubs.
- Assisted the Youth Forum to run a number of activities including 'Peace One Day' at Whatman Park.
- Worked with partners to progress the Maidstone Skills Studio, which will help 14-16 year olds gain vocational skills in an out of school setting.

### What this means for Maidstone...

- Better educational opportunities and training for young people, meaning a reduction in 16-18 year olds NEET figures.
- Equal access to training opportunities creating more opportunities in disadvantaged areas.

### Improved engagement with young people and more young people involved in positive activities.

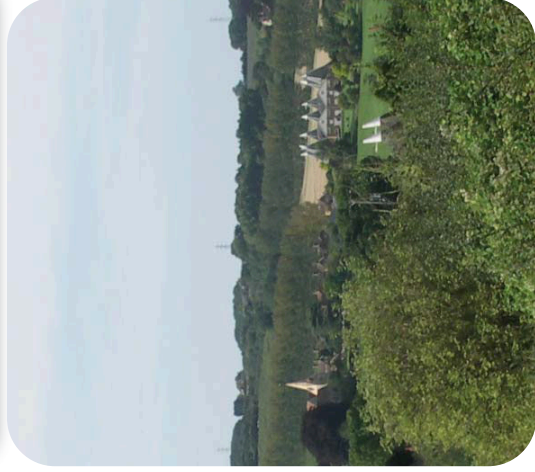
- Organisations working together to improve life for children, young people and families in the borough
- Housing Benefit applications determined quickly and correctly.

### Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Continue to provide an effective and responsive benefit service promoting the range of benefits available and how they can be accessed, whilst also ensuring that issues of fraud are tackled.
- Increase the number of people (especially young people) involved in positive activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas.



## Homes and Communities



“Develop Maidstone Borough’s urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living”

### National Context

The Government believes it is a basic right that everyone should have a decent place to live. The Government has set a Decent Homes standard and wants all councils and registered social landlords to ensure all the homes they own meet the standard by 2010 and has set targets which aim to make sure that at least 70% of vulnerable households (including families with children) within the private sector live in decent homes by 2010. It is an aim of many people to own their own home. House prices have continued to rise in recent years meaning that it has been difficult for many people to get on the housing ladder, particularly in areas where people particularly want to live e.g. cities like London and some rural areas and villages. This led to a number of initiatives to help first time buyers

and key workers own at least a stake in their homes e.g. shared ownership. The economic downturn has seen house prices drop, repossessions increase, people struggle to get mortgages and homelessness increase.

Regeneration is seen as critical to tackle inequality and poor living standards, but the number of homes being built has dropped considerably since the onset of the credit crunch. When homes are built it is important that enough affordable homes and social housing are included. It is recognised that on large developments it is important to provide a good mix of social housing, affordable housing and private sector housing to create balanced communities, as well as the necessary infrastructure to ensure communities are sustainable.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

Maidstone is home to around 143,000 people, living in about 60,000 households. Maidstone has been identified as a Growth area by the Regional Spatial Strategy and the population of Maidstone is expected to increase to around 158,000 people by 2026, with the addition of around 10,080 homes within the next 20 years. The Council was awarded Growth Point Status in 2007, so has access to funding for additional infrastructure. In 2005 the Housing Needs survey showed that 59% of those who wanted to could not afford to join the private rental sector, 68% who

wanted to could not afford to purchase their own home, even though 23% or more were earning over £27,000 (national average earnings). Like the rest of the country, house prices have fallen in Maidstone due to the economic downturn but people have also found it more difficult to get mortgages. The pressure on social housing is high, illustrated by the fact that there are 2500 families on the waiting list for social housing. There has also been a rise in homelessness. Regeneration schemes to create new homes, including social and affordable housing, and help tackle deprivation are on-going at Shepway, Parkwood and the High Street wards.

### In 2008/09 we .....

- Ensured developments of over ?? homes contained at least 40% affordable housing. This meant ?? new affordable homes were built.
- Bought back ?? empty homes into use
- In response to the economic downturn helped fund the purchase of ?? properties from developers at an average cost of ??, working with Registered Social Landlords.
- Formed a North & West Kent Partnership with neighbouring authorities and secured £1.5 million

funding to use for energy efficiency measure, first time buyers' grants and other efficiency measures.

- Prevented ?? households from becoming homeless.
- Reduced the number of families living in temporary accommodation.
- Opened the Maidstone Gateway, improving access to our services and those of our partners.
- Awarded grants of £?? to help people continue to live in their own homes.
- Continued to work closely with parishes and this year helped ?? to compile and publish parish plans.

### What this means for Maidstone...

- More people will be able to have a real say in local services through parish Councils and other representative groups.
- 400 new affordable homes built by March 2012.
- High quality developments that complement the area.
- Increased allocation of land for Gypsy and traveller pitches to respond to the accommodation needs of these communities.
- The right sized homes built in the right areas to fulfil the housing needs of the residents of Maidstone.
- More opportunities for volunteering and community involvement creating a strong sense of place and pride in our communities.
- Prevented 600 households from becoming homeless by March 2012.

### Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Enable the development of a range of homes in accordance with local housing need in order to develop sustainable communities. This means taking care to ensure that the Council responds to the market, encourages good design and maintains an awareness of the importance of architecture and landscaping.
- Use the development control service to ensure that future developments are built to high design standard and improve planning enforcement activity as well as simplifying design.
- Enable the Delivery of new affordable homes.
- Reduce the number of empty properties.
- Improve the quality of the existing housing stock in the borough including through the use of renovation grants. Ensure that the best use is made of the existing housing stock.
- In terms of spatial planning ensure an appropriate allocation of land for house building.
- Reduce the number of households who become homeless (through intervention).
- Continue to improve access to services.
- Continue supporting parish councils and representative groups in all communities of the borough.
- Promote effective partnerships working with the voluntary and community sectors.
- Promote equal opportunities, encourage greater community involvement and improve social inclusion in the borough.
- Encourage greater citizen participation, especially in registering to vote, elections and Council meetings and promote greater engagement with Council members.
- Improve communications and delivery of services to Gypsy and Traveller communities.



## Sport, Creativity and Culture



“Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all”

### National Context

Government has set a target for 2010 to offer all children at least four hours of sport a week. It is hoped that some of the work being done in relation to the Olympic Paralympic Games will inspire more young people to get involved in sporting activities.

The Olympic Games is also an opportunity for culture and the arts. The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games will be accompanied by a four-year cultural festival which began at the end of the Beijing Games. Providing an opportunity to show the creative industries in England to a global audience.

In addition the Government has implemented a number of initiatives to encourage participation in culture and the arts. Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people. Since its launch over 2,000 schools have participated, involving more than 80,000 teachers and 800,000 students.

The Arts Council for England has set its ambition for 2008-11 in 'Great art for Everyone'. The Arts Council wants to increase focus on the supporting Deaf and disabled artists and increase engagement in priority places.

### Why it is important to Maidstone

The Maidstone Leisure centre at Mote Park is one of the largest outside London and offers a variety of sports including swimming, a fitness suite and exercise classes. Sport and cultural services can play a crucial role in tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity and stimulating lifelong learning, which are all important for the borough. The centre is also located close to the park which offers a range of outdoor leisure opportunities.

Maidstone has three museums which not only reflect the local history and the geographical identity of the area but also hold some of the best collections outside of London. The Hazlitt Arts Centre has recently been renovated and as a result offers a wider range of activities and interests for local residents and visitors to the area.

Maintaining facilities and activities that allow local residents and visitors to engage in sports, and creative and cultural activities is essential to improving quality of life. This is particularly important in the current economic climate as more people are watching their spending and may want to participate in social activities at a reduced cost, closer to home.



### In 2008/09 we .....

- Celebrated the Museums 150th Birthday.
- Agreed a contract to manage the leisure centre to ensure high quality services and value for money.
- Increased the number of people visiting the museum and launched new initiatives like a series of classical concerts which are held at the museum
- Held the Maidstone Mela in Mote park as part of Black History month, which attracted 15,000 visitors.
- Completed work on the Hazlitt Theatre and Exchange to provide more facilities e.g. recording studio and rehearsal area and made a music and cultural information centre.
- Continued to improve play areas across the borough e.g. new equipment for teenagers has been installed at Giddyhorn Lane play area in December and includes a sports wall and basketball hoop, a Rodeo board and sheltered seating.
- Were awarded a green flag for Clare Park.
- Held a re-enactment of the Battle of Maidstone which attracted a large number visitors to the town.
- Put in a bid for lottery funding to improve Mote Park.
- Hosted Radio One's Big Weekend in Mote Park. 30,000 people attended and people living in the borough were given priority for the free tickets.

### What this means for Maidstone...

- A refurbished leisure centre offering a range of sporting activities.
- An extension of Maidstone Museum on Faith Street will provide a bigger and better museum, art gallery and Tourist Information Centre.
- Increased tourism.
- Better access to sport and sporting facilities.
- More activities and things to do for those living in Maidstone.
- If the Mote Park lottery bid is successful new paths and a nature trail will be created, the car park, lake and café area improved and more volunteer work will be coordinated.

### Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Improve parks and green open spaces through the green spaces strategy action plan and the play area strategy and enhance Maidstone's watercourses.
- Monitor residents' access to sport, leisure and cultural facilities, improve and maximise the use of Council facilities and encourage other service providers to provide high quality services to meet the needs of our residents.
- Develop the leisure centre to offer improved facilities.
- Work to raise the profile of Maidstone's music, sporting and cultural activities, including Art at the Centre, with the museum and the Hazlitt Theatre.





## Environmental Excellence and Climate Change



“Retain and enhance Maidstone borough’s distinctive history, landscape and character “

“Establish Maidstone Borough’s reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate change”

### National Context

People have become increasingly concerned about climate change. Carbon dioxide contributes to 85% of green house gases and the UK has committed to reduce emissions by 20% from 1990 to 2010. Around 29% of all carbon dioxide emissions were released as a result of road transport and whilst air is cleaner than it has been at any time since the industrial revolution local traffic hot spots continue to be an increasing problem. The need to travel to work and taking children to school are major factors in traffic levels. The weather patterns over recent years have demonstrated that climate change is a real problem with flooding in 2007 in the Midlands and Gloucestershire. Meanwhile certain areas of the country have continued to suffer from drought. Across the country, space in landfill sites

for rubbish is running out: landfill life averages between three and 13 years across different regions. There is a real need to reduce waste production, promote waste recovery, and develop new infrastructure to support this. The Government encourages people to recycle as much as possible and expects local councils to work hard to increase recycling rates. The recent ICUN Red List of Threatened Species indicates that 75% of plant species, one in three amphibians, one in four mammals and one in eight birds that have so far been assessed are at risk of extinction world wide. Biodiversity supports life itself through a range of ecosystem services and resources. In 1994, the UK became the first country to produce a national biodiversity action plan, following the Convention on Biological Diversity signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.





## Why it is important to Maidstone

Climate Change is an important issue for Maidstone having suffered floods in 2000 and a heat-wave in 2003. Drought is of particular concern as Kent is a drought Zone and Maidstone is a particularly susceptible area within Kent. In Maidstone most carbon emissions are produced by industry and commercial activities. There is also more road traffic within the South East than any other area of the UK and in Maidstone this has contributed to an air quality management area being introduced which covers the entire urban part of the borough. When looking at regeneration and new developments it is important that we minimise the impact on the environment by balancing housing and employment to reduce the need to travel to work, designing buildings that are energy efficient and ensuring that the areas used for developments allow for the use of public transport or cycling. Landfill void space in Kent is about five and a half years, lower than the national average. By increasing recycling and using the incinerator at Allington the amount of rubbish from Maidstone going into landfill will be vastly reduced. Levels of waste generated per head in Maidstone are also high when compared to other authorities. Maidstone contains 10% of the county broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland representing 12% of the borough's land cover. Biodiversity is primarily conserved via land designation.

## In 2008/09 we .....

- Re-tendered the Park & Ride service to ensure the service provides value for money and minimises the environmental impact.
- Held several 'Clean Sweep' events in the borough, volunteers from parish councils and community groups have joined with the council, to collect hundreds of bags of litter over the year.
- The new air quality management areas became effective and work

- progressed on their assessments.
- Were awarded a grade B for the energy usage of the leisure centre. Most leisure centres score lower efficiency ratings of D or E.
- Increased recycling rates with a new kerbside collection service.
- Reset our carbon neutral policy.
- Secured £10,000 funding from DEFRA to support our air quality work.
- Secured one to one support from the Energy Saving Trust.
- Secured participation in the Low Emissions Peer Group.

## Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Reduce the Council's carbon emissions through, amongst other activities, the introduction of Environmental Management System and Carbon reduction targets.
- Encourage and promote the reduction in Carbon emissions by residents and businesses.
- Ensure the Local Development Document currently being prepared deals with all development in an environmentally sustainable way.
- Reduce fuel poverty in the borough.
- Enhance biodiversity in Maidstone to improve the natural environment.
- Reduce water and material consumption in Council-owned properties and improve energy efficiency throughout the borough.
- Continue to support better cleaning, waste minimisation and recycling and improve monitoring.

## What this means for Maidstone...

- Maidstone will be better prepared to adapt to climate change and cope with the changes.
- Improved air quality: carbon emissions reduced by 2011.
- Easier ways of recycling for everyone, boosting recycling rates to 35%.
- A cleaner and tidier borough.
- 10,000 native trees planted by 2010 as part of our Climate Change Action Plan.
- The Council's carbon emissions will reduce by 3% a year.
- Environmentally sustainable developments.



# Making it happen

## How we'll deliver our priorities

Our service planning, delivery and monitoring mechanism will be the processes through which this plan is delivered. We must ensure we plan carefully and have the financial resources to deliver our priorities, so the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy are aligned with our corporate planning process.

### Service Planning

The service planning process allows us to convert high level objectives from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the authority. The function of any service plan is to ensure that all activities carried out by the department complement the aims and objectives of the Council and the community as a whole. This process

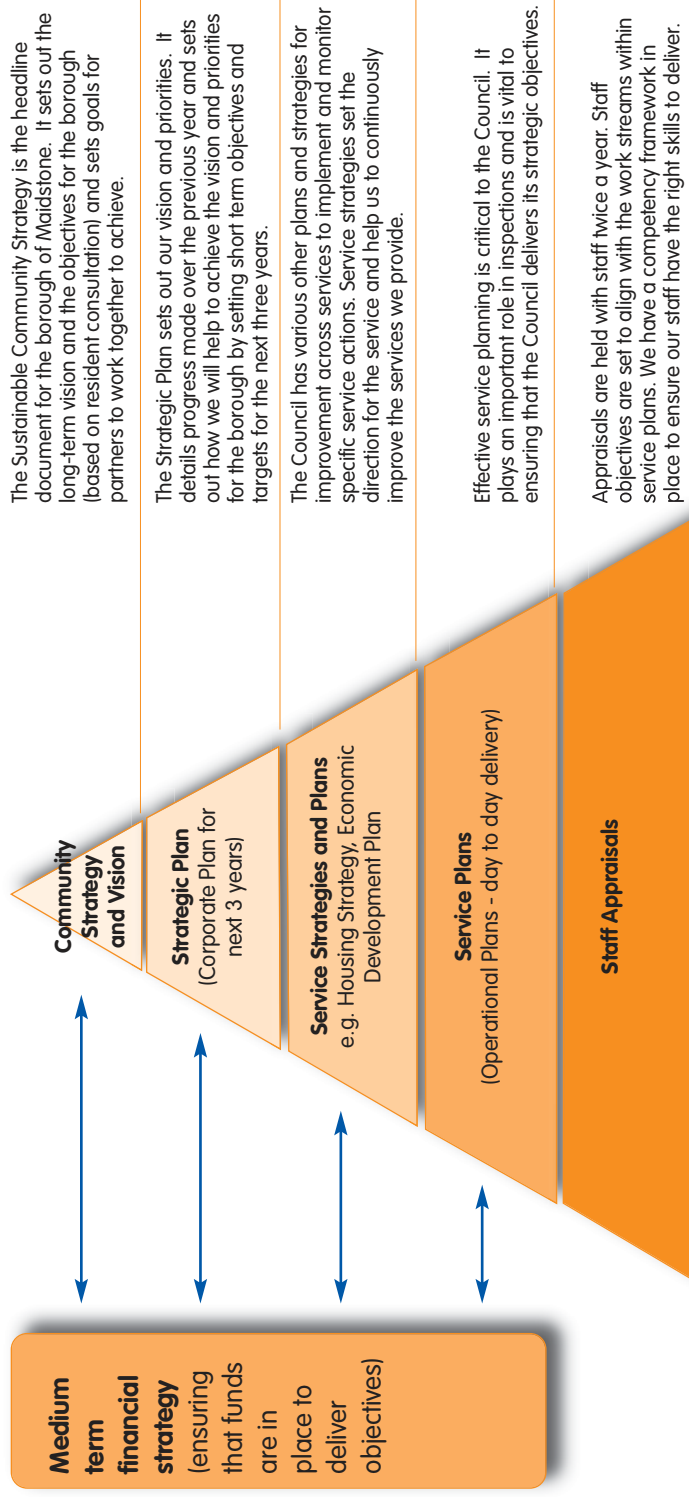
allows us to draw down objectives into individual performance areas and the development of personal action plans for employee development. Effective service planning helps us:

- deliver our corporate priorities
- match resources to priorities
- effectively plan at all levels

Service plans are an essential tool for setting the work for each department's developments and the priorities for the next three years, clearly linking these with financial planning, workforce planning, risk and performance management. The process is set out in the diagram on the next page.



## Maidstone Service Planning Process



### Prioritisation

The Council does not have the money to do everything it would like, especially in light of the current economic climate, which means we have to make difficult decisions about what services are most

important. Currently our focus must be on delivering statutory services (services we have to provide) and the services that help those most in need. We have to shift resources towards delivering our priorities and away from areas that are not priorities



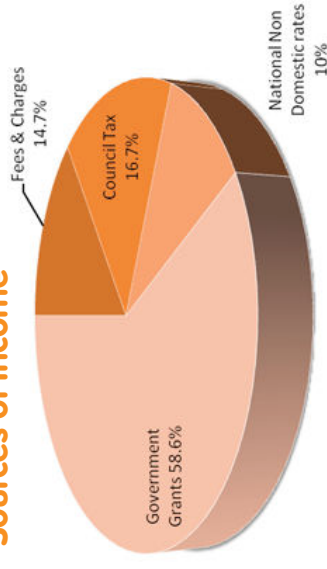
### Financial Resources

Councils have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Local authorities are having to support more people through the tough financial climate at a time when income from services that councils charge for is falling. In addition to these pressures the targets from the Comprehensive Spending Review came into force in 2007/08 placing the obligation on authorities to achieve 3% cashable efficiency savings each year.

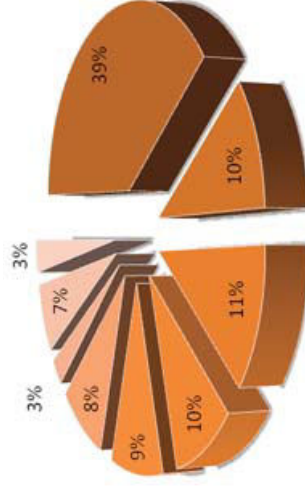
Despite these pressures Maidstone Council remains committed to avoiding excessive council tax increases and is determined to provide good value for money. The Council has developed an increasingly sound financial position over recent years, whilst recognising the pressure on resources that will continue to apply in the future. Locally the economic downturn and the impact on the Council can be summarised as:

- Less income generation with a reduction in applications being received for licensing and planning
- A reduction in funding from Central Government;
- Increased demand for services such as housing benefit with an increase in those losing their homes as a result of the economic climate;
- Less income from the sale of property assets due to the slump in housing market; and

### Sources of Income

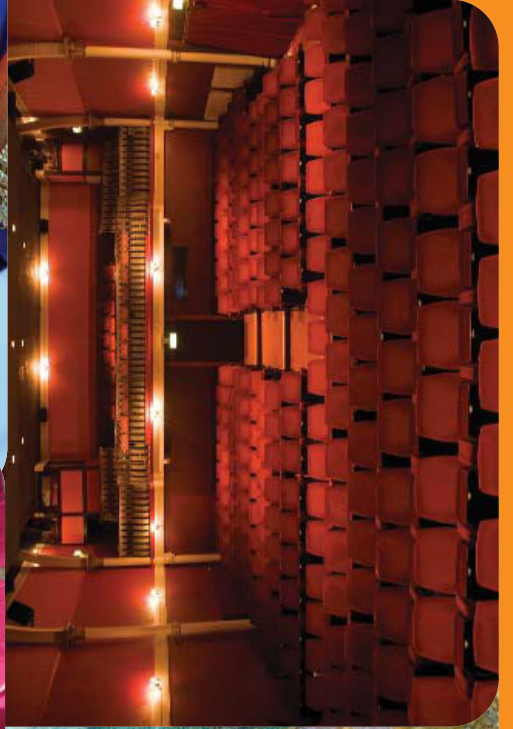


### Budget Estimates for 2009/10



- Housing Benefits £30,067
- Housing-Other £7,868
- Council Tax Benefit £8,811
- Highways £7,264
- Planning & Economic Development £7,047
- Recreation & Tourism £6,401
- Environmental Health £1,957
- Refuse Collection £4,957
- Other £2,387







## Other resources

that the best use is made of the Council's resources, and that the priorities in this Corporate Plan are adequately supported.

Our resources are not just financial. The table below highlights how we will ensure

- ✓ **Human - the people who deliver our services**
- ✓ Continue to focus on high performance through performance indicators and team by team performance through Reach
- ✓ Ensure performance is taken into account in deciding pay progression through the new appraisal process
- ✓ Improve the Council's workforce planning and recruitment and retention
- ✓ Improve equalities and the diversity of the Council's workforce
- ✓ Support new Councillor development, training and performance evaluation arrangements
- ✓ Explore, with partners, opportunities to develop new, more cost-effective ways of working
- ✓ Ensure all our staff have the training and development they need to be able to do their jobs well and deliver excellent services to our customers
- ✓ Ensure we develop our staff to match competencies with what the Council requires and develop a more structured approach to succession planning

## Information and Communication Technology (ICT) -

- ✓ new technology to help us deliver services more effectively and efficiently
- ✓ Support flexible and home working to improve work/life balance & help improve efficiency & quality of service
- ✓ Automate and streamline business processes wherever possible
- ✓ Develop e-procurement & e-billing to improve efficiency of procurement
- ✓ Investigate how customers access our services currently and will want to in the future
- ✓ Encourage customers to use more cost effective transactions, i.e. E-billing and E-citizen initiatives providing key information online
- ✓ Support shared services/partnership arrangements being developed in for example Licensing, Housing Benefits and ICT
- ✓ Investigate the benefits of a corporate Electronic Document Recognition Management System to improve document & records management and knowledge management
- ✓ Take advantage of pooled procurements (such as combined disaster recovery contract) and partnership/shared service arrangements (such as a Kent-wide network linking all partners) through the Kent Connects Partnership





**Assets** – the property and assets that we own or use our services

The Council will manage its property resources to ensure they are:

- ✓ in the right location and suitable for staff to deliver services
- ✓ in good condition to the extent that services can be provided from them in a comfortable environment for both staff and to deliver customers without interruption
- ✓ suitable for the purpose for which they are being used and accessible to people with disabilities
- ✓ flexible to the extent that they can be adapted economically to adjust to changing services needs, including sharing with partners in service delivery
- ✓ able to demonstrate 'Best Value' in terms of a balance between efficiency in operation, running costs and long term sustainability
- ✓ able to convey a positive image of the Council and the service being provided
- ✓ able to contribute positively to the immediate environment, particularly where there is a need for physical regeneration of the locality
- ✓ good examples of sustainable development if new or extensively refurbished
- ✓ maintained through a programme of planned maintenance arrangements
- ✓ managed to mitigate their impact on and the effect of climate change
- ✓ able to make the maximum contribution to service revenue budgets in terms of rental income
- ✓ able to make a positive contribution to the social wellbeing of the community either through its presence as a heritage asset or through use by others such as voluntary groups, charity organisations or small businesses
- ✓ retained for reasons of strategic importance, such as to influence the physical and economic regeneration of the Borough

**Natural** – ensuring we make effective use of natural resources and reduce the impact on the environment

- ✓ Reduce the amount of energy we use in our buildings
- ✓ Reduce the amount of fuel we use in our vehicles
- ✓ Look at the amount of water we use in our buildings and try and reduce this
- ✓ Increase use of laptops with low-energy power supplies, utilising less than half the power of a desktop PC & flatscreen monitors
- ✓ Automatic power-down of desktop PCs overnight to save energy
- ✓ Reduce the waste we produce and increase recycling
- ✓ Look at reducing the environmental impact of services as part of all tendering processes
- ✓ Minimise how much paper we use through reducing what we print
- ✓ Work with local residents and KCC to make efficiencies in recycling



## Value for Money

The Council continuously looks for ways to save money and improve services. It is essential our services provide value for money: good performance at the best possible price. We address the value for money or efficiency agenda in a number of ways:

- Procurement;
- Shared services and partnership working;
- Business transformation; and
- Comparing our delivery with the best performers

### Procurement

Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, while minimising damage to the environment. Procurement is essential in achieving our value for money agenda. We have efficient procurement processes in place to ensure value for money is key in the tendering process we use to award contracts and purchase goods.

### Partnership working and shared services

We believe that it is important that we work with other local district councils and Kent County Council to provide more cost

effective services. The Council is signed up to the Kent Commitment, which seeks more effective working arrangements between the district councils in Kent and Kent County Council. It also led in the development of the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership with Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Councils. The partnership looks for opportunities for working together in partnerships or providing shared services i.e. having only one Council providing a service for two or more councils, rather than each council having departments providing the same service. Partnerships and shared services ensure the service is resilient and can deliver large financial savings. The Council currently has partnerships and shared services in the following areas:

- Internal Audit – partnership with Ashford Borough Council
- Overview and Scrutiny – partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Learning and Development – partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Benefit Fraud and Visiting service – shared service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Business transformation – shared service with Tunbridge Wells BC and Ashford BC

Through the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership and through our Business Transformation function we are considering possibilities for shared services, partnership working or ways to significantly improve services e.g. Legal, Human Resources, Audit and ICT.

### Business transformation

The Council has a Business Transformation department shared with Tunbridge Wells and Ashford and is developing links with other authorities undertaking similar programmes. Business Transformation involves reviewing services and seeing where efficiencies can be made. The section is able to re-engineer processes in one off reviews with one authority or with multiple authorities reviewing the same process.

### Benchmarking – Price Book

The term benchmarking means comparing our performance with other authorities. This helps to ensure we are performing well in comparison with our peers and helps drive forward improvements. The Price Book is benchmarking exercise with the other Kent district councils. The aim is to provide high quality services at the lowest possible cost.



### How our performance will be monitored

To make sure we deliver on our promises, we monitor the progress made in achieving the Strategic Plan. Performance indicators (PIs) help us do this by measuring how we are doing in delivering the Council's key objectives and provide important information on how well we are delivering services.

- **National indicators (NIs)** – are statutory indicators set by the Government that we have to collect
- **Key performance indicators (KPIs)** – are indicators we have set for ourselves to measure how well we are delivering our key objectives
- **Local Performance Indicators (LPIs)** - any other PI we have set for ourselves that we use to manage performance

We use PIs to monitor how well we are doing in comparison to previous years, but also looking forward, to set challenging yet achievable targets for the coming years. This ensures the Council is always striving to improve.





**Risk Management**

The Council must manage threats and maximise opportunities that impact on the achievement of our priorities. Over the last five years Maidstone Borough Council has embedded a strong risk management culture. The table below shows our strategic risks. These are risks that could impact on the whole borough

and could impact on the delivery of our priorities. Risks are aligned with priorities and take into account of the environment in which we operate.

Risk levels are calculated by the likelihood of an event occurring against its predicted impact and have been rated as high, medium or low. If a risk is highly likely to occur and has a significant impact then it

is high. All our strategic risks have action plans with the aim of reducing the risk to the authority along with controls which are taken into account when calculating risk. However, some risks will always remain high due to the predicted impact. The Authority's strategic risk register is set out below.

**Strategic Risk Register**

**Credit Crunch/  
Economic Decline**

The current economic climate has changed dramatically over the past twelve to eighteen months. The credit crunch which occurred in 2007 and is still continuing, has reduced the supply of money in the financial markets which has had the impact of increased interest rates, scarcity of money, impact on the housing mortgage market with a knock on effect on supply of new houses as the overall scenario has led to a reduction in house prices - plus uncertainty in the banking sector, both nationally and internationally, which adds to the risk/reward trade off in the investment strategy. This scenario has been complemented by a reduction in national growth, an escalation in inflation rates and a general decline in economic activity. It is anticipated that this will produce a period of stagflation i.e. reduced economic growth and increased inflation.

The increase in inflation is substantially a consequence of international oil prices which impacts on all aspects of economic activity from businesses to individual costs and, therefore, net disposable income.

**A1**

**Affordable Housing**

The Council has challenging affordable housing targets. There are limited sites for development in the borough and the value of housing is intrinsically high.

**A2**

**Spatial Planning**

Economic regeneration, development and planning - a key priority for the council but there are many opposing views both within the council and within the community.

**B2**

**Deprivation**

The relative affluence of the local area hides some pockets of serious deprivation (two in particular) which have spending needs and require the Council's attention, but internal and external recognition is needed.

**B2**

<p><b>Educational and other skills attainment</b></p> <p><b>B2</b></p>	<p>A relatively high proportion of local school leavers do not have the necessary educational skills that are required by employers, particularly those employers whose business environment provided medium to high salary reward. The level of qualifications of working age population residents in Maidstone, though close to the national average, is inferior to that of the South East – a position inconsistent with a prosperous county town in this region.</p>
<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <p><b>B2</b></p>	<p>Geographically, Maidstone sits between the development areas of Thames Gateway to the west, and Ashford to the east and resources are being channelled into these areas. The council has challenging ambitions, together with targets (e.g. on housing) which demand improved levels of infrastructure in the borough. The Council has been identified as a Growth Point in the SE plan and has been allocated in excess of 10,000 houses. In its bid for funding the Council has been allocated circa £5m over the next 5 years. This level of funding requires further public and private monies to provide the necessary infrastructure</p>
<p><b>Corporate Projects</b></p> <p><b>B2</b></p>	<p>The Council has a programme of projects, many of which are significant and have a high profile. These include the New Depot and the Museum Extension as well as several very large scale regeneration schemes in accordance with agreed Growth Point priorities.</p>
<p><b>Two-tier working</b></p> <p><b>B2</b></p>	<p>Maidstone Borough Council has previously set out the goal to be part of a unitary status authority, as a key element of the vision for the organisation. There are arguments that without unitary status, some priority themes are not fully achievable. The structural agenda for local government is still in flux.</p>
<p><b>Waste Collection - Review of waste collection</b></p> <p><b>B3</b></p>	<p>The Council needs to meet challenging targets for recycling. Maidstone is a collection authority not a disposal authority, so need to work closely with partners to develop an optimum model in this area. Alternative arrangements are currently being considered.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change</b></p> <p><b>C2</b></p>	<p>All signs are pointing to the fact that the Council must respond both by mitigating environmental impacts and by adapting to the change that comes from the changing climate.</p>
<p><b>Partnership working - Shared Services</b></p> <p><b>C3</b></p>	<p>The Council is increasingly being encouraged to move towards partnership working, driven by the need to improve services, reduce cost and increase resilience. Levels of commitment to partnership working across Kent are variable, as is preparedness to drive through proposals in the face of adversity. There is a wide range of ICT systems across Kent and differing political/strategic priorities.</p>

**Key**

High Risk

Medium Risk

Low Risk







## Maidstone Borough Council

### Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 7 April 2009

#### Draft Whole and Partial Council Elections Review

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 At the meeting of Maidstone Borough Council on 27 February 2008, Councillor Mrs Stockell put the following motion to the Council:

1.2 "Following on from previous questions on the issue of having whole Council elections and the obvious support at the time from Councillors, Members were advised by the Chief Executive that this could not be feasibly introduced until 2009. I would therefore formally propose that this Council agrees, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consult all interested parties on the introduction of whole Council elections for Maidstone."

1.3 This motion was carried and the Democratic Services Manager is now investigating the potential for the Council to move to whole Council elections.

1.4 The focus of the review was to consider:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of moving to whole council elections for:
  - The electorate
  - The politicians
  - The Council (including electoral administrative staff)
- What methods of consultation can be used?
- What is the impact, if any, on voter turnout?

1.5 The report establish that neither electing by partial or whole council elections is certain to be more beneficial to the electorate, politicians or the local authority. Rather both offer conflicting advantages and disadvantages.

#### **2. Recommendation**

2.1 The Committee is asked to review and approve the attached draft report and recommendations and make amendments as appropriate.

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**CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**WHOLE AND PARTIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS REVIEW**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008 - 2009**

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## Contents

	Page Number
1. Executive Summary	2
2. Recommendations	3
3. Introduction	4
4. Terms of Reference and Focus	5
5. Background	6
6. Legislation	7
7. Electoral Commission Guidance	9
8. Implications for the Electorate and Voter Turnout	11
9. Implications for Politicians	17
10. Implications for the Council and Officers	20
11. Single Member Wards	23
12. Consultation	25
13. Conclusion	27
14. Evidence Log	28

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## 1. Executive Summary

- Local Government now have power to pass a decision to move to whole council elections. The Councillors Commission recommend a single election method be utilised by all local authorities to ensure uniformity. The Electoral Commission advise that all local authorities should hold whole council elections.
- We have identified that neither electing by partial or whole council elections is certain to be more beneficial to the electorate, politicians or the local authority. Rather both offer conflicting advantages and disadvantages.
- There is evidence of electoral confusion with regard to frequency and timing of local elections nationwide. Although uniformity of local area elections may reduce confusion, it may not necessarily be the most appropriate method to enable a sustainable increase in electoral turnout.
- Turnout within the Kent Districts between 2003 and 2007 does not show any correlation between electorate participation and election frequency.
- Consultation should take place over a minimum of 12 weeks and must reflect the Code of Practice of Consultation as established by the Cabinet Office. It is advised that an outside agency be employed to ensure best results. Consultation should take place as is seen appropriate.
- Although it is not mandatory to do so, it is advisable that Parish Council elections are held simultaneously to Local Council elections.
- Although there is a possibility that single member wards may increase clarity of the electoral process, multi member wards enable Councillors to share expertise and assist each other within their roles.
- The implementation of single member wards will require major planning, Boundary Commission consent, significant officer time and considerable funding.

## 2. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** That Council review this report and make a decision as to whether or not to go out to consultation on implementing whole council elections.

**Recommendation 2:** That improving voter turnout be reviewed by the Council.

**Recommendation 3:** That, as set out within Section 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, if the election cycle changes, Parish Council elections be held at the same time as Local Council elections.

**Recommendation 4:** That, Council review this report and agree whether there should be single member wards and if this is considered desirable, a request be made to the Boundary Commission, as outlined within *Section 55 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*.

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## **The Elections Cycle**

### *A comparison of Whole Council and Partial Council Elections*

#### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 At the meeting of Maidstone Borough Council on 27 February 2008, Councillor Mrs Stockell put the following motion to the Council:
- 3.2 "Following on from previous questions on the issue of having whole Council elections and the obvious support at the time from Councillors, Members were advised by the Chief Executive that this could not be feasibly introduced until 2009.
- 3.3 I would therefore formally propose that this Council agrees, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consult all interested parties on the introduction of whole Council elections for Maidstone."
- 3.4 This motion was carried and the Democratic Services Manager is now investigating the potential for the Council to move to whole Council elections.

## 4. Terms of Reference and Focus

4.1 The focus of this Review is as follows:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of moving to whole council elections for:
  - The electorate
  - The politicians
  - The Council (including electoral administrative staff)
- What methods of consultation can be used?
- What is the impact, if any, on voter turnout?

4.2 The Terms of Reference of this Review are as follows:

- Establish clear advantages and disadvantages of moving to whole council elections in order that councillors and the electorate can be reliably and fully informed; and
- Identify an appropriate method of consultation to gather views on the proposed changes.

4.3 **Committee Membership:**

Councillor Mrs Pauline Stockell (Chairman)  
Councillor Derek Butler (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Allan Bradshaw  
Councillor Eric Hotson  
Councillor David Marshall  
Councillor Mrs Pat Marshall  
Councillor Brian Mortimer  
Councillor Colin Parr  
Councillor Mrs Wilson

4.4 The Committee would like to thank all those who all those who gave their time to assist with the review, including: Alison Broom, Director of Operations; Steve Goulette, Assisted Director of Regulatory and Environmental Services; Brian Parsons, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Strategy Management; Neil Harris, Democratic Services Manager; Gill Gymer, Registration Services Manager; Vronni Ward, Corporate Marketing Manager; John Turner, Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators; Councillor R Bliss, Leader of Shepway District Council; and the Democratic Services teams within Swale Borough Council and all Kent districts.

## 5. Background

- 5.1 Within Kent, the majority of local authorities hold whole or all-out elections every four years. . Borough Councillors of Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells, however, are elected for a four year term and stand down by thirds (Partial council elections). Local elections occur within the borough three out of the four years. Within the fourth year Kent County Council (KCC) elections are held.
- 5.2 Since the enactment of Section 33 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the power to change to whole council elections rests with the Local Council as opposed to National Government. Maidstone Borough Council can resolve to move to whole council elections up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010. The first whole council elections will then take place in 2011. Swale Borough Council have also undertaken a review into the possible move to whole council elections and they now have a commitment to go to consultation on moving to whole council elections.<sup>1</sup> There is no obligation for the Council to change the current election process.
- 5.3 The review demonstrates that there are advantages and disadvantages of each electoral method and neither one can be said to be considerably more beneficial. This is reflected within the Electoral Commission's report published in 2008, which concluded that a more co-ordinated and unified approach to electoral administration is necessary. There was, however less agreement as to how this should be overcome.<sup>2</sup> Changing the frequency of elections may not be the most appropriate method.

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<sup>1</sup> Swale Borough Council are currently unable to provide details of when consultation will take place.

<sup>2</sup> *Electoral Administration in the UK*, The Electoral Commission, 2008, page 11.

## 6. Legislation

6.1 In 2006 the Local Government White Paper stated that government would “give all local authorities the freedom to opt for whole council elections and enable all those holding such elections to move to single member wards<sup>3</sup>,” which it enacted within the Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

6.2 Section 33 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides the following requirements with regard to Council resolutions for whole council elections:

- 1) A council must comply with this section in passing a resolution for whole-council elections.
- 2) The council must not pass the resolution unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change.
- 3) The resolution must be passed—
  - a) At a meeting which is specially convened for the purpose of deciding the resolution with notice of the object, and
  - b) By a majority of at least two thirds of the members voting on it.
- 4) The council must pass the resolution in a permitted resolution period.
- 5) In subsection (3) the reference to the members of the council includes, in a case where the council are operating a mayor and cabinet executive, the elected mayor of the council.
- 6) In this section “permitted resolution period” means—
  - a) In relation to a metropolitan district council –
    - i. The period ending with 31 December 2009, or
    - ii. The period in 2013, or in any fourth year afterwards, that starts with the day after that council’s annual meeting and ends with 31 December.
  - b) In relation to a non-metropolitan district council –
    - i. The period ending with 31 December 2010, or
    - ii. The period in 2014, or in any fourth year afterwards, that starts with the day after that council’s annual meeting and ends with 31 December.

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<sup>3</sup> *Strong and Prosperous Communities, The Local Government White Paper (2006) Cm 6939-I, p.49.*

- 7) The Secretary of State may by order provide that a permitted resolution period is to end later than the day determined in accordance with subsection (6).

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## 7. Electoral Commission Guidance

- 7.1 In 2004, the Electoral Commission published a report entitled *The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England*. The report recommended that:

“the cycle of local and sub-national government elections in England should follow a clear and consistent pattern, within and across local authorities. Individual authorities should not be permitted to ‘opt out’ of this pattern, and any newly created authorities should also follow the same pattern”;

“each local authority in England should hold whole council elections, with all councillors elected simultaneously, once every four years”; and

“The Commission recommends that all local government electors in England should elect members of their district, metropolitan borough, London borough or unitary council simultaneously once every four years. Two years later, in the mid-point of the electoral cycle, electors in areas with county councils, city-wide authorities or any future sub-national government should elect representatives to those bodies.”

- 7.2 The 2007 report of the Councillors Commission<sup>4</sup> supports the proposal for whole Council elections, with Recommendation 18 stating:

“A uniform cycle of all-out four yearly local elections should be introduced across the whole of England. All authorities in a given region should be elected on the same day, but not all regions should hold elections at the same time. Local elections should not take place on the same day as national or European elections<sup>5</sup>.”

- 7.3 Despite the Electoral Commission’s recommendations it is also recognised that it may not necessarily be desirable to have one election method in place across the entire of the UK. Rather, it is emphasised that the most appropriate voting mechanism is one which best suits the electorate within the local area. In 2003 the Electoral Commission stated that:

“[W]e do not see a consistent pattern of local electoral cycles as necessarily desirable in its own right. Rather, we recognise the significant benefits to wider public understanding and awareness of democratic rights that a more consistent pattern would bring<sup>6</sup>.”

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<sup>4</sup> The Report of the Councillors Commission, *Representing the Future*, (2007), available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/583990.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* p.83.

<sup>6</sup> *The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, Electoral Commission (2003) p.14.

- 7.4 Despite the Electoral Commissions recommendations, there are also arguments which support the continuation of partial council elections.

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## 8. Implications for the Electorate and Voter Turnout

8.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 identifies that Local Councils are expected to take decisions which will encourage improvements in electorate participation. Electorate participation is essential in order to ensure a sufficient democratic process and the legitimacy of Local Government. The significant issue to consider, therefore, is whether the implementation of whole council elections will encourage an increase in voter turnout.

### 8.2 Simplification of the Election Process

The primary reason given for the Government proposal for authorities to implement whole council elections was that it should enable a simpler voting system, increasing clarity for local voters. Research conducted by MORI during March and April 2003, reported that a significant proportion of the electorate were unaware of the frequency of local elections within their area<sup>7</sup>.

8.3 A complicated electoral process and a lack of understanding of the system may deter the electorate from voting and reflect a low turnout. The electorate have confirmed this by stating;

“We are concerned that the complex current pattern of different local electoral cycles across England does not help electors to understand the opportunities open to them for participation in the democratic process.<sup>8</sup>”

8.4 Arguably, this confusion is exacerbated within the Borough as a result of the combination of multi member *and* single-member wards<sup>9</sup>. Consequently there will be years in which elections occur only within some wards. Within Maidstone 11 wards are represented by three Councillors, seven are represented by two Councillors and eight have single Councillor representation. The implementation of whole council elections will require all local elections to occur in unison and therefore should reduce electorate confusion. Supporting this MORI, 2003, recorded that 58% of those questioned, backed the alignment of all ward elections within their authority<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Electoral Cycles, General Public Quantitative Research*, The Electoral Commission, (April – May 2003), p.4. 23% gave an incorrect answer or said they did not know when asked if there was a local election to be held soon.

<sup>8</sup> *Cycle of Local Government Elections*, the Electoral Commission, Executive Summary, January, (2004) p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, Electoral Commission (2003) p.12.

<sup>10</sup> *Electoral Cycles, General Public Quantitative Research*, The Electoral Commission, (April – May 2003), p.11.

- 8.5 Nonetheless, the Councillors Commission suggests that implementing whole council elections is not necessarily the most appropriate way of addressing problems associated with the local electoral system, in particular the issue of a low electoral turnout<sup>11</sup>.
- 8.6 In 2003 the LGC Elections Centre produced a paper – Electoral Cycles in English Local Government<sup>12</sup> – which directly considered the implications the frequency of elections has upon the electorate’s voting behaviour. The study compared the electorate turnout within Metropolitan Boroughs which hold partial elections, and 32 London Boroughs which hold whole council elections. The comparison of these two authority types demonstrates that the London Boroughs generally have a higher turnout<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, the paper identifies that electoral frequency and the proportion of members elected, are only two factors determining electorate participation. For example, it was found that within all areas turnout declines as ward size increases. Additionally, where strong competition exists between the three main political parties, local people are more likely to participate in the election. Finally, the report indicates that although alterations in the voting system may leads to an initial change in voter turnout, this increase may not persist once the change in model has faded<sup>14</sup>. This makes it problematical to predict to what extent a change to voting frequency will affect levels of electorate participation<sup>15</sup>.
- 8.7 Further to this, consultation carried out by the Electoral Commission identified that a number of respondents, particularly those from within local government, suggested that low levels of turnout were actually caused by “the decreasing powers and relevance of local government’s ability to affect change<sup>16</sup>.” A matter which was picked up when the Corporate services Overview and Scrutiny working group reviewed the balance of power between central and local government earlier on this year. Therefore, amendments to the electoral cycle are unlikely to result in a significant improvement to democratic participation. Nevertheless, the Commission reject this opinion and continue by stating that;

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<sup>11</sup> The Report of the Councillors Commission, *Representing the Future*, (2007), p.30. Recommendation one of the Committee states that all local authorities should be charged with an explicit duty to facilitate local democratic engagement; to explain local governance; to actively promote civic participation; and to promote the role of councillors.

<sup>12</sup> Rallings, C and Thrasher, LGC Elections Centre, *Electoral Cycles in English local Government*, (2003).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p.23.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p.2.

<sup>16</sup> *The cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, The Electoral Commission, (2003), p.20.

"We recognise that many different factors may influence levels of turnout, but do not accept that individual exceptions to the Elections Centre's findings invalidate its conclusions. The balance of evidence suggests that local government electors are less likely to participate in the democratic process in areas that hold elections by thirds<sup>17</sup>."

### 8.8 Voter Fatigue

It is also contended that whole council elections diminish the possibility of voters becoming disinterested in elections as a result of being required to vote annually. This is known as "voter fatigue"<sup>18</sup>. Ensuring that the electorate hold an interest in the local political climate, as opposed to burdening them with a repetitive election process should ensure the electorate remains active.

8.9 Nevertheless, in 2003 MORI stated that 71% of those questioned as part of the Electoral Commission's review, thought that the frequency of elections was "about right."<sup>19</sup> Only 8% of people living in wards with partial elections said that they were taking place too often<sup>20</sup>. This suggests that 'voter fatigue' as a result of partial elections is not as much of a problem as has been suggested by those who favour the use of whole council elections. Furthermore, if whole council elections were implemented, the electorate will continue to be expected to participate in European Parliament elections, National elections and County elections.

### 8.10 Electoral Equality

The Electoral Commission have identified that to ensure a democratic voting system, the local voting process must be equitable. The current use of both whole and partial council elections within England renders this impossible. The existence of multi member and single member wards within the Maidstone Borough may also intensify this problem. In 2004 the Commission identified that;

"It is fundamentally unfair and, in our view, unacceptable that within an individual local authority some electors may have fewer opportunities to vote and influence the political composition of the authority than their neighbours in a different ward<sup>21</sup>."

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<sup>17</sup> *The cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, The Electoral Commission, (2003), p.20.

<sup>18</sup> Rallings, C and Thrasher, M, *Electoral Cycles in English Local Government*, LGC Elections, (2003), p.3.

<sup>19</sup> *Electoral Cycles, General Public Quantitative Research*, The Electoral Commission, (April – May 2003), p.9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* p10.

<sup>21</sup> *Cycle of Local Government Elections*, the Electoral Commission, Executive Summary, (2004), p.2.

8.11 In order to guarantee an equitable system of electoral arrangements in areas which hold partial elections, it would be necessary to elect a uniform number of Councillors within each of the Borough's wards. A whole council election system, would require no change to the Council's current electoral arrangements,<sup>22</sup> and so may be more desirable.

#### 8.12 Political Influence

A further contention supporting the implementation of whole council elections is that the system would provide the electorate with a greater opportunity to influence the political party in power. The Electoral Committee have stated that; "[w]hole council elections...ensure that all eligible electors in the authority have the opportunity to influence the political composition and control of the authority at the same time."<sup>23</sup> If the electorate perceive themselves as being able to influence which party is in power during an electoral term, it is predictable that a larger turnout will be recorded. If however, it is felt that votes hold little political consequence, it is probable that local people will not value the importance of a local election and so will not be willing to participate. Holding whole council elections also prevents the political control of the Council shifting without the whole electorate having had an opportunity to vote immediately prior to the change.

8.13 Partial elections, however, provide less opportunity for unexpected, possibly disruptive and politically exaggerated amendments to the make-up of councils and their policies and so should reflect more sensitively the changing views of the electorate. Conversely, some suggest that partial elections encourage difficult or politically sensitive decisions to be put off, unlike whole council elections which provide three years of stability encouraging more complex to be made.

#### 8.14 Political Accountability

Finally, it is strongly maintained that partial elections provide greater accountability as a result of the requirement for Councillors to engage with voters, promote their policies and defend their decisions on a more frequent basis. It is contended that the more frequent the opportunity to vote the more democratic the electoral process is. The LGC *Elections Centre – Electoral Cycles in English Local Government* supports these proposals by stating that "...increasing the frequency when some fraction of the local council membership is held to account helps to strengthen democratic accountability<sup>24</sup>."

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, Page 18.

<sup>24</sup>Rallings, C and Thrasher, M, *Electoral Cycles in English Local Government*, LGC Elections, (2003) p.1.

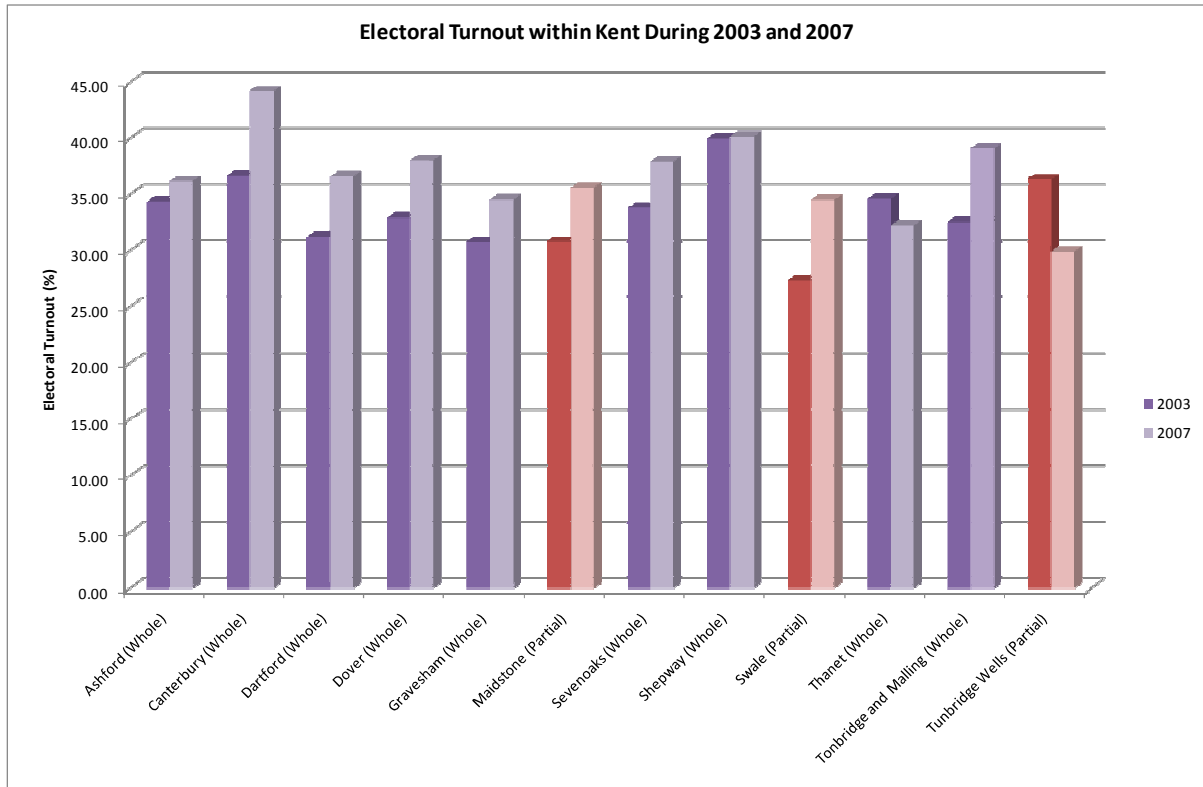


8.15 This argument too can be challenged. Whole council elections require less time throughout the four year term being allocated to the 'pre-election period'. This is a six week period corresponding with the election campaign, during which politically sensitive announcements cannot or should not be made. The aim is to prevent sitting parties from making attractive policy declarations and decisions which could unduly influence voters in the run up to an election. During this pre- election period, business of the council ceases. Whole council elections require this process to occur only once in the four year term, rather than the two or three times that would be necessary in the case of partial elections. Whole elections therefore, are affected by a shorter time period in which the council are not fully functional.

#### 8.16 Electoral Turnout within Kent

Authority	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	Average (2003 - 2007)
Ashford (Whole)	36.18				34.39	35.29
Canterbury (Whole)	44.20				36.70	40.45
Dartford (Whole)	36.63				31.25	33.94
Dover (Whole)	38.02				32.92	35.47
Gravesham (Whole)	34.56				30.78	32.67
Maidstone (Partial)	35.58	37.30		39.33	30.80	35.75
Sevenoaks (Whole)	37.90				33.80	35.85
Shepway (Whole)	40.17				40.00	40.09
Swale (Partial)	34.53	35.00		37.10	27.32	33.49
Thanet (Whole)	32.24				34.65	33.45
Tonbridge and Malling (Whole)	39.08				32.55	35.82
Tunbridge Wells (Partial)	29.90	39.77		36.73	36.34	33.12

8.17 The above table gives the election results off all Kent authorities within 2003 and 2007. The Canterbury and Shepway boroughs, which elect by whole council elections, have the highest average of electoral turnout during this time period. However the election results within those authorities which use this election method are wide ranging and a number of those also recorded particularly poor elections results. Gravesham District Council has the lowest average turnout and also elects by whole council elections.



8.18 The figure above presents the electoral turnout for all District Councils within Kent. Those coloured in shades of purple elect by whole council elections and those shaded in pink hold partial council elections. Between 2003 and 2007 all districts recorded a rise in electoral turnout, other than Thanet, which elects by whole elections, and Tunbridge Wells which elects by thirds.

## 9. Implications for Politicians

- 9.1 Arguably council elections should be run in the manner which best encourages electorate participation as opposed to the method which is most advantageous to politicians. This is supported by a Member who has suggested;

"It should be the job of the council to set the terms of election that best suit the residents of the borough. It is not for the council to consider the effect this will have on individual councillors no matter what their party affiliation or indeed lack of. The nature of democracy and campaigning will determine the makeup of the council chamber – not the terms of the election."<sup>25</sup>

- 9.2 Nevertheless, benefits experienced by candidates and political parties will most likely benefit the electorate. The Elections Process Review Survey carried out by the scrutiny team, in which local Councillors were asked to provide their opinion as to whether or not a move to whole council elections is desirable, identified that 70.5% of those who responded were against moving to whole council elections. The most common reason given was the belief that less frequent elections would diminish democratic accountability.<sup>26</sup>

### 9.3 Consistency of Governance

Whole council elections provide political parties with a greater opportunity to organise campaigns, consult with the public and should allow for the production of a more detailed manifesto prior to an election. The political party then has a four year period to fulfil its manifesto promises. This provides the electorate with a greater amount of time to judge the party on its policies and performance, in particular the setting of council tax<sup>27</sup>. However, partial elections ensure that, in multi-member wards, first time Councillors are able to consult with their more experienced colleagues. This will ensure more efficient Councillor teams and newly elected Councillors should be able to build capacity over time<sup>28</sup>. In contrast, whole council elections may result in a lack of Councillor expertise at the outset of a new political term in addition to a complete reversal of policies between alternating administrations. The Head of Internal Audit and Risk Strategy Mr Brian Parsons, who manages the audit partnership with Ashford Borough Council, identified that;

"At the last ABC election (2007), 16 of the 43 members were new. At the 2003 election, there had been 21 new members. This meant that significant training had to be carried out for

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<sup>25</sup> Review of the Election Process Survey, Overview and Scrutiny, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *The cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, The Electoral Commission, (2003), p.18.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Councillors after each election, particularly with regard to planning, although this had never led to a situation where the municipal year could not start as planned."<sup>29</sup>

#### 9.4 Mobilisation of Politicians and Political Activists

All out elections demand a larger number of candidates to stand for appointment in order to ensure that all of the 55 seats within the Borough are contested. During the 2007 partial elections, two seats, for the first time within Maidstone, were uncontested. There are reasonable grounds to suggest that the election of uncontested candidates undermines the democratic legitimacy of either voting system. Arguably this problem will be intensified if whole council elections are put into operation within the Borough.

- 9.5 Whole council elections are less time consuming for political activists who, like the electorate, may suffer from fatigue as a result of the frequency of partial elections. All-out elections require political parties and activists to mobilise their supporters only once every four years. This should ensure that potential and existing candidates do not lose interest. Conversely, whole council elections require the organisation of enough supporters to canvass the entire Borough. A Member has also identified that whole council elections are disadvantageous to smaller political parties. It was stated that;

"This at a stroke makes it very difficult for the smaller parties to operate and collectively organise. Those parties with well oiled and financially supported machines will be able to buy in organisational assistance."<sup>30</sup>

- 9.6 Partial elections enable the Councillor's workload to be spread more evenly over the four year period, as opposed to whole council elections which can result in a substantial increase in work during the election year.

#### 9.7 Electoral Cycle of Parish Council Elections

Modifications to the electoral cycle within the Borough may also require changes to the Parish elections. Currently it is usual for Parish elections to be held at the same time as ward elections, as Maidstone Borough Council covers the cost of parish elections held simultaneously to ward elections. Section 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 allows councils to alter the years for ordinary elections for Parish Councillors. This is to enable an individual to vote for a district councillor at the same time as voting for a parish councillor.

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Whole Council Elections, Meeting with Officers, Wednesday 21 January 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Review of the Election Process Survey, Overview and Scrutiny 2009.

- 9.8 A resolution to move to whole council elections need not affect the parish council elections unless the Council decides to make an order so that parish council elections coincide with district council elections. This is a power that the Council may or may not exercise and is not an obligation,<sup>31</sup> however it would be more cost effective for the Parish Councils to hold elections at the same time as the district council elections.
- 9.9 Appendix A details the time table of Parish elections based upon the current election system.

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to Electoral Commission, Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, April 2008, section 148.

## 10. Implications for the Council and Officers

### 10.1 Political Consistency

The cycle or frequency of elections will influence the capacity of local authorities to manage efficiently and deliver their responsibilities. Those who argue in favour of whole council elections “emphasised the importance of consistency of policies and representatives through a defined period of office, without the interruption and diversion of intervening elections<sup>32</sup>.” Whole council elections ensure the Council has a clear mandate to work from. One Member is of the opinion that;

“The greatest advantage will be the opportunity for the administration to actually get down and do something significant and see it through. Far too often the administrations (on both sides) are looking over their shoulders at the next election and going for a quick fix, and, even worse, are not able (or prepared) to tackle a problem in other than a short term way.”<sup>33</sup>

10.2 Additionally, Mr Parsons has identified that “[t]he continuity of a four year term [within Ashford Borough Council] gave the opportunity to plan longer-term. For example, in Maidstone the Strategic Plan was overhauled each year but in Ashford it stayed in place for four years at a time with periodic reviews to ensure it remained appropriate.”<sup>34</sup>

10.3 Nevertheless supporters of elections by thirds suggest that stability is more suitably provided by an election method that allows gradual political change as opposed to a sudden shift in political power<sup>35</sup>. The Electoral Commission has confirmed that it favours the political stability which accompanies whole council elections. The Commission identify that authorities who elect by thirds have traditionally had single-party political control which some perceive as being a sign of stability. Nevertheless, it disagrees with this contention by suggesting that this is merely “a legacy of political stability rather than any inherent structural stability,” and so has no reflection upon the electoral system used within the borough.

10.4 Furthermore, whole council elections provide Officers with greater opportunity to establish a robust relationship with Councillors over the four year term. This should benefit the functioning of the Council unlike

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<sup>32</sup> *The cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, The Electoral Commission, (2003), p.20.

<sup>33</sup> Review of the Electoral Process, Overview and Scrutiny 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Whole Council Elections, Meeting with Officers, Wednesday 21 January 2009.

<sup>35</sup> *The cycle of Local Government Elections in England*, Report and Recommendations, The Electoral Commission, (2003), p.20.



the frequent shift of personalities which accompanies whole council elections.

#### 10.5 Administrative Issues

Whole council elections may enable a financial saving in relation to the employment of administrative staff<sup>36</sup>. Shepway District Council, which elects quarterly, has identified that if elections were to take place annually, there would be no scope to review practices and undertake training. The Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators has advised that a change of the frequency of local elections, however, is unlikely to have a dramatic effect upon the required support from the administrative service. Nevertheless a Local Councillor is of the opinion that;

"I am convinced that the Party 'machines' get very rusty if not exercised annually and the quality of campaigning and informing the public of the 'products' on offer suffers considerably. It breeds complacency in Members and in Parties which is bad for democracy."<sup>37</sup>

10.6 If whole council elections were to be implemented within Maidstone, staff would be involved in the administration of an election every other year (this includes county elections). The registration services team within the Council is currently small. Having limited knowledgeable staff may cause problems during the restricted election period which accompanies whole council elections. The Director of Prosperity and Regeneration, Mrs Alison Broom, who has worked for three authorities, Maidstone Borough Council and the London Boroughs of Camden and Merton, both of which were unitaries with whole council elections, recognised that;

"[i]n her experience, work increased in the run-up to a whole council election. Although decisions could not be made, the number of councillors canvassing right across the Borough led to a significant amount of enquiries from members of the public. Whilst this did happen at MBC, it was on a smaller scale as only one third of the councillors were up for election."<sup>38</sup>

#### 10.7 Financial Considerations

The electoral method used within the Borough will inevitably have cost implications. Reverting to whole council elections should enable a number

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<sup>36</sup> Councillor Bliss of Shepway District Council indicated that the number of offices engaged full time in elections has not exceeded more than two for many years.

<sup>37</sup> Review of the Election Process Survey, Overview and Scrutiny, 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Whole Council Elections, Meeting with Officers, Wednesday 21 January 2009.

of financial savings over the four year period. The hiring of polling stations will not need to occur on such a frequent basis and fewer polling cards will be printed. The total expenses incurred during the most recent local elections within the Maidstone Borough were recorded as £147,845.34. Nevertheless the savings which result from the use of a whole election system are not as high as may first be expected. In 2003 it was established that to hold whole council elections every four years would result in a total saving of £50,000, giving an annual saving of £12,500.<sup>39</sup>

- 10.8 Whole Council elections cost considerably more than each single election of a partially elected borough and expenditure continues to be incurred during those years which are not subject to an election as a result of storage costs. Counting methods required during whole council election are also significantly more complicated and costly. The council are likely to experience further costs as a result of an increased number of by-elections during the whole election period compared to those which occur currently.

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<sup>39</sup> As stated by the Leader of the Council at the meeting of Maidstone Borough Council, 27 March 2003.

## 11. Single Member Wards

11.1 *Section 55 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* states that a local authority can only make a request to the Boundary Commission to carry out a review for single member wards if it is already subject to a scheme for whole council elections. There is however, no requirement to make the request and it should not affect a decision to move to whole council elections. Nevertheless if the council are considering this option it is sensible to assess the possibility at the same time as the assessment of whole council elections, so as to enable changes to be made together in 2011, if considered desirable. 64% of Maidstone's Councillors who gave their opinion on single member wards identified that there were both advantages and disadvantages for ward residents having only one political representative.<sup>40</sup> If alterations are made to the current ratio of ward members to Councillors, it needs to be ensured that these amendments provide closer contact between the residents and elected member, not less.

11.2 The key criticism of single member wards is that candidates may appeal only to a restricted number of local people, which may discourage some from voting. The Councillors Commission report identified that "Councillors are significantly unrepresentative of the population as a whole in a descriptive sense<sup>41</sup>." The report continues by suggesting that multi member wards encourage political parties to maximise their appeal to the electorate by providing a more varied range of candidates, which provides those from under represented groups with a greater possibility of being selected, than would be the case in single member wards. Recommendation 19 of the report states that:

"In view of the potential positive impact that multi-member wards can have in terms of encouraging the election of under represented groups and encouraging teamwork and the sharing of responsibilities between councillors, multi-member wards should be adopted throughout the local government electoral system<sup>42</sup>."

11.3 A number of Local Councillors have identified that multi member wards also serve a practical role by ensuring that, should one ward Councillor suffer from illness, for example, the ward residents continue to have access to an elected representative. Additionally, it is arguable that multi member wards are particularly beneficial for those areas who are represented by the Leader or a Cabinet Member. These Councillors will be

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<sup>40</sup> Review of the Elections Process Survey, Overview and Scrutiny, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Representing the Future, Report of the Councillors Commission, (2007), p.13.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* p.85.

subjected to particular responsibilities which accompany the position and so may find it more difficult to allocate sufficient time to the concerns of the local ward members.

- 11.4 Multi member wards can have a positive impact in encouraging the election of under represented groups and encouraging teamwork and sharing responsibilities between Councillors. Nevertheless The Electoral Commission are of the opinion that the local people can more easily relate to a single Councillor due to greater clarity of leadership, therefore the use of a single ward Councillor is more appropriate.
- 11.5 On the other hand, a number of the Borough Councillors are of the opinion that single member wards provide unity between several communities, encouraging community engagement and enabling social events to be shared. For example, a member has stated that “[m]y ward happens to be a very homogeneous community. We share many activities...”<sup>43</sup> It has also been raised that multi members may not deliver the most appropriate representation in rural areas which are often defined by one Parish Council in addition to comparable desires of local residents.
- 11.6 Finally, single member wards may alleviate the problem of low turnout which the Elections Centre associates with large wards<sup>44</sup> and as has been previously indicated, may help to clarify the electoral system, thereby encouraging more local residents to vote.
- 11.7 Evidently a move to single member wards would require major planning, Boundary Commission consent, as a Member identifies;

“The notion of single Member Wards is one which I have always advocated BUT I do not think that we would be allowed to proceed without the express permission of the Electoral Boundary Commission. Ward Boundaries are set in place by the Commission to a very precise formula of Members to Electorate in ratio and this then relates to the Electoral Divisions of the County Council which have a different ratio and so on up to the Parliamentary representation in the Constituency.”

- 1.8 Additionally, significant officer time and considerable funding will be required to implement this change. If this move is considered desirable, a request to the Boundary Commission should be made to carry out a review of the possibility of single member wards within the Borough.

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<sup>43</sup> Review of the Election Process, Overview and Scrutiny, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Rallings, C and Thrasher , LGC Elections Centre, *Electoral Cycles in English local Government*, (2003), p.17.

## 12. Consultation

12.1 The Council must not pass a resolution to move to whole council elections unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult on the implications that will result from these changes. Currently no guidance exists as to what extent the Council is expected to consult in regards to change in election frequency. The Council's Consultation Handbook should be referred to<sup>45</sup>. Additionally the Code of Practice of Consultation<sup>46</sup> should be followed. This advises that the written consultation period should be 12 weeks. The five additional guidelines of the consultation process are as follows<sup>47</sup>;

- Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
- Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
- Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
- Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
- Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

12.2 Following consultation a Council can make a decision by a resolution passed by a majority of at least two thirds of members voting at a specifically convened (an extraordinary) meeting of which notice has been given. The resolution can only be passed though the permitted resolution period. For whole council elections to be implemented by 2011 within the Maidstone Borough, a resolution must be sought by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

### 12.3 Consultation Methods

Swale Borough Council have suggested that consultation takes places with the use of a website questionnaire, local media coverage, letters to Parish clerks, political groups, key stakeholders, an email questionnaire to the citizens panel, posters in libraries, Council offices and Parish notice boards.

12.4 Having met with the Corporate Marketing Manager a number of possible consultation mechanisms were discussed, and an approximate budget of

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<sup>45</sup> Maidstone Borough Council, *Consultation Handbook*, (2002) – this handbook is currently under revision.

<sup>46</sup> Code of Practice on Consultation, Cabinet Office, (2004)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* p.4.

£6,000 - £10,000 was recommended<sup>48</sup>. It should be ensured that those participating are provided with an adequate understanding of the two election mechanisms in order to provide valuable responses.

- 12.5 The Council should consult as seen appropriate. Possibilities include a focus group representing the general public; publicising the possible amendments on the internet and allowing for feedback; consulting directly with Parish Council. Council employees should be informed and given the opportunity to provide feedback via Wakey Wakey and a Citizen's Jury should be established to enable informed members of the public to participate in a debate and vote as to their preferred election method. The consultation process would benefit from the employment of an outside agency.

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<sup>48</sup> This is an approximation and should be clarified if detailed planning of consultation proposals takes place.



### **13. Conclusion**

- 13.1 It is apparent that there are numerous arguments for and against both election mechanisms. Evaluation suggests that neither of the two is acutely more advantageous than the other.
- 13.2 Arguably, to ensure consistent and equitable elections within Kent, Maidstone Borough Council should implement whole council elections. This argument will be intensified if Swale Borough Council continues with the decision to move to whole council elections following consultation.
- 13.3 Although the Electoral Commission recommends the implementation of whole council elections it does recognise that the method used should be that which is most appropriate for the local area. The election method employed should be that which will best encourage voter participation. Nevertheless, analysis identified that it is problematical to determine whether all out elections will achieve an increase in voter turnout. Data of electoral turnout within Kent shows no substantial difference between those authorities that elect with whole council elections and those that utilise partial council elections. Although the districts that recorded the highest voter turnout within Kent elected by whole council elections, the lowest recorded turnout was also recorded by a district which utilised all out elections.
- 13.4 Whole council elections will be accompanied by financial savings, yet these are relatively slight and may be off-balanced by the identified disadvantages of whole council elections.
- 13.5 As the Councillors Commission identify, various other improvements could be made to the election mechanism in order to increase voter participation. It may therefore be more appropriate to implement these methods as opposed to exchanging one election method with another.

## 14. Evidence Log

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Improvement and Development Agency, *Elections 'by thirds' or 'all ups'*, November 2007. <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7582188> (viewed November 2008).

### Witness Sessions

1 July 2008, Interview with:  
The Democratic Services Manager, Neil Harris

9 October 2009, Interviews with:  
Phillippa Saray, Regional Manager South of England, Electoral Commission

21 January 2009, Interviews with:  
Councillor Richard Ash, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services; Alison Broom, Director of Operations; Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Regulatory and Environmental Services; Brian Parsons, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Strategy; Angela Woodhouse, Overview and Scrutiny Partnership Manager.

Written Evidence

Review of Election Process Survey - Written Councillor responses as to the appropriateness of moving to whole council elections and implementing single member wards.

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## APPENDIX A

### Timetable for Elections Based upon the Current Electoral System

NAME OF WARD	PARISHES SITUATED IN WARD	YEAR OF ELECTION
HEADCORN	East Sutton	2010
BEARSTED	Bearsted	2011
DETLING AND THURNHAM	Detling, Thurnham	
DOWNSWOOD AND OTHAM	Downswood, Otham	
HARRIETSHAM AND LENHAM	Harrietsham, Lenham (North Ward), Lenham (South Ward)	
LEEDS	Broomfield and Kingswood, Leeds	
LOOSE	Loose	
MARDEN AND YALDING	Nettlestead, Yalding, Collier Street, Marden	
SOUTH	Tovil	
STAPLEHURST	Staplehurst	
SUTTON VALENCE AND LANGLEY	Sutton Valence, Langley	
BARMING	Barming, Teston	2012
BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA AND CHART SUTTON	Boughton Monchelsea South, Boughton Monchelsea North, Chart Sutton	
BOXLEY	Boxley North, Boxley South, Boxley South East, Boxley Woodlands, Bredhurst	
COXHEATH AND HUNTON	Coxheath, East Farleigh, West Farleigh, Hunton, Linton	
HEADCORN	Boughton Malherbe, Headcorn, Ulcombe, East Sutton	
MARDEN AND YALDING	Marden	
NORTH DOWNS	Bicknor*, Frinsted*, Hucking*, Otterden*, Wichling*, Wormshill*, Hollingbourne, Stockbury	
KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS		2009
EUROPEAN	PARLIAMENTARY	2009

35 Parish Councils

6 Parish Meetings

\* indicates Parish Meeting

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## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 7 April 2009**

#### **Consultation Process**

**Report of:** Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Manager

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December identified the need for the Council to have a database and mechanism for responding to national, regional and sub-regional consultation to ensure that the Council does not miss important consultations and there is a transparent process in which Members can be involved.

#### **2. The Consultation Process**

- 2.1 The Committee requested that the Council should maintain a database of consultations and responses on its website to ensure transparency. The consultation process attached at appendix A outlines how consultations will be monitored and how Members will be involved in the process. The new system will be supported within existing resources by the Policy and Performance Team. Essentially drafting responses will be the responsibility of Heads of Service and ensuring that all consultations are logged and tracked will lie with policy and performance. Scrutiny Members will be kept informed via the overview and scrutiny team of new consultations as part of the work programme item at Committee meetings.
- 2.2 Corporate Management Team have been consulted on this process and identified that the roll-out and implementation of the process would be crucial to its success. It was also identified that the database could improve access to external funding as opportunities to apply for funding via consultation exercises would be monitored.

#### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the attached consultation process, make recommendations as appropriate and recommend its adoption.



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## **Maidstone Borough Council Consultation Process**

### **1. Purpose**

The Council receives many requests and has many opportunities to respond to consultation exercises on a range of issues.

Requests are received from a range of government departments, partner organisations, public service agencies and others.

Many consultations may have an impact upon the Council's aspirations, services and processes, this protocol and the resulting database seeks to ensure that the Council is involved in such consultations. The purpose of this protocol is to ensure:

- that the process for responding to consultations is open and transparent;
- that opportunities to be involved in important consultations are not lost;
- that there is an agreed process for responding to consultation; and
- that Members (including scrutiny members) can be involved in the process.

This consultation process covers:

- Types of consultation and the process for responding to consultation;
- The responsibility for identifying and responding to consultation;
- Scrutiny and Cabinet Member involvement;
- The information held on the central consultation database and the tracking process; and
- A protocol for responding to consultation documents.

However, some consultation exercises are not relevant, could be very time consuming with little value to the organisation or do not enable the Council to make comparisons with other authorities as part of the drive for continuous improvement.

### **2. Types of Consultation**

Consultation documents fall broadly into two types. Firstly, where the Council is asked for factual information on its functions or services, and where in responding there is no view or comments expressed on behalf of the Council. A number of individuals and organisations are now using Freedom of Information requests (for which the Council has a documented process) to obtain views that may have previously been requested through consultation exercises.

The other type of consultation is where the Council is asked for its view and comments on a document, proposals for change or indeed recommendations. As an example, this will cover consultation documents issued by a Government department, Local Government Association, Regional Association and other such bodies. The focus ranges from the views relating to a specific service area through to the whole of the Council.

A process for responding to consultation documents is set out at Appendix A. Consideration needs to be given to how the receipt of documents is monitored, consultation exercises logged and that both members and officers are aware of the existence of such documents. This should ensure that the Council does not miss opportunities to comment on key consultation exercises and respond within any set deadlines.

### **3. Responsibility for Identifying and Responding to Consultation**

To ensure that the Council does not miss the opportunity to respond to important consultation, it will be up to the Head of Service to ensure that all consultations are logged on the database and dealt with appropriately. The Policy and Performance Team will also regularly review up and coming consultations and refer these to Heads of Service when necessary.

Prior to logging the document, the Head of Service will need to assess the implications of the document for the Council, whether a response should be prepared and determine any decision-making process to agree the response.

### **4. Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Involvement**

The consultation database will be reported monthly to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and if they wish to be involved in a consultation exercise this should be initially discussed with the Head of Service. It may be useful in some circumstances for scrutiny to draft a response to go to Cabinet for approval, for example the consultation on the balance of power between central and local government carried out by a Parliamentary Select Committee. Scrutiny can respond to consultations as an Overview and Scrutiny Committee but it should be clear when a response is submitted in such a fashion that it is the response of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and not the Council.

### **5. Consultation Document Tracking Process**

When the Consultation document is received it should be logged as soon as possible on the Central Consultation Database by the Head of Service of the relevant service area or, if more than one service area, by the Head of Service of the service area most "affected". The database will be available on the Intranet and will be maintained by the Policy and Performance Team. The information to be logged by the Head of Service will be:

- name of body who has sent the document;
- a short summary of the purpose of the document including a hyperlink to the document if available;
- the deadline for the response;
- whether it is proposed to provide a response;
- name of lead officer co-ordinating the response;
- name of responsible Cabinet Member;
- the process to agree the response in line with the Consultation Document Response Protocol (as set out in appendix A);

- the date the response was sent; and
- finally details of where the document may be found (or a hyperlink to the document itself).

Any new consultation exercises will be published each month as part of the regular performance reports to the Corporate Management Team. This will also be reported each month to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of reviewing their future work programme.

When documents are logged in the Database the deadline for the response will also be entered. In most cases, the timescale for responses will allow for the decision making process to be followed as set out in the Protocol attached at Appendix A.

However, there may be times when an urgent response is required or where the timescale does not allow for a report to Cabinet or Council as required. Heads of Services should try to seek an extension to the deadline for a response but, in exceptional cases where this is not possible, then an urgent response can be agreed in line with the requirements of the Protocol.

When the response to the consultation is dispatched a copy will also be added to the Intranet.

## **6. Maintaining and Monitoring the Consultation Database**

The central consultation database on the Council's Intranet will be maintained and monitored by the Policy and Performance Team. The external webpage detailing Council responses to consultations will also be maintained by the Policy and Performance Team.

The Overview and Scrutiny Team will be responsible for reporting consultations to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the work programme agenda item each month.

The Overview and Scrutiny Team will also be responsible for ensuring that Heads of Service are notified when scrutiny wish to be involved in developing/reviewing responses to consultations.

**Note:** references, and any delegation to Heads of Service apply also to Directors who may be asked to co-ordinate responses, as appropriate.

**Appendix A**  
**Consultation Document Response Process (Key: HS = Head of Service)**

<b>Implications of Document</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Decision Making Responsibilities</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Urgent Response (exceptional grounds)</b>
<p>Document seeks comments on proposals that will have implications for the Council’s Budget and Policy Framework or is of major strategic importance.</p>	<p>Log On Database - HS</p> <p>Scrutiny Team to review database and alert HS if scrutiny wish to be involved in the review</p> <p>Write Report for Cabinet and scrutiny if appropriate see above (follow usual CMT process for cabinet reports) - HS</p> <p>Enter on database date response sent and link to copy- HS</p>	<p>Report to Cabinet to agree recommendations. In cases where the Leader of the Council feels that the matter is of significance for the Council the recommended response, as agreed by the Executive, shall be submitted for debate to the full Council. These may be matters which will have significant implications for the Council’s budget and policy framework or where the Leader or the Chairman of Scrutiny (with the agreement of the Leader) considers that the matter should be debated by the full Council. If the matter is</p>	<p>Scrutiny will be made aware of these documents as they will also receive copies of the consultation database. They may request to have an input into the final response.</p> <p>Consult other relevant Members if appropriate.</p>	<p>Agree grounds for urgency with Leader. Agree with Leader extent of consultation with members (email, party group leaders, workshop etc).</p>

<b>Implications of Document</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Decision Making Responsibilities</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Urgent Response (exceptional grounds)</b>
		debated by Council the response will still be sent in the name of the Cabinet Member taking into account the views of full Council.		
Document seeks comments on proposals that will have implications for specified Council services, or have resource implications for specific services.	Log On Database. HS  - Write Report for Cabinet Member to agree. HS	Cabinet Member to agree response and agree whether he wishes to seek wider members' views (email, workshop etc). The Leader to be notified and have the option to ask that the matter be brought to District Executive for decision. In cases where the Leader	Scrutiny will be made aware of these documents as they will also receive copies of the consultation database	Agree grounds for urgency with Cabinet Agree with Cabinet Member and Leader extent of consultation with members (email, party group leaders, workshop etc).
Document seeks factual information on council services or is a Freedom of Information Request	HS to respond as appropriate including applying FOI if appropriate – do not log on database.	N/A	N/A	N/A



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## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 7 April 2009**

#### **Implications from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Police and Justice Act 2006**

**Report of:** Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Manager

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health (LGPIH) Act 2007, and the Police and Justice Act 2006 made a number of changes to the operation and duties of local government. This report identifies those which affect scrutiny and require changes to the constitution. The Police and Justice Act 2006, regulations come into force as of 30 April 2009.
- 1.2 A further order comes into affect on 1 April 2009 relating to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, introduced by the Secretary of State under section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000 regarding matters which can be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as this runs parallel to the changes required under the LGPIH the amendments required by this order are also included in this report.
- 1.3 The changes proposed to the procedure rules will require an amendment to the constitution and as such the Committee will have to make any recommendations for change to Council via the Standards Committee.

#### **2. Implications and Required Constitution Changes LGPIH, 2007 and Matters which can be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

##### **2.1 Councillor Call for Action**

- 2.1.1 The Act provides that any member of the Council will be able to refer to Overview and Scrutiny Committees "a local government matter", i.e. a matter relating to the Council's functions which affects their electoral division. As well as putting an item forward they will be allowed to make representations to the scrutiny committee to explain why they think the matter should be scrutinised.
- 2.1.2 When a Member exercises this right they must have regard to the guidance issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and IDeA. The guidance states that Councillor Call for Actions (CCfA) coming to scrutiny must be an act of last resort for the Ward Councillor:

“CCfA will be a means of “last resort” in a broad sense, with issues being raised at committee after other avenues have been exhausted. As such, the process should make it easier for issues that would benefit from scrutiny consideration to rise to the surface, and for those issues which are best dealt with through other means to be signposted accordingly.”

A protocol is attached at **Appendix D** for inclusion in the Council’s constitution as an appendix to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules for dealing with a Councillor Call for Action. The protocol adheres to the guidance issued.<sup>1</sup>

- 2.1.3 If the Committee decide not to scrutinise the matter they must tell the member why not. If they do carry out a scrutiny review into the matter the outcomes and recommendations must be provided to the Member. According to the guidance when scrutiny considers whether to review a matter referred by a ward councillor they must also consider the extent to which the Member has exercised the power given to him under section 236 of the Act. Section 236 refers to the exercise of local functions, this provides for the Council to make arrangements for individual members to exercise executive functions for their ward.
- 2.1.4 Presently our constitution allows any overview and scrutiny member to put forward an item for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Act broadens this considerably allowing any Councillor to refer a matter to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Outlined below is the relevant extract from the constitution:

#### **“9. Agenda items**

Any Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub Committee shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub-Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee. On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.”

The requirements of the Act are such that an additional paragraph will need to be added to the overview and scrutiny procedure rules section 9, Agenda Items as follows:

“Furthermore any Member shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relating to his ward, which is relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub- Committee of which he is not a member to be included on the agenda for the next

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<sup>1</sup> Councillor Call for Action, Best Practice Guidance, CfPS and IDeA, 2009,

available meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee (A Councillor Call for Action). On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action Protocol. In putting forward such a request the Councillor must have regard to the Councillor Call for Action Protocol attached to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules and the government guidance. The Councillor concerned will be able to make representation to the Committee or Sub-Committee, when the Committee or Sub-Committee considers whether to take an item forward for scrutiny. The Committee should consider the extent to which the Councillor has exercised any power given to him under section 236. If the matter is a crime and disorder matter responsible authorities (CDRP Members) must be notified by the proper officer. The proper officer will also give regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State regarding matters that can not be referred to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the paragraph below."

## **2.2 Matters not to be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

2.2.1 Furthermore the regulation introduced by the Secretary of State under section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000, will require a further addition to the above section of the constitution. This Order specifies descriptions of matters that are not to be local government matters for the purposes of section 21A. The effect of article 2 of the Order is that a member of an English local authority may not refer to the authority's overview and scrutiny committee:

- any matter relating to a licensing decision or a planning decision (both defined in article 1(3));
- a matter relating to an individual or entity where there is already a statutory right to a review or appeal (other than the right to complain to the Commission for Local Administration – commonly known as the Local Government Ombudsman);
- or a matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable to be included on the agenda for, or to be discussed at, a meeting of an overview and scrutiny committee or any of its sub-committees.

2.2.2 Article 3 provides that a matter which consists of an allegation of systematic failure of an authority to discharge a function for which the authority is responsible may be referred to an overview and scrutiny committee, notwithstanding the fact that the allegation specifies matters which would otherwise be excluded by virtue of article 2.

2.2.3 The following additional paragraph will need to be added to number 9, Agenda Items of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules:

"The following matters may not be referred to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or its Sub-Committees:

- a) any matter relating to a planning decision;
- b) any matter relating to a licensing decision;
- c) any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment;
- d) any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable to be included in the agenda for, or to be discussed at, a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee or at a meeting of a sub-committee of that committee.

However a matter which consists of an allegation of systematic failure of an authority to discharge a function for which the authority is responsible may be referred to an overview and scrutiny committee, notwithstanding the fact that the allegation specifies matters which would otherwise be excluded by virtue of article 2."

2.3 The changes proposed in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 are outlined in **Appendix A and D**

#### **2.4 Scrutiny of Functions exercised by Individual Members**

2.4.1 Under section 236 of the LPIH Act a Ward Councillor can be given delegated powers to carry out executive functions for their ward. As such any exercise of executive functions will be subject to scrutiny including call-in. The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules regarding call-in will have to be amended to allow such scrutiny. The proposed amendment is included at **Appendix B**.

#### **2.5 Scrutiny of Local Improvement Targets and Joint Scrutiny Committees**

2.5.1 The act allows overview and scrutiny committees to scrutinise the performance of the Local Area Agreement and its improvement targets. In two tier areas the responsibility for this applies to the County Council, district councils can however scrutinise the Kent Wide Area agreement through joint committees. Whilst Maidstone will scrutinise the LSP and its targets through the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee we will not be able to place requirements upon partner agencies to provide information unless permission is sought and given by the Secretary of State

2.5.2 A scrutiny officer working group will be considering how the scrutiny of the LAA should take place in Kent. The legislation allows for joint scrutiny committees to be set-up on two-tier areas to scrutinise the LAA and the local improvement targets – this will be one of the

options considered by the working group with the aim to get new scrutiny arrangements in place in June 2009. Once these new arrangements have been agreed further amendment to the constitution may be required.

### **3. Implications and Required Constitution Changes arising from the Police and Justice Act 2006**

- 3.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 was introduced to increase community involvement in crime and disorder and community safety matters. The act allows communities to refer unresolved crime and disorder matters to the responsible authorities via ward councillors and scrutiny committees. It also increases the democratic accountability of the Police and Crime and Disorder Partnerships (CDRP) through increased scrutiny powers. Responsible authorities are those which are statutorily required to form the CDRP.
- 3.2 The overview and scrutiny regulations of the Police and Justice Act 2006, will finally come into force on 30 April 2008. The Police and Justice Act 2006 Part 3, Section 19 (1) states that "Every local authority shall ensure that it has a committee (the "crime and disorder committee") with power –
- (a) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions;
  - (b) to make reports or recommendations to the local authority with the respect to the discharge of those functions."
- 3.3 The same Act also declares (in Part 3, Section 19 (9)(a)) that "the crime and disorder committee is to be an overview and scrutiny committee of the authority".
- 3.4 The primary function of the Crime and Disorder Committee will be to exercise and undertaken a function in relation to the powers delegated to Local Authorities via the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006 – as a responsibility of Scrutiny. These will be exercised provided that they are not:
- exercisable only by the Council itself;
  - exercised in a way which breaches, or has the effect of breaching, policies, strategies and overall budgets approved by the Council, or have adverse legal implications.
- 3.5 The explanatory note for the regulations relating to the above act is outlined below for information:

"Regulation 3 provides that crime and disorder committees may co-opt additional members from those persons and bodies who are responsible authorities within the meaning of section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, and from those persons and bodies with



whom the responsible authorities have a duty to co-operate under section 5(2) of that Act (the “co-operating persons and bodies”), subject to the provisions set out in that regulation. To the extent of their membership, co-opted members have the same entitlement to vote as any other member.

Regulation 4 provides that a crime and disorder committee shall meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, no less than twice in every twelve month period.

Regulation 5 provides that responsible authorities or co-operating persons or bodies must provide such information requested of them by the crime and disorder committee, subject to the provisions in that regulation.

Regulation 6 provides that a crime and disorder committee may require the attendance before it of a representative of a responsible authority or of a co-operating person or body in order to answer questions, subject to the provisions in that regulation.

Regulation 7 provides that where a crime and disorder committee makes a report or recommendations to a responsible authorities and co-operating persons or bodies in accordance with section 19(8)(b) of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the responses to such report or recommendations of each relevant authority, body or person shall be in writing and within 1 month from the date of the report or recommendations or, if this is not reasonably possible, as soon as possible thereafter.

Regulation 7 also provides that a crime and disorder committee shall review such responses and monitor the action (if any) taken by the relevant responsible authorities, co-operating persons or bodies in accordance with its powers under section 19(1) of the 2006 Act.”

- 3.5 It is recommended that the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee operates as the Crime and Disorder Committee. The terms of reference for the Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will need to be amended to reflect the Act and regulations. These amendments are outlined at **Appendix C and D**.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members are asked to agree the amendments proposed and outlined in Appendices A-E, and make appropriate recommendations to Council and the Standards Committee for consideration.

- 4.2 Members note that since the guidance has only just been published with a short timescale for implementation there may be a need for further amendments to ensure that the constitution fully reflects the governance arrangements for Maidstone.

**9. Agenda items**

Any Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub-Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee. On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.

"Furthermore any Member shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relating to his ward, which is relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub-Committee of which he is not a member to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee (A Councillor Call for Action). On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action Protocol. In putting forward such a request the Councillor must have regard to the Councillor Call for Action Protocol attached to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules and the government guidance. The Councillor concerned will be able to make representation to the Committee or Sub-Committee, when the Committee or Sub-Committee considers whether to take an item forward for scrutiny. The Committee should consider the extent to which the Councillor has exercised any power given to him under section 236. If the matter is a crime and disorder matter responsible authorities (CDRP Members) must be notified by the proper officer. The proper officer will also give regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State regarding matters that can not be referred to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the paragraph below."

The following matters may not be referred to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or its Sub-Committees:

- a) any matter relating to a planning decision;
- b) any matter relating to a licensing decision;
- c) any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment;
- d) any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable to be included in the agenda for, or to be discussed at, a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee or at a meeting of a sub-committee of that committee.

However a matter which consists of an allegation of systematic failure of an authority to discharge a function for which the authority is responsible may be referred to an overview and scrutiny committee, notwithstanding the fact that the allegation specifies matters which would otherwise be excluded by virtue of article 2."

**16. Call in**

When a decision is made by the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive, or a Councillor with delegated Executive authority or a key decision is made by an Officer with delegated authority from the Executive or an Area Committee or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council, normally within 2 working days of it being made. All Members of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be sent copies of the records of all decisions within the same time scale, by the person responsible for publishing the decision.

That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of five working days after the publication of the decision, unless an Overview and Scrutiny Committee objects to it and calls it in.

During that period, the proper officer shall call in a decision for scrutiny by the Committee if so requested by any two Members of the Council not serving on the Executive and shall then notify the decision taker of the call in. he shall call a meeting of the Committee on such date as he may determine, where possible after consultation with the chairman of the Committee, and in any case within ten days of the expiry of the call-in period.

If having considered it, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is still concerned about the executive decision, then it may refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to full Council. If referred to the decision make they shall then reconsider within a further five working days, amending the decisions or not, before adopting a final decision (which shall not be subject to call in).

If following an objection to the executive decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not meet in the period set out above or does meet but does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting or at the expiry of the five days period from the decision to call in the matter.

If the matter was referred to full Council the Council meeting should be convened within five days of that referral. If the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the

provision below. However, if the Council does object, it has not locus to make decisions in respect of Executive decisions unless it is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly consistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Executive as a whole or Committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within five working days on the Council request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within five days of the Council request.

If the Council does not meet, or if it does not refer the decision back to the decision making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is the earlier.



**ARTICLE 6 – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

6.01 Terms of reference The Council will appoint the Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in the left hand column of the table below to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, [the Police and Justice Act 2006](#), or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the matters set out in the right hand column of the same table.

<p>External</p>	<p>Providing a scrutiny role of outside agencies (including the Council's partners and the major utility providers)</p> <p>Health related issues including discharging the Council's responsibilities in respect of the Health and Social Care Act</p> <p><a href="#">Crime and Disorder issues including discharging the Council's Overview and Scrutiny responsibilities in respect of the Police and Justice Act, 2006</a></p> <p>The impact of the Council <a href="#">and Responsible Partners</a> on community safety within the Borough Council's area, including the Safer Maidstone Partnership</p> <p>The development and implementation of the Council's community plan (LSP)</p> <p>The external relationships of the Council.</p> <p>Lifelong Learning – Influencing external learning providers to improve the training and skills offer in the Borough</p> <p>Social Inclusion and the Council's specific initiatives to promote it</p> <p>Young people including the youth forum</p>
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**ADDITION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES**

The following addition is proposed to the overview and scrutiny procedure rules in relation to the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking on the function of the Crime and Disorder Committee.

**Procedure rules for the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee when acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**Co-option of Additional Members**

The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee may co-opt additional members from those persons and bodies who are responsible authorities within the meaning of section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, and from those persons and bodies with whom the responsible authorities have a duty to co-operate under section 5(2) of that Act (the “co-operating persons and bodies”), subject to the provisions set out in that regulation. To the extent of their membership, co-opted members have the same entitlement to vote as any other member.

**Frequency of Meetings**

The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall meet to carry out the functions required as the crime and disorder committee to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, no less than twice in every twelve month period.

**Requests for Information**

Responsible authorities or co-operating persons or bodies must provide such information requested of them by the crime and disorder committee, subject to the provisions in that regulation.

**Attendance of Responsible Authorities**

The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee when carrying out the functions of the crime and disorder committee may require the attendance before it of a representative of a responsible authority or of a co-operating person or body in order to answer questions, subject to the provisions in that regulation.

**Reports and Recommendations to Responsible Authorities**

When the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee carrying out the functions of the crime and disorder committee makes a report or recommendations to a responsible authorities and co-operating persons or bodies in accordance with section 19(8)(b) of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the responses to such report or recommendations of each relevant authority, body or person shall be in writing and within 1 month from the date of the report or recommendations or, if this is not reasonably possible, as soon as possible thereafter.

The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall review such responses and monitor the action (if any) taken by the relevant responsible authorities, co-operating persons or bodies in accordance with its powers under section 19(1) of the 2006 Act.”

**Maidstone Borough Council, Councillor Call for Action Protocol**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) seeks to strengthen the role of the Ward Councillor, encouraging them to resolve local problems on behalf of residents. The Act allows ward councillors to place Councillor Calls for Action onto scrutiny agendas for resolution and action. The legislation introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 extends the power of overview and scrutiny in two ways:

so that any Member of the Council can refer a local government matter to O&S committees; and

that matters which can be referred include matters which the Council and its partners are delivering through the Local Area Agreement and "local crime and disorder" matters.

- 1.2 The CCfA best Practice guidance released by CfPS and the IDeA refers to the importance of concentrating on outcomes rather than process when dealing with CCfAs this protocol is therefore a light touch approach.
- 1.3 The protocol outlines what constitutes a CCfA, what should be excluded and the process for dealing with a CCfA. The protocol applies to CCfAs related to crime and disorder matters as well as local government matters.

**2. What is Councillor Call for Action?**

- 2.1 Councillor Call for Action has been introduced by the government under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to strengthen the role of the ward councillor. The CCfA is a process for a Councillor to act on behalf of residents to resolve a local issue of concern, acting as a last resort for people who cannot get issues resolved through any other means, this can include crime and disorder matters.

**Local Government Matter** – under section 21A, a CCfA needs to relate to a "local government matter". This could be interpreted narrowly, to mean only those issues under the direct control of the authority. However, to give full effect to CCfA the interpretation of "local government matter" needs to be broader. This includes issues relating to the council's partners, in line with the area focus of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), and the fact that an authority's duties increasingly impact on other organisations, and

involve partners within and outside the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Matters that can not be raised as a Councillor Call for Action**

3.1 The following matters have been excluded under section 21A of the Local Government Act 2000, introduced under section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007:

- a) any matter relating to a planning decision;
- b) any matter relating to a licensing decision;
- c) any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment;
- d) any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable to be included in the agenda for, or to be discussed at, a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee or at a meeting of a sub-committee of that committee.

### **4. CCfA Process**

4.1 In accordance with the national best practice guidance Overview and Scrutiny should be the last stop for a CCfA. The expectation will be on the Ward Councillor to have tried to resolve an issue using all available mechanisms (including partnership working when appropriate) prior to referring the matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. When a matter is referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it will be up to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Chairman and the Proper Officer whether the matter is progressed and taken forward by scrutiny. If the CCfA relates to a crime and disorder matter than this must be referred to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee which in Maidstone Borough Council is the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### **4.2 Referral to Scrutiny**

The Chairman of the relevant O&S Committee will then determine with the Proper Officer whether to take the CCfA forward and will inform the Ward Councillor whether they will accept the CCfA within 5 working days. If the CCfA is a crime and disorder related matter then responsible partners must be notified (CDRP Members).

Reasons a Chairman may not take the CCfA forward to Committee could include:

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<sup>2</sup> Councillor Call for Action, Best Practice Guidance, IDeA and CfPS, 2009

- Not enough information has been provided;
- More could be done to resolve the issue at a local level, e.g. key people have not been contacted;
- The CCfA is, or has stemmed from, a vexatious discriminatory or unreasonable complaint;
- The matter has recently been examined by O&S (though the Ward Councillors may argue that certain aspects were not sufficiently covered hence a need for a CCfA);
- The matter is the subject of an ombudsman complaint or other official complaints procedure;
- The matter falls under excluded matters (see paragraph 3 above)

If a CCfA is rejected for consideration by scrutiny the ward councillor will be notified in writing within 5 working days of lodging the CCfA. Where it is a Crime and Disorder CCfA all responsible partners (CDRP Members) must be notified. Ward Councillors will have the opportunity to reply to the Chairman perhaps with further information to substantiate the CCfA.

If the CCfA is accepted, the relevant Cabinet Members, Officers and/or partners will be notified by the Chairman.

#### 4.3 **Ward Councillor Process for resolution of a CCfA:**

- a) Public request for action or issue identified by local ward councillor
- b) Discuss with other ward councillors if a multi-member ward and agree action
- c) Take steps to resolve the issue through existing mechanisms such as liaising with partners, county and parish councillors or raising with officers
- d) If unresolved and the matter can be taken no further by the ward councillor then refer to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee by completing "the councillor call for action form" and submit this to the Proper Officer (the Overview and Scrutiny Manager) for action.
- e) Overview and Scrutiny Committee either:
  - Rejects the CCfA and notifies the Councillor who in turn should inform the public;
  - Accepts the CCfA and arranges to consider the CCfA, notifying partners as appropriate. Following which they will determine their response and relay this to the Councillor and Partners as appropriate



## **5. Process for Dealing with a CCfA by a Scrutiny Committee**

- 5.1 The Chairman and Proper Officer will determine if a special meeting outside the calendar of meetings is required and call a meeting, if not then the CCfA will be dealt with at the next available meeting of the Committee.
- 5.2 The Chairman in consultation with the Ward Councillor and Scrutiny Team when considering the meeting should give consideration to :
- Witnesses;
  - Notifying and Inviting Partners
  - Evidence required;
  - Key questions;
  - Timescales; and
  - Aims and objectives for the meeting.
- 5.3 In a similar fashion to the call-in process at the meeting the Committee will be expected to reach a decision on whether to:
1. Take no action; or
  2. Refer the matter to the Executive/Council/Partner Organisations with recommendations; and/or
  3. Carry out a full scrutiny investigation.
- 5.4 Any report and recommendations arising from the Committee meeting will be made available and sent to all agencies involved with the CCfA within 5 working days of the meeting, in the case of a crime and disorder matter, reports and recommendations will be sent to the responsible authorities as listed in the Police and Justice Act 2006.

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 7 April 2009**

#### **Annual Report 2008-09**

**Report of:** Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Manager

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has within its terms of reference responsibility for producing the annual scrutiny report:

“Responsibility for keeping the O&S process under review and the production of the annual report.”

- 1.2 Attached at appendix A is the draft annual report for scrutiny covering its work during 2008-09. The Committee is asked to consider the attached report and propose amendments/additions as appropriate. The report has a section on each of Overview and Scrutiny’s priorities based on the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s four principles of effective scrutiny. The report details the key achievements for 2008-09 including the results of call-in, reviews and committee meetings.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to review the annual report, suggest improvements and agree to the final version being signed off and approved by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman prior to its submission to full Council.

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# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report



Keeping an eye on  
Maidstone

2008-09

## Contents

Page

**Introduction from the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman (2008-09)**

**What's the point of scrutiny?**

**Successful Scrutiny**

- **Ensures scrutiny provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers**
- **Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities**
- **Makes an impact on the delivery of public services**
- **Takes the lead and owns the scrutiny process**

**Partnership Working**

**Introduction to Overview and  
Scrutiny 2008-09**

Councillor Paulina Stockell, Chairman  
of Corporate Services Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee  
(insert photo)

DRAFT

## What's the Point of Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is an effective tool for back bench councillors. There are five key roles for scrutiny:

1. Policy Development – scrutiny can carry out reviews in new areas, for example the 2003-04 review into Climate Change resulted in the Council developing a Climate Change Action Plan.

2. Holding the Executive to Account - scrutiny can invite Cabinet Members to report to committees on their work and make recommendations to initiate reviews of services. Scrutiny can also delay cabinet decisions and suggest changes to decisions.

3. Policy Review – keeping an eye on the policies being developed by the Council and Cabinet and suggesting improvements where appropriate.

4. Performance Management – reviewing performance management information, identifying services that are not meeting targets and making recommendations for improvement.

5. External Scrutiny – looking outside the Council at other services provided to the public.

6. Engaging and representing the views of the public through and in the work of scrutiny.

### The Vision and Priorities for Scrutiny at Maidstone

The following vision was agreed for scrutiny by councillors:

*To have an effective and well respected service that ensures*

*the Council's services are delivered equitably, effectively and efficiently for our residents*

To achieve this vision four priorities have been set based on the Centre for Public Scrutiny principles of effective scrutiny:

- 1. Ensures scrutiny provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers;**
- 2. Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;**
- 3. Is carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny role; and**
- 4. Drives improvement in public services.**

The annual report sets out how scrutiny has met these four priorities during 2008-09.

### Scrutiny Support

Scrutiny is supported by 2.5fte officers; the management function is shared between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. This partnership has offered savings to both Councils whilst ensuring best practice is shared. The senior and scrutiny officer both have two committees each plus working groups.

### Member Training

This year a wide variety of Member training activities have been held including:

- A one day course on the nuts and bolts of effective scrutiny and new legislation;
- Budget Scrutiny Training; and
- RADA, questioning skills



## **Ensures scrutiny provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers.**

There have been several clear examples of scrutiny meeting this priority during 2008-09, with the call-in function being used more than ever before. We have had nine call-ins during the course of the year showing that scrutiny will challenge the executive when appropriate. The call-ins covered:

- Sustainable Construction Options for the new depot
- Concessionary Fares
- Sale of the former Coombe Quarry Park and Ride site
- Options for CCTV
- Current and Future Provision of Park and Ride
- Award of Park and Ride Bus Service Contract
- Managing on and off street parking demand
- Re-prioritisation of growth point fund expenditure
- Community Halls

The results of call-in demonstrate scrutiny’s effectiveness at providing critical friend challenge to the Cabinet. Key results from call-in are outlined below:

### **Companion Pass for disabled travellers**

In July 2008, the decision of the Cabinet not to fund companion passes for disabled residents was called in. Following detailed and well-informed discussions between Cabinet Members and the Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was recommended to Cabinet that these be reintroduced to enable disabled residents requiring companions to make use of public transport. This was

subsequently agreed by Cabinet, who highlighted the scrutiny meeting as an example of “scrutiny at its best”.

### **Community Halls**

The call-in challenged the Cabinet’s decision regarding the management of community halls in March 2009. A meeting was held in one of the halls affected and over 30 members of the public attended. The Committee interviewed an expert witness of community hall management and funding. The legacy of this call-in will be that expert witness working with the Council to improve how community halls are managed.

### **Road Safety**

(Insert Photo of meeting)

Scrutiny at Maidstone has never been afraid to look beyond the Council and its powers when challenging policy makers. The review of road safety looked at the roles of all agencies involved in promoting road safety. Internally the review has recommended that all essential users at the Council undertake an e-learning driver skills course. The group have also recommended that the legal blood alcohol level to be reduced and for the police to be given powers to do on spot breathalyser tests using intelligence . The group interviewed regional and national expert witnesses with Tunbridge Wells Council as part of the scrutiny partnership. This avoided duplication and ensured we were able to get high profile witnesses to contribute to the review.

## **Enables the Voice and Concerns of the Public and Its Communities**

The This year has seen greater public involvement than ever in the scrutiny process. We have held a one-off scrutiny review into a section 106 agreement following a petition to a scrutiny committee. A call-in regarding parking was supported by a petition and registered public speakers. Press coverage for scrutiny work has remained strong with articles on committee meetings and reviews appearing nearly every week in the Kent Messenger. Several reviews mentioned in this report have been triggered as a result of public concern and interest including road safety and the review of public conveniences

### **Corben Close**

(Insert Picture)

When residents of Corben Close and Beaver Road Allington approached their ward member with a petition regarding the enforcement of a Section 106 Agreement in their area he suggested that scrutiny could be a useful way to pursue the issues raised. This provided an excellent opportunity to trial the petition meetings encouraged in the recent Community Empowerment White Paper. Over 30 residents attended the meeting to hear the Leader and Officers explain the action taken in relation to the S106. Residents were pleased that the Council would act to adopt the land and that the play area would be maintained by the Council with costs charged to the developer.

### **Youth Scrutiny**

(Insert Picture)

The team have established a youth scrutiny committee made up of members of the youth forum. The Committee agreed its own work programme for the year and in 20087 completed a review of sex and relationships education. The young people involved interviewed expert witnesses ranging from teachers to sexual health outreach workers. The report was presented by the youth scrutiny to full council and resulted in radio and local press coverage. We will be pursuing the recommendations made in the report for local schools in the new year.

### **Diverse Communities**

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have carried out a review looking at the diverse communities of Maidstone. The review has involved councillors making direct contact with local minority groups and community representatives. The review has made recommendations to improve access to council services whilst recognising the vast amount of work carried out across the council to support all communities.

### **Review of Mental Health Services**

The joint review of mental health services with Tunbridge Wells has resulted in direct engagement with service users, most aptly demonstrated by the co-option of a local resident onto the Committee. The review will continue into 2009-10 looking at how access to mental health services can be improved for local residents.

## **Drives Improvement in public services**

Overview and Scrutiny, in 2008-09, has impacted on the delivery of a number of public services in Maidstone. The Committees have looked at a range of public services, plans and strategies and made recommendations for improvement.

### **Section 106 and Planning Enforcement**

Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the Council's approach to enforcing section 106 agreements and planning enforcement. The Committee held a workshop with Parish Councils to identify any problems and improvements that could be made to the present process. As a result of the review Parish Councils are now fully briefed on enforcement matters including confidential information. Other recommendations include registering S106 agreements on the land register so when property and land changes ownership outstanding S106 agreements are flagged up. The Committee have also recommended that a dedicated liaison officer be put in place to work with local members and parish councillors on enforcement matters.

### **Public Conveniences**

(Insert Photo)

The Image of Maidstone scrutiny review carried out in 2007-08 identified from a residents survey that public conveniences were a key concern for local residents. Councillors have interviewed expert witnesses and carried out site visits of loos across the Borough to make recommendations to improve the

service offered to residents. The Committee has recommended that the Council operates and leads a community toilet scheme, phases out those toilets that are not used frequently and more toilets are put in place in key areas of the town centre.

### **Review of Past Reports**

(section to be inserted highlighting key achievements over the past 8 years)

## **Takes the lead and owns the scrutiny process**

The scrutiny members in Maidstone have a national reputation for the parity of esteem they have established with the Cabinet and an integral part of this is the ownership they have of the scrutiny committees and the work they carry out. As stated earlier in this report Members have been involved in training activities to improve and develop their scrutiny skills

### **Balance of Power**

A savvy scrutiny member spied an article in the Local Government First Magazine requesting evidence for the Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee's review into the balance of power between central and local government. A cross party scrutiny working group was set-up to put forward evidence for the review. In the space of four weeks the group interviewed officers and councillors on the matter. They also carried out their own research with each Member researching and producing a case study to support the arguments put forward in the report. The final report was endorsed by all Members at a full Council meeting. Following the submission Maidstone was called to give evidence, the only district asked and the only Council represented by a Scrutiny Member. The Chairman of the Select Committee commented that the scrutiny approach to producing evidence was " a very interesting example" and that the "the Committee was very grateful (we) took this seriously. This is the first time that national and local scrutiny have been linked in this way.

### **Working Groups**

(To be added)

### **Elections**

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of whole and partial council elections in order to inform a decision of full council. As part of the review Members interviewed the electoral commission and officers as well as canvassing the opinions of all councillors on whether the Council should change from the present system of elections by thirds to whole council elections. The report will be presented to full council early in the next municipal year, when members will be requested by scrutiny to make a decision on changing the process.

### **Work Programme Setting**

(insert photo)

This year for the first time we held a work programme workshop with all Councillors to gather ideas for the scrutiny work programme for 2008-09. Councillors had the opportunity to speak with officers and representatives of external organisations as well as reviewing scrutiny suggestions from the public and others. A full list of ideas put forward for reviews during 2008-09 was researched by the scrutiny team prior to each Committee agreeing its work programme for the year.

## Partnership Working

Maidstone Council in April 2007 formed a scrutiny partnership with Tunbridge Wells. The management of the scrutiny function is shared between the two authorities. There are many benefits to sharing the service that equate to a better use of resources including:

- Shared scrutiny reviews – where support is pooled;
- Briefing papers – rather than duplicating resources briefing papers can be shared and adapted; and
- Shared scrutiny best practice.

The motto for the partnership is to achieve more together than we could alone - this has been the case for both Councils.

### Greater Joint Working at a Member and Officer Level

This year there have been several examples of greater joint working between the two authorities including work on road safety, member training events, a joint review of mental health services and joint chairman's meetings.

The review of mental health services has been supported by the two senior scrutiny officers at both Councils with three members from each authority forming the working group. This is a review that has been undertaken because of the partnership as the two councils cover the same health economy it was felt to be helpful to carry out a joint review. The review will continue into 2009-10, so far the group have found that:

- members of the public seemed to be unaware of the services that were available, where

they were located and how to access them.

- Partnership working appeared to be lacking between the organisations that provided mental health support.
- The availability of financial support, from KCC, for the provision of these services should be investigated, in addition to whether they would consider encouraging greater partnership working between organisations currently offering the service.

Both Councils have conducted reviews of road safety during 2008-09 and rather than duplicate resources and effort held a joint meeting to interview national experts and the police on road safety.

(insert photo)

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