MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 08 February 2012

IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2012-15

Issue for Decision

To consider Maidstone Borough Council's improvement journey detailed in the Improvement Plan 2012-15 set out at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Business Improvement.

Decision Made

That the Improvement Plan 2012-15 be adopted.

Reasons for Decision

Maidstone Borough Council has set the priorities and outcomes for the borough of Maidstone in its Strategic Plan. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out what will be spent and where savings will be made. In order to deliver the priority outcomes and the savings required, a number of key pieces of work and projects will be carried out. These are detailed in the Improvement Plan 2012-15, which ensures the improvement work is aligned with the Strategic Plan and the MTFS.

The Improvement Plan has three objectives:

1. A reduction in net cost, through making savings or increased income

2. Improving or maintaining quality: ensuring we deliver excellent services, which means delivering what is promised to agreed standards

3. Identifying and responding to opportunities aligned with the Strategic Plan

The four corporate workstreams (1-4) and enablers (5-7) of the plan are:

1. Incremental improvement
2. Asset management
3. Transformation
4. External challenge
5. Organisational culture
6. Good information and knowledge management
7. Councillor assurance

The priority services and projects for improvement have also been identified in the Improvement Plan, based on priorities in the Strategic Plan, our current knowledge of any external or internal opportunities and potential for improvement and/or reduction in net cost. These are as follows:

- Waste and Recycling
- Customer services delivery
- ICT
- Parking transport management
- Hazlitt Arts Centre
- Planning
- Revenues and Benefits
- Housing
- Finance
- Building Control
- Future use of Town Hall
- Community asset transfer
- Major assets review
- More proactive use of Covalent, our performance management system
- Management & Admin recharges review
- Other shared services and Mid Kent Improvement Partnership work
- Cross-organisational collaboration
- Corporate peer review

Compiling an Improvement Plan allows the key workstreams to be brought together and monitored. Officers responsible for each of the workstreams and enablers and the Leader will make up a monitoring group to ensure the plan progresses and benefits are delivered. It is proposed the group would include:

- Leader – provides political leadership and councillor assurance (as defined in the Improvement Plan)
- Chief Executive - ultimately owns and is accountable for delivery of Improvement Plan
- Assistant Director of Environmental & Regulatory Services – responsible for Asset management workstream
- Head of Change & Scrutiny – responsible for Incremental improvement and External challenge workstreams
- Head of Business Improvement – responsible for Transformation workstream and Good information and knowledge management enabler
- Head of HR – responsible for Organisational culture enabler
- Head of ICT – responsible for Use of technology, which is not a workstream or an enabler but a critical tool for improvement
- Head of Finance & Customer Services – essential to ensure that any improvement work is aligned with the MTFS.

The plan will be updated annually and progress reported to Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

It could be decided not to adopt the Improvement Plan 2012-15. This is not thought appropriate as the Improvement Plan is aligned with the Council's strategic objectives and MTFS and is essential for ensuring corporate oversight of a number of different pieces of work across the organisation.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: **17 February 2012**

Improvement Plan 2012-15

Maidstone Borough Council has been recognised under previous inspection regimes as providing good quality value for money services. However, we want to be even better, offering the services that people want for a cost they think is good value. Last year the Government announced its plans to reduce public spending by 25% and reduce the national deficit. The Council has to save around £2.9m over the next three years, which is a substantial reduction in the budget we have to spend on providing services for local people, at the same time that the number of potentially vulnerable people requiring some of those services, like housing advice and Housing and Council Tax Benefit, is increasing. The Strategic Plan details the priorities and priority outcomes for Maidstone until 2015 and how these will be delivered. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out what the Council will spend and when and where savings will be made. In order to deliver the Strategic Plan and MTFS the Council is undertaking various pieces of work and projects to improve value for money and quality of customer service, and this must be aligned with the Council's strategic objectives and Medium Term Financial Plan. This improvement work makes up the building blocks that will make Maidstone a better council.
This plan explains the key workstreams for the Council's improvement journey, the drivers for improvement as well as priority services and projects for improvement. It will allow work to be planned, sufficiently supported and monitored to ensure savings needs and the improvements required for the Council to meet its priority outcomes are delivered.

Objectives

It is important that the Council delivers services that are value for money and that residents are satisfied with. We must make savings and maximise income where we can but also be flexible enough to take opportunities as they arise, including those that come from external influences like changes in legislation. Therefore, the objectives of the improvement journey are:

1. A reduction in net cost, through making savings or increased income

2. Improving or maintaining quality: ensuring we deliver excellent services, which means delivering what is promised to agreed standards

3. Identifying and responding to opportunities aligned with the Strategic Plan

Improvement workstreams

The Council's Improvement Plan is corporate and involves a number of different workstreams, which are owned by different officers in the organisation. Those workstreams identified as most important are:

1. **Incremental improvement** (Head of Change and Scrutiny) **–** making good use of performance and financial information and good business planning to enable service managers to make small changes to enable continuous improvement in the services their teams provide.

2. **Asset management** (Asst Director of Environmental & Regulatory Services) **–** making the best use of what we have in terms of buildings

and land and management of our use of water, gas, electricity and petrol/diesel. It is important we know what assets we keep and what we want to sell or transfer to others, and that we actually dispose of those assets we no longer require. This is essential in terms of providing capital income and ensuring services are delivered to residents in the best way. This may mean that we transfer assets to others, including community groups, to enable them to deliver more services in the future. It may also mean that we look to make savings by sharing accommodation with other organisations.

3. **Transformation** (Head of Business Improvement) **–** larger changes to ensure key outcomes are delivered effectively and efficiently. Making good use of unit cost information and benchmarking to consider different ways of delivering services, for example using shared services to gain economies of scale and increase resilience, and using business improvement techniques to improve processes. This includes working with other organisations and residents to deliver shared goals as well as different teams within the Council working together better. We may also work with public service providers and local people to redesign services and pool budgets through Community Budgets. More internal and/or external support to make these improvements may be required.

4. **External challenge** (Head of Change & Scrutiny) **–** using information and challenge from residents and critical friends to improve services. This includes complaints information, feedback from local people, peer reviews, nationally driven change like the welfare reform changes and Overview & Scrutiny reviews.

These workstreams and the whole Improvement Plan are underpinned by the following enablers:

• **Organisational culture** (Head of HR) – creating an organisational culture where there is permission to experiment and time to learn and where all officers and members are engaged and are able to give their feedback and ideas. Improving collaboration between different parts of the organisation, ensuring that change is well managed and there is the capacity and capability to deliver the required outcomes.

• **Good information and knowledge management** (Head of Business Improvement) **–** smart use of information we gather about our customers and making use of other customer insight, like Mosaic Public Sector, to create and deliver messages that people hear and understand and which cause them to make positive changes in behaviour.

• **Councillor assurance –** leadership and involvement of elected members in shaping, implementing and monitoring the progress and outcomes of policies and projects.

Other important tools for improvement are:

- Procurement

- Use of technology

Priority services and projects for improvement

In order to ensure we can deliver our priority outcomes in the Strategic Plan and savings in the MTFS it is important to make changes in the following service areas. The list of service areas below is in order of priority for improvement, from highest priority to lowest. These improvements may be to deliver savings, improve the quality of a service or respond to an opportunity that may arise.

1. **Waste & Recycling** – procuring a new waste contract with other Kent authorities and working to achieve the target of 50% recycling by 2015

2. **Customer services delivery** (including Gateway, Contact Centre and Corporate Support) – becoming more customer-centric, engaging better with our residents and designing a sustainable model of customer services delivery for the long term

3. **ICT** – sharing our ICT service with local authority partners

4. **Parking Transport Management** – completing our Transport Strategy and implementing this

5. **Hazlitt Arts Centre** – investigating options for governance and implementing the chosen option to ensure value for money

6. **Planning** – developing the synergy between Planning and Economic Development to improve the prosperity of the borough and being ready to respond to any change in legislation that would allow us to set our own planning fees

7. **Revenues and Benefits** – embedding the shared service, preparing for the national welfare reforms and exploring different ways of delivering the service for the future

8. **Housing** – ensuring we can respond to the increased need for homelessness services, preventing homelessness wherever possible, enabling the provision of more housing and ensuring that there is a supply of decent, affordable and accessible housing, including in the private rented sector

9. **Finance** – building a service that supports the Council make informed strategic financial management decisions, manage and control budgets and commit and measure resources and investigating how this service could be delivered in the future

10. **Building Control** – re-designing the service, diversifying work to undertake more trading rather than statutory work and looking to both public and private sector partners to investigate and develop a model for delivery for the future.

The following table shows our top priorities for the next three years:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Waste & Recycling	Waste & Recycling	Customer Services delivery
Customer Services delivery	Customer Services delivery	Revenues & Benefits
Revenues & Benefits	ICT	Housing
ICT	Revenues & Benefits	Building Control
Hazlitt Arts Centre	Housing	
Planning	Finance	
Parking Transport Management		

As well as work in particular service areas there are a number of other important projects that need to be undertaken in each of the improvement workstreams:

- **Cross organisational collaboration**– exploring and establishing new ways of commissioning and delivering services with other agencies and organisations to improve outcomes, increase efficiencies and reduce cost. To review and revise existing governance and funding arrangements including pooled budgets to maximise the use of resources in service delivery

- **Future Use of the Town Hall** – looking at the future use of the Town Hall, including the former Tourist Information Centre facility at the front of the building, with a view to maximising the income potential from the building. Exploring potential uses including both commercial and community use to achieve the best rate of return and usage whilst not competing with local businesses

- **Major assets review** - reviewing the Council's assets as part of the Asset Management Plan, which seeks to ensure that the Council's property portfolio is managed in a way to support the Council's 3 key priorities. Major sites such as King Street and Medway Street are being considered for a joint vehicle arrangement with other Kent authorities. We will work with the tenants of Park Wood industrial estate to invest in and improve the estate, which generates considerable income for the Council, mostly through ground rents

- **Community asset transfer -** establishing an effective mechanism and approach for supporting the transfer of community assets where this is appropriate, demonstrating value for money and maximising their use

- **Management & Admin recharges review** - establishing and implementing a simplified, transparent time and cost efficient recharges model that supports informed decision making at all levels of the

organisation and enables effective assessment of alternative service delivery models

- **Corporate peer review** - a peer challenge involves officers and members from other authorities acting as critical friends, making recommendations on where we could do things better. We are going to use this method to look at our corporate governance and take advice on any improvements we can make

- **More proactive use of Covalent –** embedding the use of Covalent, our performance management software system, so that managers and key officers in the organisation use it to effectively monitor performance, service delivery and risk

- **Other shared services and Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) work –** working with partners, in particular our MKIP local authority partners, to establish closer working arrangements and partnerships in more services.

This is how the priority services and projects for improvement fit in with the 4 improvement workstreams:

Asset management	Incremental improvement	Transformation	External challenge
Future use of Town Hall Community asset transfer Major assets review: • King Street • Medway Street • Park Wood	More proactive use of Covalent Management & Admin recharges review	Customer services delivery Waste & Recycling ICT Finance Housing Other shared services and Mid Kent Improvement Partnership work Cross organisational collaboration	Revenues & Benefits Planning Parking Transport management Hazlitt Arts Centre Building Control Corporate peer review

More detail on the work to be undertaken on the priority service areas in the Transformation and External challenge workstreams is in Appendix 1.

Governance and Monitoring

The Cabinet own the Council's improvement journey and the Chief Executive is ultimately accountable for delivery of the Improvement Plan. Political leadership is provided by the Leader. A head of service is responsible for each of the workstreams and enablers that make up the improvement journey detailed above. The Leader, Chief Executive and the appropriate heads of service make up a group that will monitor progress against plan to ensure that any as yet unknown opportunities that would provide greater benefit than the work already planned are not missed and that the services and projects for improvement are re-prioritised as necessary as a result.

This plan will be updated annually to the same corporate planning timetable as the Strategic Plan and MTFS. A progress report will be compiled and sent to Cabinet 6 months after the adoption of the improvement journey.

APPENDIX 1

Future for priority service areas in Transformation and External challenge workstreams

Service area	Long term	Medium term	2012-13
Waste & Recycling	• Recycling 50%+ • New open book waste contract • Refresh strategy in 2015	• Review staff structures	• Undertake tender process • Clarify how bulky collections etc will work • Clarify role of contractors • Use of ICT for monitoring performance/contract • Strategy alignment with Kent County Council (KCC) • Maximise recycling rates to maximise KCC funding • Moving processes on-line (next 6 months)
Customer Services delivery (including Contact Centre, Gateway & Corporate Support)	• Reduced cost of provision • Greater range of partner provision	• Reflect effect of welfare reforms • Reflect effect of waste contract • Determine use of break clause in Gateway contract in 2 years	• Customer centricity review • New website • Ownership of website and resources – one service for customer contacts • Voice recognition software – automated switchboard • More work on Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) project and effects of moving towards this e.g. increased work
ICT	• Fully integrated ICT partnership • Considering models for delivery	• Complete phase 3 – governance and organisational structure	• Preparing business case and vision/10 yr strategy for April 2012/13 • Phase 1 – moving kit to Maidstone • Phase 2 – Move virtual services to MKIP cloud • Start phase 3 • Quick wins in consolidation, single systems and joint working e.g. new website Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells councils
Hazlitt Arts Centre	• Vibrant theatre that people want to go to all the time	• Different governance structure – 2013/14	• Planning and implementing different governance structure

	• Cut subsidy by 50%+ • Increased community participation and involvement	• Run more like a business • Link to Museum on education	• Work to make Hazlitt financially ready - maximising savings and income • New governance means asset management and support structure issues
Planning	• Making sure vision including leisure and business opportunities is delivered in a sensitive way • Effects of Local Development Framework – less planning enforcement – so could move resources to deal with increased levels of development • Skills development – more negotiation and selling		• Investigate options for improvement of processing and delivery of planning support e.g. shared • Channel shift to website • Restructure to include Spatial Policy, plus support for those in management roles • Investigation of Management & Admin recharges • Consider options for service e.g. gold plated • Efficiency work e.g. Business Improvement process improvement • Participating in and responding to peer review
Parking/Transport Management	• More customer power to pay, less enforcement	• Expand partnership	• Transport Strategy –models considered and delivery set up including Park and Ride issues • Consolidate parking partnership • Investigate other ways to pay e.g. mobile phone • Channel shift on-line (into medium term)
Revenues & Benefits	• Develop wider shared service or pursue commercial opportunities	• Restructure and change through welfare reform • Decide if we take the saving or use the	• Efficiency work e.g. channel shift and reducing avoidable contact – building capacity to sell • Planning to manage welfare reforms – need

		capacity for income generation	to have Council Tax benefit structure in place by April 2013
		• Determine effect of Council Tax reforms e.g. possible reduced collection rate • Opportunities through business rate reforms	
Housing	• Quality housing that people want and is accessible to the whole community • Affordable housing delivered to strategy – challenges in achieving this • Good private sector market with choice • Good housing advice that prevents homelessness	• Welfare reforms – manage effects on private sector • Improved working with registered providers and private sector landlords	• Review policies and priorities • Business Improvement process review – Private Sector Housing then Housing Options • Review tenancy strategy, homelessness strategy, empty homes approach, affordable housing programme • Understand, respond to and begin prevention of increased homelessness • Decide how to respond to increased legal challenges • Review use of local Bed & Breakfast accommodation • Review housing assistance grants • Decide on home improvement agency approach • Consider threat to Disabled Facilities Grant funding – internal and external • Plan approach for tackling disadvantage with early years (into medium and long term)
Finance	• Support the business make	• One ICT system across	• Restructure to work towards long term

		Mid Kent Improvement Partnership	better support for business
	informed decisions, manage budgets, commit and measure resources • Investigate model of delivery		• Decide and implement approach to recharges • Develop use of Agresso (payments and invoice system) for more things e.g. for Direct Debits
Building Control	• Model of delivery – trading arm doing work on behalf of private companies	• Diversify work – less statutory, more trading account • Develop and take advantage of partnership opportunities	• Break even • Staff restructure • Channel shift on-line