

AGENDA

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 5 January 2010

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

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

Page No.

1. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.
2. Apologies.
3. Notification of Substitute Members.
4. Notification of Visiting Members.

Continued Over/:

Issued on 18 December 2009

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

5. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

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

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

7. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 1 December 2009. 1 - 13

8. Strategic Plan 2009-12 - Update for 2010/11. 14 - 87

Interview with:

- Councillor Chris Garland, Leader of the Council; and
- Georgia Hawkes, Policy and Performance Manager.

9. Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards. 88 - 173

Interview with:

- Councillor Chris Garland, Leader of the Council;
- Zena Cooke, Director of Resources and Partnerships; and
- Paul Riley, Head of Finance.

10. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions. 174 - 181

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Stockell (Chairman)
Councillors Butler, Bradshaw, Hotson, Marshall,
Mrs Marshall, Mrs Wilson and Mortimer

66. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.

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

67. Apologies.

There were no apologies.

68. Notification of Substitute Members.

It was noted that Councillor Mortimer was substituting for Councillor Parr.

69. Notification of Visiting Members.

It was noted that Councillors Ash and Field were visiting Members with an interest in all items on the agenda.

70. Disclosures by Members and Officers:

All Members declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 8 and 9 which were in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Function Review by virtue of their membership of overview and scrutiny committees.

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

Resolved: That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

72. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2009.

A Member referred to Minute № 63, "Devolved Budgets", resolution (c), "that the guidance around spending devolved budget money on "religious activities" be clarified to ensure a clear distinction between 'faith' and 'culture'" and asked whether this had been considered yet. The Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager confirmed that all resolutions on this item had been considered by the Audit Committee on 30 November 2009 and a response was expected shortly.

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

73. Overview and Scrutiny Function Review: House of Commons Select Committee:

The Chairman welcomed Huw Yardley and Emma Gordon, Clerk and Committee Specialist respectively for the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, to the meeting and invited them to outline the work of House of Commons Select Committees.

Mr Yardley gave Members a presentation on the work and operation of select committees (attached at [Appendix A](#)) and showed a DVD entitled *Scrutiny Uncovered*¹ which explained the work of Parliamentary Select Committees before Members asked questions. The following areas were covered in the course of the agenda item:

Politics

Select committees were made up of 11-14 members and reflected the political balance of the House of Commons. Chairmen were divided amongst the political parties, again to reflect political balance. Committee members were expected to behave impartially, and it was accepted that although all members would bring political beliefs to an investigation, all members would work together. Committees tended to act as "we the committee, you the executive", rather than along political lines, and the chairman was expected to foster this.

The value of a select committee inquiry was that it produced consensual, cross-party report and Mr Yardley suggested that minority reports had little value. It was argued that if the whole committee could not be convinced of an argument, the executive was also unlikely to be convinced. Select committees tended to avoid issues of major political controversy for this reason; these issues were not neglected, however, as they were likely to be scrutinised elsewhere.

It was emphasised that the purpose of select committees was not to embarrass the government, however they were not afraid to look into topics that could end up doing so, as this would generally mean that something was going wrong and needed to be corrected. Mr Yardley suggested that such issues gave select committees power and influence.

Work Programming

Mr Yardley informed the Committee that select committees rarely had topics referred to them and work programmes were chosen entirely by members. Work programmes were flexible to allow committees to react to events as well as schedule in longer term reviews. Select committee staff had a role to play in advising on possible topics for investigation and

¹ This DVD can be viewed at <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/ScrutinyUncovered/Default.aspx>

the extent to which the committee was fulfilling its core tasks, but the final choice of work programme rested with the committee.

Select committees did not scrutinise legislation as they were investigative committees. They did, however, consider draft bills where appropriate. The select committee chairmen had produced a list of ten core tasks which select committees were required to take into account when planning their work, and they were required to report on their work against these core tasks annually. Whilst not prescriptive, this list helped to ensure a balance of work by committees. The core tasks included examining Government policy proposals and deficiencies (this formed the majority of select committee work), examining progress against Public Service Agreement targets and scrutinising major appointments, though committees had no veto. Select committees also monitored associated public bodies, including quangos, providing the only direct accountability for these unelected bodies.

Mr Yardley suggested that some of the most successful select committee inquiries were ones that 'shone a light on a dark corner', considering issues that were not currently on the cabinet radar. Whilst issues of great public and media concern were clearly important, they were not the only options.

A Councillor asked about the split between policy reviews and holding to account, and Mr Yardley stated that much of the direct 'holding to account' work was done in writing and largely staff driven. Policy reviews were of more interest to members. There were two evidence sessions per year for members to discuss with senior officials and Ministers the work of the department more generally; this ensured an ongoing overview and knowledge.

With regard to public suggestions for select committee topics, Mr Yardley suggested that the best option was to write to the chairman or to all committee members. Correspondence sent to the select committee staff would not be circulated to the whole committee as they had a policy of not circulating third party material; this avoided members having to deal with excessive or unnecessary information. Most correspondence related to individual issues, which select committees did not deal with, however suggestions for policy review would be passed on to the chairman and kept on a list of suggestions for future reviews.

Operation of Committees

Mr Yardley emphasised that committees were able to operate in any way that they wished. This included having a variety of outputs, including reports, debates in the House of Commons and single sessions on topics. It was noted that having a single session, for example asking a minister to explain a decision rather than replicating the whole Government inquiry, could be extremely valuable in terms of improving transparency. Committees sometimes considered only written evidence, rather than calling witnesses.

One of the key advantages of select committees was the time they had available to look into issues, which the cabinet did not have. This offered the opportunity to engage a wide range of stakeholders and carefully analyse a wide range of evidence. All evidence considered as part of a select committee inquiry was published online, and it was therefore suggested that this was an excellent source of information for local authority scrutiny committees.

Committees operated in both public and private. Whilst the majority of evidence was heard in public to ensure accountability and transparency, some meetings were in private, for example to discuss draft select committee reports, to ensure the effective conduct of business. Select committees met once a week, except when Parliament was in recess.

Select committees could set up sub-committees, though not all did. Some committees had standing sub-committees to consider specific issues, whilst others set up ad-hoc sub-committees to look at issues that the committee as a whole did not want to investigate.

There was a liaison committee made up of the chairmen of all of the select committees to consider general matters related to the work of the committees; however this was not always effective due to its size and the wide range of views. It was suggested that this could work better in local authorities because it would have fewer members.

When producing a report, a 'draft heads' document would be submitted to the committee outlining potential recommendations and the main direction of the arguments. This ensured that the final draft report would broadly reflect the opinion of the committee. Draft reports were checked by several levels of staff before being considered by the committee chairman. The draft report then went to the committee as the 'chairman's draft' and this was for the chairman, rather than the officer, to discuss and defend.

When a report was submitted to the Government, it had two months to respond. It was noted that if recommendations were rejected, select committees had the opportunity to carry out further research in support of the recommendations before resubmitting them with further evidence. The need to think long-term was emphasised as sometimes no immediate action would be taken following the submission of a report, however several years later it would become apparent that policy had moved in the direction that the select committee report had recommended.

The staff employed to assist in the operation of the select committees were not civil servants, rather they were servants of the House; this distinction was considered crucial as it highlighted the independence of committee staff. There were approximately 8 staff per committee, and there was one media officer per 4-5 committees; this was extremely beneficial as in local authorities, media officers were council-wide and so had a conflict of interest when it came to publicising scrutiny stories, particularly if these did not show the executive in a positive light.

The main role of committee staff was to produce a brief of suggested questions. Approximately 25-30 questions were produced for each 2 hour session, and each question was preceded by half a page to a page of background research to explain the context of the question. This allowed members to quickly gain an understanding of the topic and the areas of questioning that would need to be covered. The questions were not a script, rather a prompt to ensure that all of the necessary ground was covered. In private, the chairman asked members which questions they would like to ask to ensure that all issues were raised.

Other Issues

It was acknowledged that attendance was an issue because the number of committee places had significantly increased. There were now 577 select committee places and only half that number of members eligible to sit on them. However, select committee chairmen generally acknowledged that those sessions with fewer members tended to work better as there was more opportunity for members to ask everything that they wanted to. The briefing reports also ensured all issues were covered no matter how many members turned up at meetings.

Public engagement was considered to be a weakness, however Ms Gordon highlighted that this was an ongoing problem for all government and local government meetings, even for meetings dealing with issues of major public concern.

In response to a question, Mr Yardley suggested that the most desirable qualities in a chairman were the ability to work on behalf of the committee rather than a political party and be fair to all members; the ability to keep the meeting in order; and the ability to judge the mood of the committee and synthesise the comments of all members into a report that the whole committee could sign up to. Chairmen received payment for their role but other members did not.

Differences between Select Committees and Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny

Ms Gordon was on secondment from the Overview and Scrutiny Department at Hampshire County Council and provided Members with an overview of the differences between select committees and her experience of local authority overview and scrutiny. These included:

- Select committees chose their work programmes with little influence from anyone else; the main concern was that it was important to members and the public;
- The House was not the Government; this independence from the executive was vital;
- Select committees had dedicated media officers to prevent conflict with government interests;
- Research included in House briefings meant that there were few surprises in evidence sessions and those sessions were more about

public accountability. They also ensured that the right questions were asked; and

- Local authority scrutiny was extremely complex due to the interactions between partners and different levels of government.

A Councillor asked how backbench members could be convinced of the value of the scrutiny process. Ms Gordon stated that her time working with select committees had made the breadth and depth of local government business, and therefore the scale of the challenge for scrutiny councillors in local authorities, clear. Local councillors needed to be proud of the scrutiny work that they undertook as it was extremely valuable when it worked well. Mr Yardley pointed out that select committees had been in place for over 30 years; their role was therefore accepted and members were not so concerned about embarrassing their own party. In local authorities, majority party councillors often saw their main role as supporting the executive; however they were actually there to improve the executive's work, even if this meant exposing failures.

The Committee thanked Mr Yardley and Ms Gordon for an interesting and informative discussion.

Resolved: That the discussion be noted as part of the ongoing Overview and Scrutiny Function review.

[The meeting was adjourned from 8:25 p.m. to 8:32 p.m.]

74. Overview and Scrutiny Function Review: Structure Workshop.

The Committee considered the suggested recommendations within the report of the Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager for inclusion within the final Overview and Scrutiny Function Report. The Committee made the following comments:

It is recommended that there are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees which all have the option of creating working groups where appropriate. It is further recommended that the terms of reference of the committees be reconsidered by the Overview and Scrutiny Team and then approved by this Committee.

Agreed. Particular concern was raised over the size of the remit of the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager agreed to look at this as part of the review of the terms of reference.

It is recommended that there are 8 members on each committee.

Members requested information from the Democratic Services Manager on whether having an even number of members on a committee would make achieving political balance difficult.

It is recommended that meetings are held monthly, except for May, with flexibility to add or cancel meetings as appropriate.

Agreed. Members agreed that having the meetings diarised would ease organisation, but emphasised that the chairman should be strong in cancelling meetings with limited business with the agreement of group spokespeople.

It is recommended that the chairman and vice-chairman of each committee come from different political groups.

Agreed. A Member clarified that contrary to the report, one of the groups at the workshop did not recommend this. However Members agreed that this would be a worthwhile recommendation.

It is recommended that the chairman of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee comes from a party not represented on the executive.

Agreed subject to an amendment stating that if the cabinet was a coalition of all parties, the chairman would be elected through a normal voting process.

It is recommended that the role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee be strengthened to ensure better management and coordination of committee work and working groups.

Agreed.

It is recommended that a clear job description for scrutiny chairmen be established.

Members noted that this would not be enforceable, however the merits of having outline responsibilities included in the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook were noted. The need for training was also emphasised, for example providing chairing skills training for all members rather than just existing chairmen.

It is recommended that any non-executive member be allowed to substitute on an overview and scrutiny committee, rather than having nominated substitutes.

Members agreed that this should be recommended for all committees where prior training was not a prerequisite to membership.

It is recommended that the vice-chairman received a percentage of the chairman's allowance.

Members agreed that this should only be the case where the vice-chairman had taken on a significant amount of the responsibility and therefore proposed that this be reworded; "should the chairman be unable to undertake the substantive role for three months or more then the allowance will be reallocated to the vice-chair for that period". Members

also agreed that further clarification on the role of the vice-chairman would be useful.

Members then noted the comments made at the Overview and Scrutiny Structure Workshop and agreed to include comments in the final report on meeting format, training and the role of the chairman.

A Member noted that contributions from a range of other councils had been used to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Structure Workshop and recommended that these councils be thanked for their contributions in the report.

Resolved: That

- a) The following recommendations be included in the final Overview and Scrutiny Function Report:
 - i. That there are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees which all have the option of creating working groups where appropriate;
 - ii. That meetings are held monthly, except for May, with flexibility to add or cancel meetings as appropriate;
 - iii. That the chairman and vice-chairman of each committee come from different political groups;
 - iv. That the chairman of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee comes from a party not represented on the executive, except where the executive is an all-party coalition in which case a vote will take place for which all committee members are eligible;
 - v. That the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee be strengthened to ensure better management and coordination of committee work and working groups;
 - vi. That outline responsibilities for Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook;
 - vii. That any non-executive member be allowed to substitute on an overview and scrutiny committee, rather than having nominated substitutes;
 - viii. That any non-executive member be allowed to substitute on any committee not requiring prior training, rather than having nominated substitutes; and
 - ix. That should the chairman be unable to undertake the substantive role for three months or more then the allowance will be reallocated to the vice-chair for that period.
- b) The Overview and Scrutiny Team review the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and report back to the Committee;

- c) The Democratic Services Manager be asked for clarification on whether having an even number of members on a committee would cause problems with achieving political balance;
- d) The comments made at the Overview and Scrutiny Structure Workshop be noted as part of the ongoing review of the Overview and Scrutiny Function;
- e) The Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager include sections in the final report on meeting format, training and the role of the chairman and vice-chairman; and
- f) The councils that had responded to requests for information on scrutiny structures be thanked in the final report.

75. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

The Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that the Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards and the Strategic Plan Update would be considered at the 5 January 2010 meeting. It was also recommended that as this would be a substantial meeting, the update on enhancing local democracy should be moved to the February meeting and this was agreed.

A Member highlighted the Treasury Management Strategy 2010/11 and it was explained that this would be considered by the Audit Committee. The Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager agreed to inform Members of the date for this.

Resolved: That

- a) The update on enhancing local democracy be moved to the 2 February 2010 meeting;
- b) The Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager inform Members of the date when the Treasury Management Strategy would be considered by the Audit Committee; and
- c) The Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

76. Duration of the Meeting.

6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.

Parliamentary scrutiny through Select Committees

Huw Yardley

Clerk,
Communities and Local
Government
Committee

Emma Gordon

Committee Specialist,
Communities and Local
Government Committee



Talk content

- Brief outline of key points
- Short video, *Scrutiny Uncovered*
- What select committees do
- How they do it
- SWOT of parliamentary select committees
- Questions (but do interrupt!)

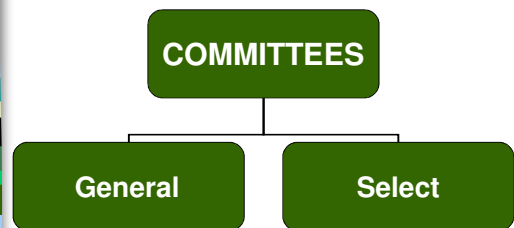


Key points

- Committees choose own subjects
- Inquiries are based on evidence received
- Programmes are flexible
- No checklists or templates
- Different outputs
- Independence of staff



Types of committee



Role of Select Committees

- One to scrutinise each Government Department
- “Administration, expenditure and policy” of that Department
- Additionally:
 - “Cross-cutting” Select Committees
 - “Scrutiny” committees



Tasks of Select Committees

- Examine Government policy proposals and deficiencies
- Scrutinise draft bills
- Examine department’s actions and administration
- Examine PSAs
- Monitor associated public bodies
- Scrutinise major appointments
- Examine the implementation of legislation



Modes of working

- Discuss informally
- Hear oral evidence
- Ask for written evidence
- Go on visits – UK and overseas
- Set up sub-committees
- Produce reports & recommendations



Public/Private

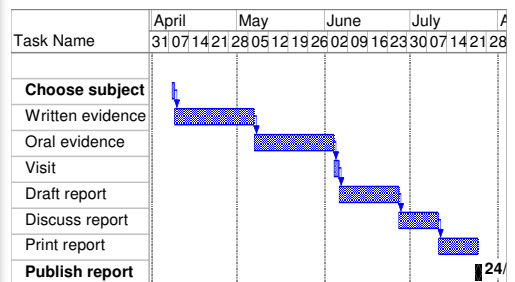
- **Private:** choice of inquiry, programme, witnesses
- **Public:** oral & written evidence
- **Private:** discussion of draft report
- **Public:** final report



The inquiry process



Committee inquiry: typical timescale



Overlapping inquiries

	Choose subject	Written evidence	Oral evidence	Visit	Draft report	Report	Await reply
A						█	█
B		█	█	█			
C					█	█	
D	█	█		█			
E			█				



Choosing subjects

- Member preference
- Topical/media/pressure groups
- Fulfilment of core tasks
- Staff input
 - Scoping
 - Terms of reference



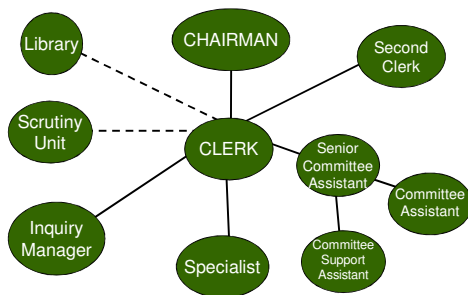
Sources of information



Committee outputs

- Report
- Single evidence session
- Debates in House
- Request for written evidence
- Chairman's speeches
- Immeasurables ...

Staffing



Staff Papers

- Background
- Summary of evidence
- SUGGESTED QUESTIONS
- Particular issue
- Heads of report
- Draft report
- Draft media release on publication

Brief: suggested questions

- Purpose of inquiry
- Witness details
- Suggested questions
 - background
 - Question: self-contained, concise, open
- Follow-up
- Divvying-up questions

SWOT of Select Committees

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Political without being party political ■ Seen to be authoritative (report quality) ■ Unique forum for questioning Ministers ■ Can secure high level media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Time members have to devote to committees ■ Poor co-ordination between committees ■ Public engagement ■ Can be seen as too slow to respond (an inquiry can take a year or more to complete)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can act as a focus of public concern on topical issues ■ Public engagement ■ Looking at areas which normally receive little public or Parliamentary attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Divided committee carries little weight ■ Other mechanisms may be seen as more effective for holding the Government to account – All party groups, direct lobbying campaigns. ■ Overload

Comparisons between parliamentary and local government scrutiny

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■Scrutiny only as good as one's members ■The importance of the Chairman's role ■The challenge of influencing the policy of the executive ■The importance of cross-party consensus ■The inquiry process is broadly similar (to those councils that use the inquiry/review model) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■The separation of executive and non-executive, impartiality and conflict of interest ■Level of resources available ■Level of access to information ■The willingness of people/organisations to co-operate ■Different emphasis placed on purpose of scrutiny – holding the executive to account vs. policy development 'policy overview approach'
<p>Key learning points for local government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■Media engagement ■Briefing members ■Report processes–quality assurance, template 	<p>Key learning points for parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■Systematic follow-up on recommendations ■Public engagement



Any Questions?



Agenda Item 8

Maidstone Borough Council

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 5 January 2010

Strategic Plan 2009-12: Update for 2010-11

Report of: Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. Strategic Plan Update

1.1 On 12 August 2009, the Cabinet agreed to produce an update to the 2009-12 Strategic Plan, rather than producing a new 2010-13 Strategic Plan. This was considered to have the following benefits:

- Whilst the three year plan demonstrates continuation and stability the annual update enables Cabinet to take account changes in circumstances and shifts in priorities e.g. the economic downturn;
- It is more cost effective as the document does not need to be reproduced in its entirety; and
- It is less resource intensive for officers and members.

1.2 The timetable for the development of the 2010-11 Update was also approved and includes consultation with Overview and Scrutiny, as required by the Council's Constitution.

1.3 The Update also identifies progress made on Key Objectives.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are recommended to interview the Leader of the Council and the Policy and Performance Manager with regard to the Strategic Plan Update and the progress on Key Objectives.

2.2 Members are further recommended to consider whether this accurately reflects the key issues now affecting the Council and the progress made to date, and to make recommendations as appropriate.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 16 December 2009

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-12 - UPDATE FOR 2010-11

Issue for Decision

To consider the first draft of the 2010-11 update of the Strategic Plan 2009-12 prior to the consultation period, and note progress made on the current key objectives in the period April – October 2009.

Decision Made

1. That the first draft of the Strategic Plan 2009-12 update for 2010-11 (attached as Appendix A to the report of Management Team) be agreed for consultation.
2. That the progress to date on the current key objectives for the period April-October as is set out in Appendix B to the report of Management Team be noted.

Reasons for Decision

The corporate planning process within the Council ensures the top level vision for the borough is delivered. Medium term key objectives in the Strategic Plan are developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Service Planning allows the Council to convert high level objectives from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the Council, which are identified in individual staff appraisals.

Alongside the Strategic Plan, the Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy have also been under development.

The Cabinet agreed in August to retain the Strategic Plan 2009-12 and produce a 2010-11 update. It was agreed that the update would include:

- A review of all the key objectives and associated actions;
- An update of what we achieved in the year (in 2009/10 we...);
- An update to any local or national context where relevant; and
- An update to the foreword.

The update will not include:

- A change to the design of the document;
- A change to the structure of the document; or
- A re-writing of the document.

Cabinet are asked to note that currently not all information is available. Where this is the case for figures "xxx" is shown. Most financial and service prioritisation information will be available in March, subject to Council agreement of the 2010-11 budget.

The timetable for the development of the 2010-11 update was agreed by Cabinet in August 2009. The member working group that was due to meet in November 2009 to consider the draft key objectives did not meet. The revised timetable is shown below.

Date	Action
12 August 2009	Cabinet consider the strategic planning proposals
August – November 2009	Development of the draft Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of progress against key objectives in 2009 • Discussion at Cabinet Away Days • Meetings with Heads of Service and officers (September-October) • Identification of savings and growth • Development of supporting performance indicators
December 2009	Cabinet consider draft Strategic Plan update and Medium Term Financial Strategy
December - January 2010	Consultation with members, residents and partners.
January 2010	Overview and Scrutiny consider Strategic Plan update and Medium Term Financial Strategy
February 2010	Cabinet consider Strategic Plan update and Medium Term Financial Strategy
March 2010	Council considers Strategic Plan update and Medium Term Financial Strategy
April 2010	Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010-11 update

Following agreement of the draft strategic plan update by Cabinet, consultation will be undertaken with residents and partners. The results will be presented to Cabinet in February 2010 alongside the final Strategic Plan update.

Progress against Current Key Objectives

Actions taken and progress made on the current key objectives between April and October 2009 are set out at Appendix B of the report of Management Team. Overall the Council has made excellent progress against the objectives for 2009/10. Monitoring progress against the Council's objectives is best practice, enabling the Council to see what actions have been taken to deliver the key objectives, and helps with the process of updating and revising key objectives.

Revised Key Objectives

The Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020 (SCS) was agreed by Council in April 2009 at the same time as the Strategic Plan 2009-12. The strategic planning process for the 2010-11 update to the 2009-12 Strategic Plan has allowed the Council to reflect on the actions it will take to deliver the SCS and improved the links between the SCS and the Strategic Plan.

Cabinet has highlighted that its overall priority is prosperity and regeneration and that its three flagship schemes are:

- Maidstone Museum extension;
- Mote Park improvements; and
- High Street Regeneration.

The Policy and Performance Team and the Head of Finance have been working with officers in a series of meetings, which were highlighted in the timetable above, to ensure that the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's key objectives are integrated and reflect the Cabinet's priorities.

The revised set of draft key objectives are more outcome focused and strategic. Some of the key objectives have been merged to reduce duplication. Whilst the wording is different, they do not represent a major departure in terms of strategic direction. In formulating these key objectives, efforts have been made to ensure that there is continuity, which reflects the fact that the priorities of the administration have not changed. Progress made against key objectives has also been considered: key objectives have been merged or updated as required and where key objectives have been achieved, or will be achieved by the end of the year, these have been removed.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Cabinet previously agreed that the Council should produce a 2010-11 update of the Strategic Plan 2009-12; Members may consider that the draft document does not deliver the Cabinet's priorities and request the development of a new Strategic Plan. However, this is not considered appropriate as the current format, design and information has been received positively by Members, residents, partners and officers and the development and design of a new document will require additional resources and would risk not being produced in time for the new financial year.

Background Papers

Strategic Plan 2009-12
Strategic Planning process report – August 2009

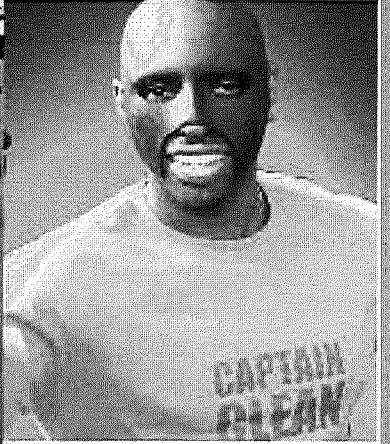
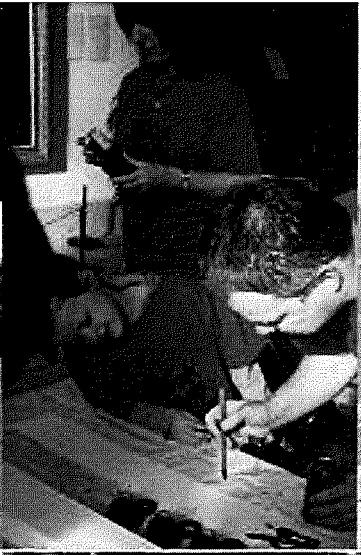
Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Scrutiny Manager by: 23 December 2009
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Appendix A

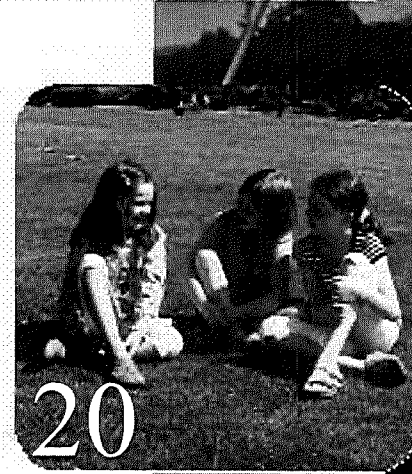
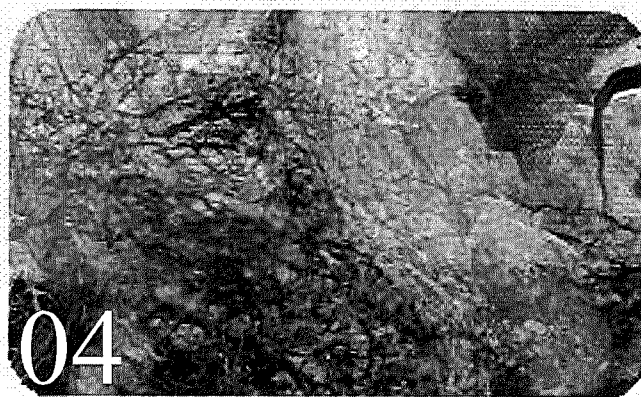
Maidstone Borough Council

Strategic Plan 2009-12

2010-11 update – draft for consultation



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Foreword
By Cllr Chris Garland and
David Petford

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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 continuing world economic situation, the focus will remain on our economy in the short to medium term.

The main challenges will be to attract investment to our borough and to maintain our County Town profile. There has been a shift in demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn.

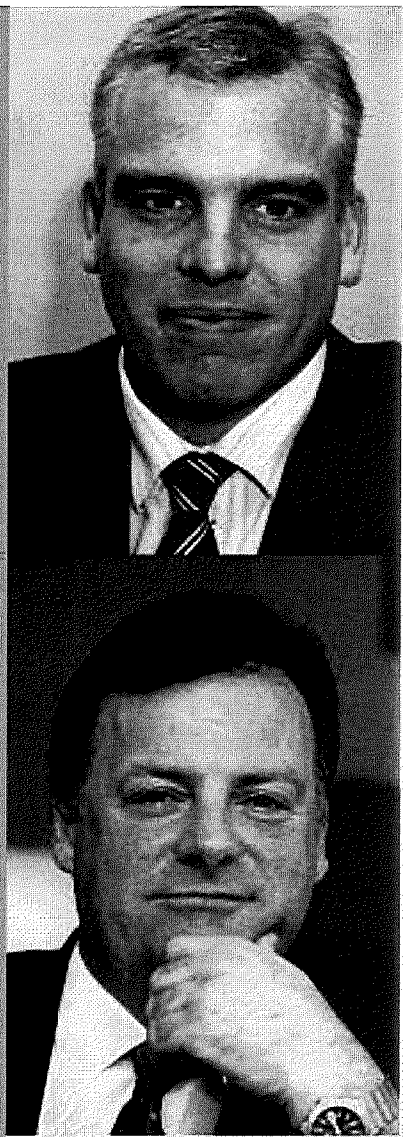
There has been a significant increase in the number of benefit and homelessness applications and the Council has targeted its resources to help those most in need.

Council finances will be tight over the next few years, with less income and predicted rises in government funding of just 0.5% per annum for 2010/11 and no growth in the short to medium term. 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 provide services jointly; to improve them and to reduce costs.

The Audit Commission assesses how councils manage and use their resources. In 2009 Maidstone Borough Council was assessed as performing well on our overall organisational assessment and performing excellently on the Managing Performance element.



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

Good progress has been on the Council's objectives in 2009/10. 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;
- Welcomed new partners and offered more services at the Maidstone Gateway, which provides a single point of access to many public services;
- Completed the roll-out of our doorstep recycling service so that every household can recycle paper, card, tins, cans and plastics – and we increased recycling rates in the borough;
- Entered a shared legal service with Swale and Tunbridge Wells councils;
- Entered a shared internal audit service with Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells councils;
- Invested £X million pounds in affordable housing to provide X number of homes;
- Helped residents and businesses fight the recession with housing and council tax benefits, heating, insulation and home improvement grants, free bus travel and money advice;

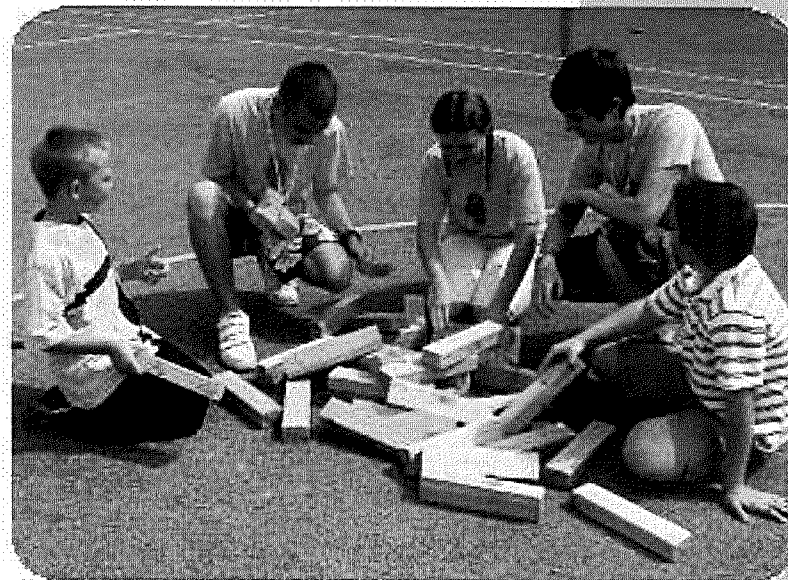
- Held many musical and cultural activities including the Maidstone Mela, St George's Day and our Summer Shakespeare season; and
- Progressed our three flagship regeneration schemes - Mote Park improvements, Maidstone Museum's East Wing project and the High Street regeneration scheme.

Towards the end of 2008, 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 of ten people said that they were satisfied with their area as a place to live.

In 2009 we improved our services as a result of what people had said. For example, we are looking to improve the way we manage street cleaning and we are working with our partners to ensure that all land is clear of litter.

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 two 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 priorities and key objectives 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.

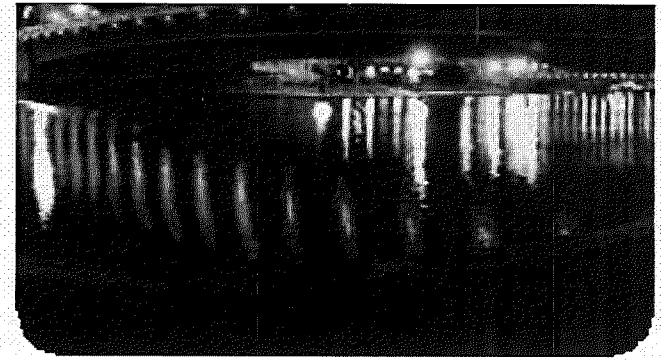
Cllr Chris Garland
Leader of the Council

David Petford
Chief Executive

section

1

Our vision priorities and values



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

We want Maidstone borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all 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 five priority themes that explain the issues we will concentrate on to help deliver the vision for Maidstone in the SCS. We want Maidstone to be:

- 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 priority themes 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. We will contribute to this in a number of ways, including:-

- Town centre improvements (public realm)
- Eclipse - business park;
- South East Maidstone Strategic Route; and
- The re-launched Locate in Maidstone website.

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:-

- Encouraging waste minimisation;
- Making Maidstone a litter free borough - with clean sweeps and a crack down on fast food litter;
- Improvements to Mote Park;
- River improvements; and
- Continuing to monitor air quality.

A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities

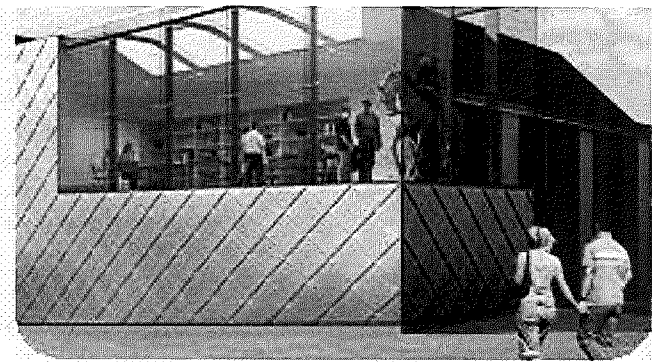
People want to be healthy, feel safe where they live and feel that they belong. The borough needs to be a place where people of all ages, faiths and cultures can live and work together. Priorities include:-

- A 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 through: -

- A revitalised Leisure Centre;
- Expansion of the Museum;
- Switch Youth Café;
- Maidstone's Dream – building a sporting heritage



- Affordable homes; and
- Decent homes for vulnerable people.

A place with efficient and effective public services

Maidstone Council performs well when compared to other councils nationally. 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. We will be:-

- Expanding the range of services available in the Maidstone 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 (LSP) - 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 made through Local Area Agreements.

The 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, co- ordinate service delivery and improve outcomes for the residents of Maidstone.

The SCS includes eight vision-related objectives and three cross-cutting objectives for Maidstone. The cross-cutting objectives are extremely important and are incorporated throughout the whole of the SCS.

Vision related objectives

- Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all;
- Develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system;
- Build stronger and safer communities;
- Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives;

- Make Maidstone borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations;
- Develop Maidstone borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living;
- Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all; and
- Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character.

Cross-cutting objectives

- Tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage;
- Establish Maidstone borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate; and
- Public agencies and their partners to undertake a programme of continuous community engagement and work with communities to resolve their issues at the community level.

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

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

We have detailed the Council's objectives under the eight SCS topics to show how we will be contributing to the overall vision and objectives for the Maidstone Borough.

Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out the authority's strategy for development in the borough. The South East Plan designates Maidstone as a 'regional hub' because the County Town serves as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities and is well related to strategic rail and road networks. The Council's aim must be to secure an effective planning framework that delivers growth with the necessary transport infrastructure, whilst taking account of the borough's environmental constraints.

The Council has already adopted two Development Plan Documents for Affordable Housing and Open Spaces provision together with a number of supplementary planning documents. Completion of the core strategy is the Council's prime focus, as this key LDF document will set the policy framework for future growth in addition to protecting and enhancing the boroughs assets.

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

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 October and November 2009 saw more than 1000 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.

The Council 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.

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

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 customers can access all of our services from one office right in the centre of town. Many of our partners also deliver services from the Maidstone 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 make it more attractive and accessible, allowing people to make enquiries and payments 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 (KCC) covers the whole of Kent (except 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, 36 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.

section

3

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 six times a year 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 has 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 that 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.

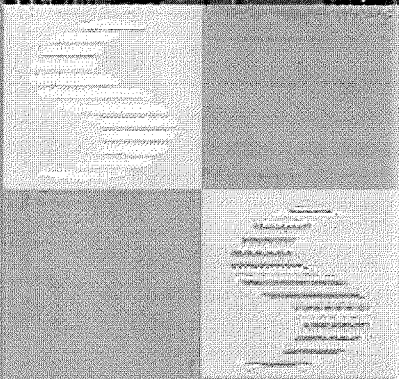
Other committees reporting to Council

There are a few other committees that meet and these include:-

- Planning Committee - makes decisions on planning applications;

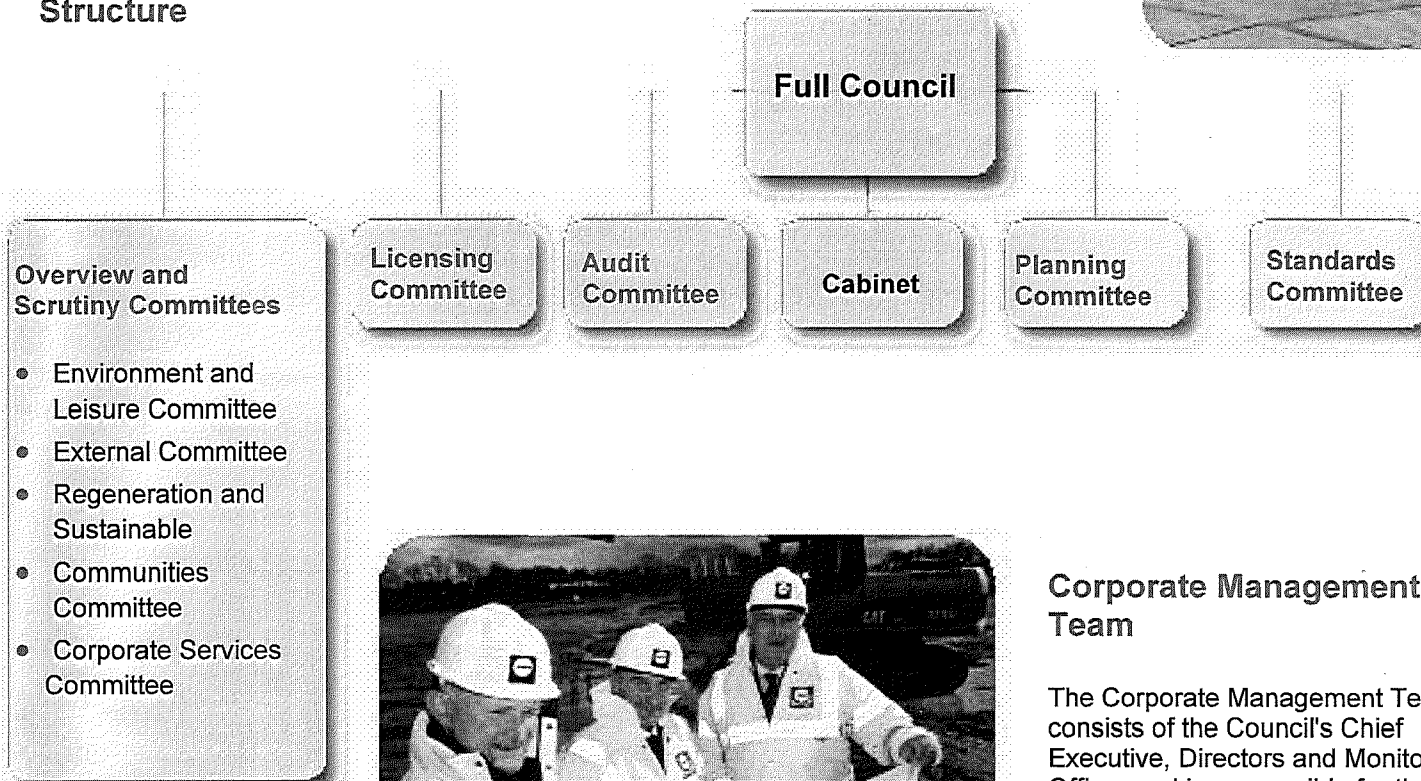
- Licensing Committee - makes decisions on licence applications;
- Standards Committee - helps ensure the Council promotes and maintains high standards of conduct and corporate governance; and
- Audit Committee - ensures the Council's risk management framework is adequate and reviews the authority's 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 on the next page.





Decision Making Structure



35



Corporate Management Team

The Corporate Management Team consists of the Council's Chief Executive, Directors and 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 helps 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 held 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

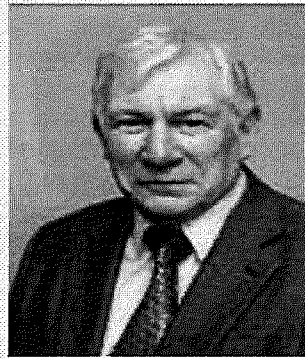
- Legal and Human Resources departments
- Land Charges
- Council Tax and Housing Benefit systems
- Property, Procurement and Projects
- Customer contact and complaints
- Democratic services
- ICT and e-Government



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

section

4

Progress and Performance



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

Comprehensive Area Assessment

Last year was the first year in which the Council was assessed under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). This is the new annual inspection process introduced by the government which came into effect in April 2009. It is focussed on outcomes for local people and consists of two main elements:

- An Area assessment; and
- An Organisational assessment.

Area Assessment

This assessment looks 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 is Kent wide and the starting point was the Local Area Agreement for Kent: Kent Agreement2 (KA2).

Organisational assessment

In 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.

The organisational assessment is made up of two parts:

- Use of Resources; and
- Managing Performance.

Councils receive a score of between 1 (poor) and 4 (excellent) for each part, which are combined to give an overall score.

In our most recent assessment for 2008/09 Maidstone was awarded a 3 (performing well) for Use of Resources and a 4 for Managing Performance (performing excellently), giving an overall score of 3.



National Indicators (NIs)

The Government has also introduced in 2008/09 a national indicator set consisting of 188 performance indicators which 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 63 of the NIs, but all of the 188 NIs will be collected at a county level.

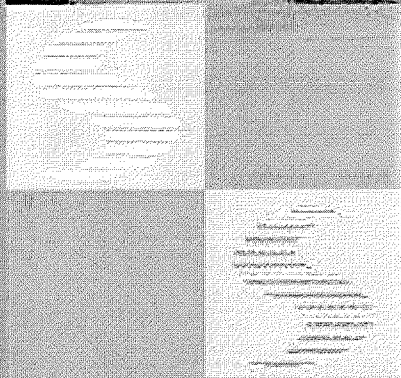
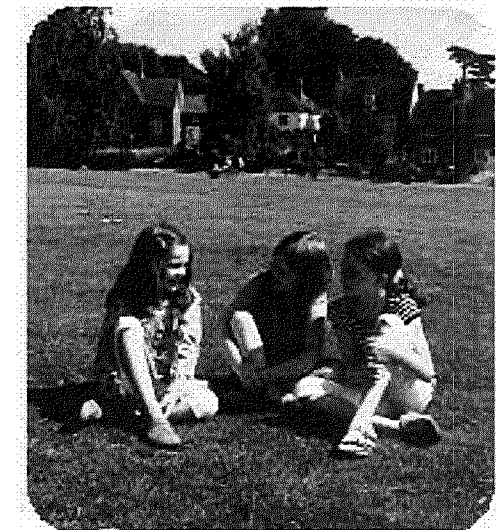
The Government understands that priorities will be different in different areas of the country, so inspectors will pay most attention to the NIs adopted as priorities in the Local Area Agreement for Kent, KA2.



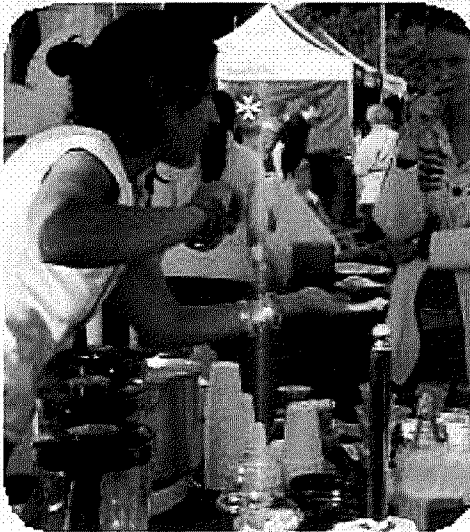
What we will deliver

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, Confidence and Safety;**
- **Health and Older People;**
- **Children, Young People and Families;**
- **Homes and Communities;**
- **Sport, Creativity and Culture;**
- **Environmental Excellence and Climate Change.**



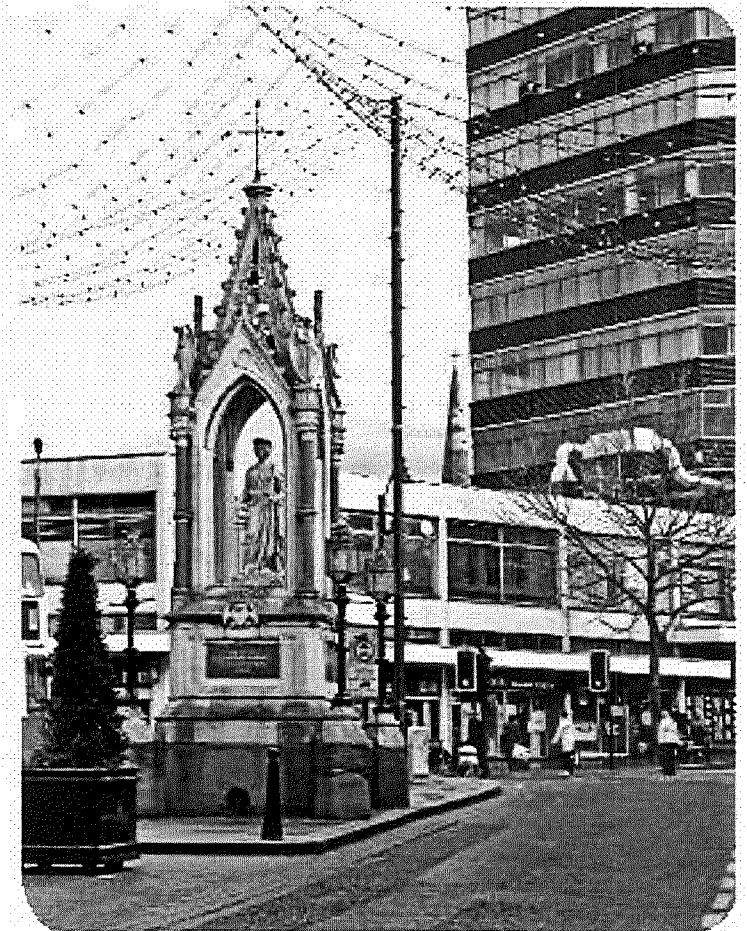
Economy and Prosperity



"Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all"

National Context

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 has 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



Why it is important to Maidstone

There are over 7,000 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 4,700 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, and 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.

In 2009/10 we

- Developed the range of services offered by the Gateway as part of the Benefits Hub.
- Signed an accord with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) that drives the Council's approach to helping the business community in the current downturn.
- Signed a memorandum of understanding with Business Support Kent setting out how the two bodies will work more closely together for the interest of residents and businesses.
- Along with partners assisted 36 independent businesses with subsidised advertising.
- Appointed an architect to undertake the High Street public realm improvements. Pictures of what the High Street will look like have been placed as window dressing in empty shops and consultation has been carried out.
- Continued to work with other neighbouring district councils to improve service delivery and cut costs through shared services.
- Improved the way we work with other organisations, like the Police, Primary Care Trust and voluntary groups, through the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership.

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Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Increase the prosperity of the borough by stimulating investment and working with existing businesses to create a distinctive local economy.
- Raising skills levels and reducing worklessness, including matching the skills of the workforce to the needs of local business.
- Achieve regeneration, focussing on enhancing the attractiveness of the Town Centre through initiatives like the high street public realm.
- Deliver more efficient and effective Council services and increase value for money
- Improve the delivery of services to local people through effective partnership working

What this means for Maidstone

- **More businesses offering employment specialisms.**
- **More higher paid high quality jobs.**
- **Increased opportunities for training for all.**
- **Increased tourism.**
- **New jobs for the borough.**
- **A better, more easily accessible town centre.**
- **Town centre public realm improvements providing better facilities and an attractive business location.**
- **A vibrant economy and prosperity in Maidstone.**

Sustainable and Integrated Transport



"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 three 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, Maidstone Council experienced significant increased cost, due to the high visitor rates to the borough and excellent links to other towns. It is expected that the Council will continue to experience high costs in 2010/11. Maidstone Council also chose to continue to provide discretionary extras as part of the scheme, which have remained popular

In 2009/10 we

- Introduced Park and Ride over the busy Christmas period to reduce traffic and congestion in town.
- Reviewed the Park and Ride service and reintroduced the London Road and Sittingbourne Road dedicated bus link.
- Lobbied Network Rail and responded to Kent County Council's 20 year integrated transport strategy, supporting better rail links to Maidstone.



Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Reduce traffic congestion and support economic growth through the development of sustainable transport infrastructure

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.

Crime, Confidence 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.

An update to the national crime strategy "cutting Crime" was published in May 2009, and stated that the Government will tackle violent crime by intervening early to prevent it, preventing escalation, being robust in the response to violent offenders, being proactive in providing services for victims, and finding innovative solutions to difficult issues.

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.

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 2009/10 we

- Worked with the Police on a Community Safety booklet on crime prevention and safety issues which was sent to all households.
- Installed CCTV with operator links in our Park and Ride car parks as well as regular warden patrols.
- Worked with the Police on 'Operation Safer Summer'.
- Ran 'operation Cubit, targeting graffiti and abandoned cars
- Helped reduce overall crime in the borough by XX and made XX anti-social behaviour interventions.

Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Make people feel safer where they live.

What this means for Maidstone

- Increased feeling of safety for local residents.
- Fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour and 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.



Health and Older People



"Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives"

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 five 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 2011 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 2009/10 we

- Provided advice in the town centre and Shepway on a range of issues including promoting the wellpoint machine which measures a range of health factors and is available in the Gateway.
- Undertook an assessment of the health implications within the key Air Quality Management Areas.
- Introduced the 'Urban Blue' bus which travels throughout the borough promoting healthy lifestyle choices, including stopping smoking and weight management

Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Improve the health of people living in the borough and reduce health inequalities.

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.**
- **Reduced number of teenage pregnancies.**

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 is 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

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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 at a significantly lower level than others in all key stage examinations.

Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Improve outcomes for vulnerable people and minimise the negative effects of recession.

Improving outcomes for children, young people and families is a cross-cutting theme.

Supporting key objectives include:

- Raising skills levels and reducing worklessness, including matching the skills of the workforce to the needs of local business (p. 23)
- Improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for communities in priority areas (p. 34)
- Encourage more adults and children to participate in sport (p. 38)
- Improve the cultural offering of the borough through projects like the museum east wing extension. (pg.38)

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.**
- **600 households prevented from becoming homeless by March 2012.**
- **Organisations working together to improve life for children, young people and families in the borough.**
- **Housing Benefit applications determined quickly and correctly.**

In 2009/10 we

- Worked with partners like Kent County Council and Mid Kent College to deliver the Maidstone Skills Studio, which will help 14-16 year olds gain vocational skills in an out of school setting.
- Bid for lottery funding for the Switch Youth café and received £335,000 to support staffing for the next five years.
- Supported the Youth Forum, who won their second Try Angle award for the Switch Youth Café.
- Successfully bid for £4000 for the Youth Forum's Peace One Day event.
- Following the success of previous years, held Proms in the Park, which attracted 4000 visitors.
- Prevented xx households from becoming homeless.
- Funded 66 places on the Hotfoot play scheme and along with KCC provided 110 places to vulnerable children on our play schemes.
- Worked with partners to help long term unemployed young people into apprenticeships.

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. The Government has also 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 Point 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.

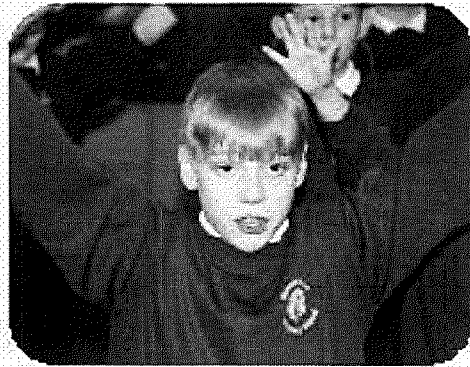
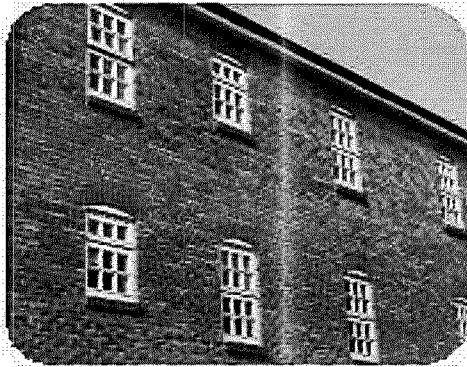
In 2009 over 1700 residents responded to the Housing Needs survey. The survey showed that xx% of those who wanted to could not afford to join the private rental sector and xx% who wanted to could not afford to purchase their own home, even though xx%

or more were earning over £xx (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 xxx families on the waiting list for social housing. 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 2009/10 we

- Ensured developments of over xx homes contained at least xx affordable housing. This meant xx new affordable homes were built.
- Consulted Gypsies, travellers, parish councils, land owners and other partners as part of identifying sufficient sites for Gypsy and traveller accommodation.
- Bought back xx empty homes into use.
- In response to the economic downturn helped fund the purchase of xx properties from developers at an average cost of £xx, working with Registered Social Landlords.
- Completed the first Strategic Housing Market Assessment which will help us build the right type of new homes in the right places.
- Awarded grants to xx people who continue to live in their own homes.
- Worked with the Police, Kent County Council and MHT to empower and engage residents in Park Wood so they have a greater say in a five year neighbourhood action plan that will address the most important issues in the area.



Homes and Communities



Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Deliver enough of the right type of well designed new homes where they are needed, maximising the numbers of affordable homes.
- Improving the condition, accessibility and energy efficiency of existing housing, including reducing fuel poverty.
- Better meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and traveller community.
- Improve the quality of the built environment including protecting the borough's heritage and ensuring new developments are well designed.
- Improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for communities in priority areas.
- Ensure people can access a wider range of services in ways that suit them.
- Engage communities so people have the opportunity to participate and have a real say in what happens in their local area.

What this means for Maidstone

- More people will be able to have a real say in local services through neighbourhood forums, parish councils and other representative groups.
- 750 high quality new affordable homes of mixed tenure built across the borough 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.
- People able to access more services at the Gateway and through the Council website, leading to more website transactions.



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 and 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 Leisure Centre is also located close to the park which offers a range of outdoor leisure opportunities.

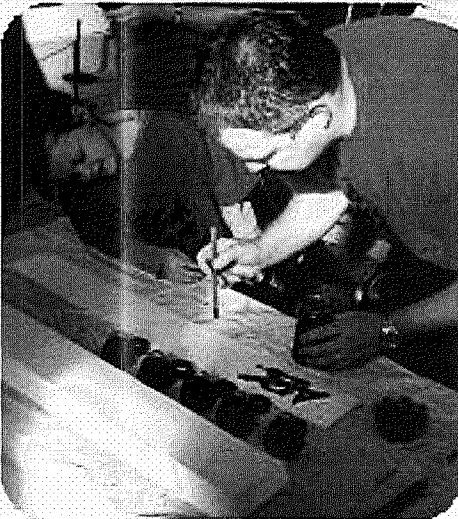
Maidstone has three museums, which not only reflect the local history and the

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.



Sport, Creativity and Culture



In 2009/10 we

- Received £2.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund to make improvements to Mote Park which includes the planting of 400 trees and repair and conservation works to footpaths and the lake, as well as works to prevent flooding.
- Held the Maidstone Mela in Mote park as part of Black History month, which attracted xxx visitors.
- Commenced a £4.5 million refurbishment of Maidstone Leisure Centre which will see a newly reinvigorated leisure centre operating from April 2010.
- Retained the green flag for Clare park.
- Started construction of the Museum East Wing extension which will improve learning opportunities, preserve the collections and increase the use of the museum.
- Launched Maidstone's Dream supporting young people towards the 2012 Olympics.

Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Encourage more adults and children to participate in sport.
- Improve the cultural offering of the borough through projects like the museum east wing extension.

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.
- Better access to sport and better sporting facilities.
- More activities and things to do for those living in Maidstone.
- As part of the Mote Park improvements new paths and a nature trail will be created, the car park, lake and café area improved and more volunteer work will be coordinated.



Environmental Excellence and Climate Change



"Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character"

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.

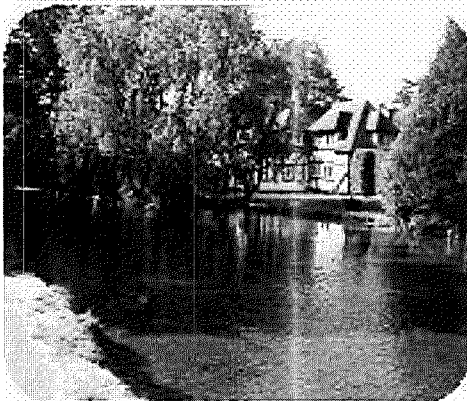
Why it is important to Maidstone

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.

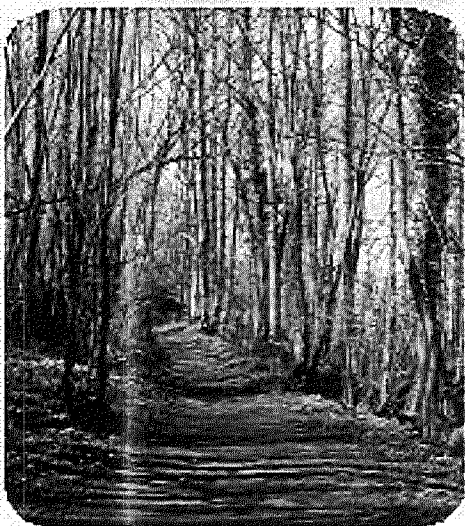
In Maidstone most carbon emissions are produced by industry and commercial activities. There is also more road traffic within the South East than any other area of the UK and in Maidstone this has contributed to an air quality management area being introduced, which covers the entire urban part of the 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.



Environmental Excellence and Climate Change



"Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character"

In 2009/10 we

- Rolled out the final phase of the new recycling scheme, which extended the collection of mixed dry recyclables to over 60,000 householders increasing the Council's recycling rate to XXX and residual waste per household by XX% to XXkg.
- Moved to a new environmentally friendly depot with solar hot water panels, rain water harvesting and recycling and intelligent lighting.
- Made improvements to Vinters park crematorium, including installing two new environmentally sound cremators.
- Supported Town Centre Management to provide residents and visitors to Maidstone with ideas and information on a whole range of greener living initiatives including recycling, reducing food-waste, keeping our borough clean and tidy, cutting fuel costs, insulation, cycling and car-sharing.



Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Reduce carbon emissions across the borough and improve air quality
- Reduce the Council's carbon footprint and improve the use of other natural resources, whilst ensuring the council is planning to adapt to climate change.
- Reduce the amount of waste people produce and increase the proportion of waste reused or recycled.
- Improve the quality of the public realm enhancing the Council's parks, green spaces and natural habitats through initiatives like the Mote Park improvement project
- Improve the care of the public realm, including cleanliness.

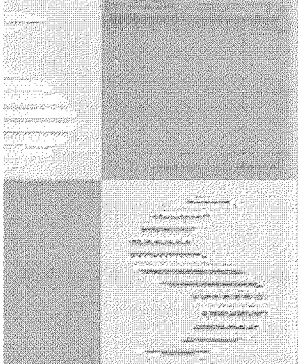
What this means for Maidstone...

- **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 36%.**
- **A cleaner and tidier borough.**
- **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 mechanisms 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

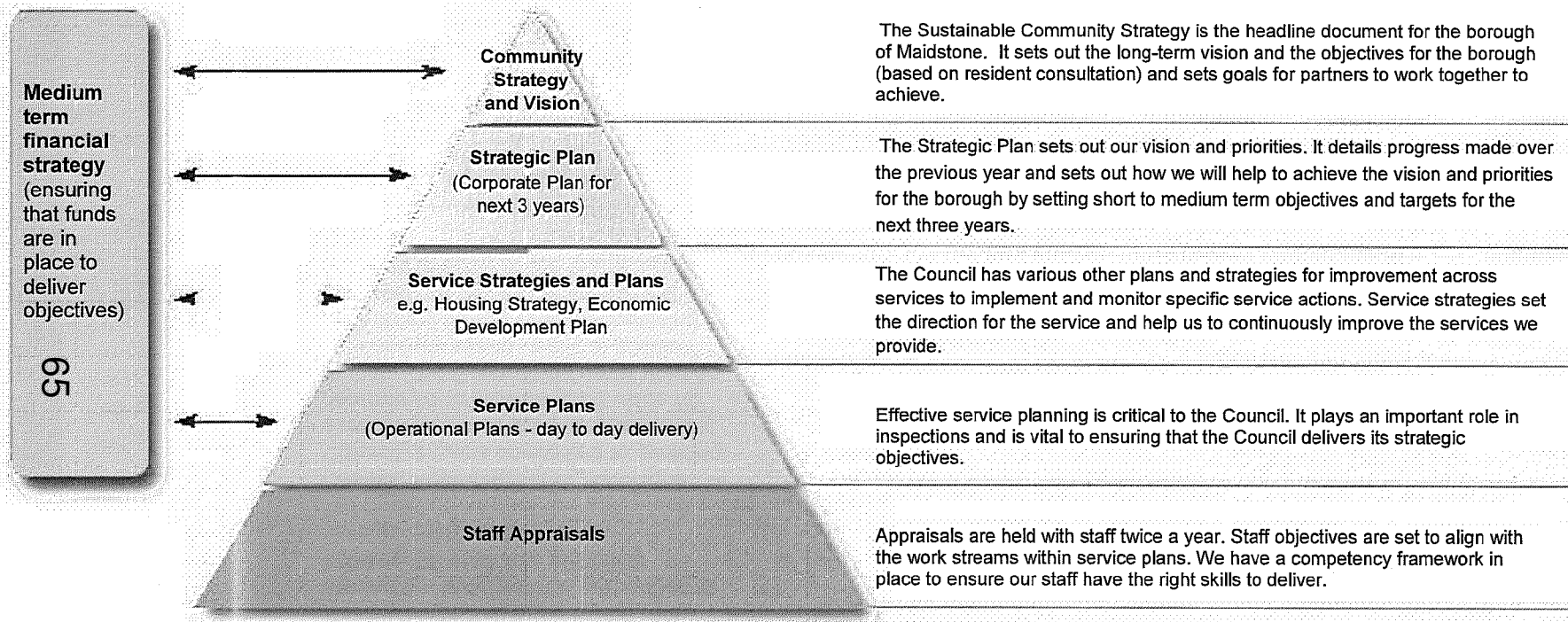
The service planning process allows us to convert high level objectives from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the authority. The function of any service plan is to ensure that all activities carried out by the department complement the aims and objectives of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

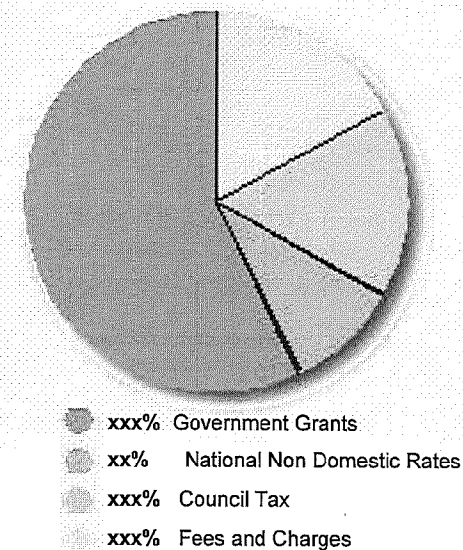
Despite these pressures Maidstone Council remains committed to avoiding excessive council tax increases and is determined to provide good value for money. The Council has developed an increasingly sound financial position over recent years, whilst recognising the pressure on resources that will continue 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;

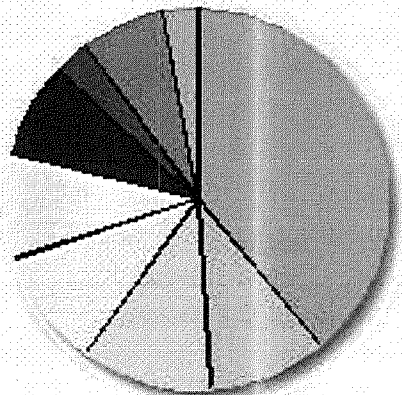
- Increased demand for services such as housing benefit with an increase in those losing their homes as a result of the economic climate;
- Less income from the sale of property assets due to the slump in housing market; and
- Pressure in certain service areas for additional capital spend to protect the local economy and address service issues such as affordable homes.

For the year 2010/11 the Council has had to identify savings of £xx million. Each year between November and December the Council undertakes a budget setting consultation exercise. In 2009 the 'Budget Simulator' was available on our website to find out what residents think we should spend money on. In 2009 over xxx residents took part and the results of this consultation have been reflected in the 2010/11 budget.

Sources of Income

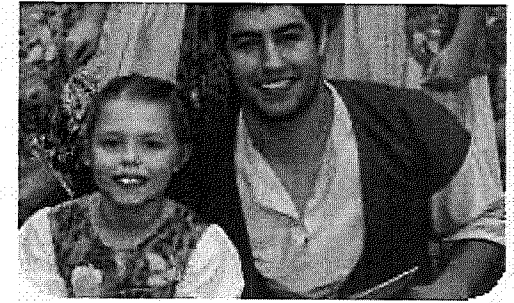


Budget for 2010/11



- xx% Housing Benefits - £xx million
- xx% Housing Other - £xx million
- xx% Council Tax Benefits - £xx million
- xx% Transportation and Highways - £xx million
- x% Planning and Economic Development - £x million
- x% Recreation and Tourism - £xx million
- x% Environmental Health - £x million
- x% Refuse Collection - £xx million
- x% Other - £xx million





Other resources

Our resources are not just financial. The table below highlights how we will ensure that the best use is made

of the Council's resources, and that the priorities in this Strategic Plan are adequately supported.

Human – the people who deliver our services

- ✓ Continue to focus on high performance through performance indicators and team by team performance through Reach the Summit
- ✓ 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 the equality and 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 records

- ✓ Support flexible and home working to improve work/life balance and help improve efficiency and quality of service
- ✓ Automate and streamline business processes wherever possible
- ✓ Develop e-procurement and 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 and efficiently 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 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
- ✓ Considering the type and 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 and 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, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale 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 Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council.

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

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.

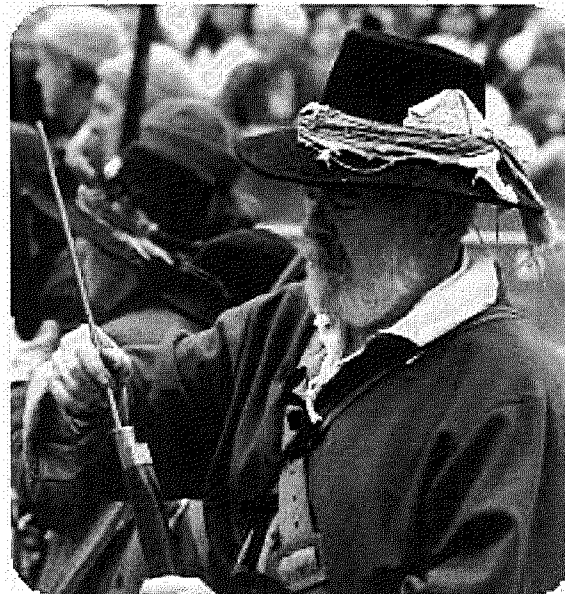
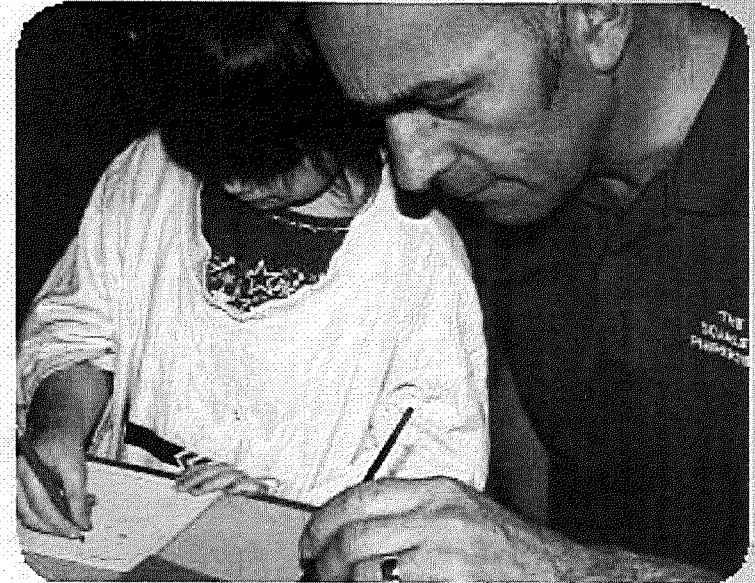
How our performance will be monitored

To make sure we deliver on our promises, we monitor the progress made in achieving the objectives in 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)** - are any other PIs 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 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. This 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.

A1 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.

Affordable Housing

A2 The Council has challenging affordable housing targets. There are limited sites for development in the borough and the value of housing is intrinsically high.

Spatial Planning

B2 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.

Deprivation

B2 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.

Educational and other skills attainment	<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 provides 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>B2</p>
Infrastructure	<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.</p> <p>The Council has been identified as a Growth Point in the South East 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 five years. This level of funding requires further public and private monies to provide the necessary infrastructure</p> <p>B2</p>
Corporate Projects	<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>B2</p>
Two-tier working	<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>B2</p>
Waste Collection - Review of waste collection	<p>The Council needs to meet challenging targets for recycling. Maidstone is a collection authority not a disposal authority, so needs to work closely with partners to develop an optimum model in this area. Alternative arrangements are currently being considered.</p> <p>B3</p>
Climate Change	<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>C2</p>
Partnership working - Shared Services	<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> <p>C3</p>

Key

High Risk

Medium Risk

Low Risk



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Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Progress Updates
E&P	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.	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Investigate the possibility of using section 106 agreements to finance physical and community infrastructure including, in relation to this Key Objective, skills and training initiatives	Brian Morgan	The Council is actively pursuing proposals for the skills centre and enterprise centre as part of section 106 negotiation.
			Explore the opportunities for using the Local Development Framework Core Strategy policies to improve employment in the borough	Brian Morgan	The Employment Land Review has been completed (September 2009) as part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy. Policies will reflect the Council's aspirations to introduce a step change towards securing high quality employment as well as meeting local need.
			Actively pursue a programme of business visits undertaken by the Senior Management Team and the Economic Development Manager	John Foster	These are now ongoing and are reported to Corporate Management Team on a monthly basis through Reach the Summit
			Continue with businesses newsletter on quarterly basis and increase circulation to improve communications	John Foster	The business newsletter is currently on hold while the Locate in Maidstone website is redesigned. The next newsletter will be in spring 2010
			Redesign of Locate in Maidstone as the principal shop window for promoting Maidstone to new and existing businesses	John Foster	The Contract for work was advertised through Media Tree and given to Visarc Ltd. The redesign is currently underway and due to be completed in Jan 2010.
			Work with Partners to promote and support businesses in Maidstone including the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Town Centre Management Initiative (TCMI)	John Foster	The Service Level Agreement with the Chamber of Commerce has been signed. The Business Engagement protocol has been signed with the Federation of Small Businesses. The Service Level Agreement with Town Centre Management is in draft.
			In partnership with Kent County Council investigate how the Council should be working with its Local Authority neighbours to deliver economic development in line with the Sub National Review	John Foster	The issue has been raised with KCC's new Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, Barbara Cooper. Discussions with Ashford Borough Council are ongoing
E&P	Continue to develop our offer in terms of retail, cultural leisure and tourism accordingly to make Maidstone more attractive to investors	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Explore the options for the delivery of the Night Time Economy Action Plan	John Foster	A Service Level Agreement with the Night Time Economy Forum is currently being considered
			Continue to investigate actions which will promote the River Medway and drive improvements through the public realm.	John Foster	Negotiations are ongoing with River Medway Developments Ltd and the new owner of the land under the High Level bridge.
			Deliver key Projects and events in the Arts Development Plan in conjunction with the town centre public realm improvements	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	Arts Development are working directly with Economic Development and Lead Artist as part of High Street improvement. A concentrated activity programme has been implemented including, Bizarre Bazaar Art and Craft Market which has now joined forces with Farmers Market, A Buskers Spot, Through the Looking Glass Gallery and Artist Networking events at the Town Hall.
			Undertake a programme of town centre public realm improvements, phase one of which will be the High Street	John Foster	Letts Wheeler had now been appointed and project management set up for the project. Consultations and design refinements are currently in process.
			Support schools preparing bids for Arts college status to maximise access to arts facilities for the local community	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	No schools are currently seeking Arts College Status. Therefore, no action has been taken.
			Identification of need in order to ensure the right amount of land sites to be released through the Local Development Framework	Michael Thornton	Studies have been completed for the Local Development Framework addressing housing employment and retail uses and also identifying the scale of need.

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E&P	Work with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partners to deliver and support key regeneration projects	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Identification of land and locations and the promotion of development in those areas	Michael Thornton	The Strategic Housing Land availability Assessment has been completed to identify housing sites supply and we are now testing, options, general location decisions through the Local Development Framework. Parallel work is underway for employment land. Infrastructure requirements have been undertaken with key stakeholders and partners for development options.
			Wrens Cross and environmental land use improvements around the town centre and Upper Stone Street	John Foster	The deliverability of the All Saints Link Road is being considered with KCC which is tied to the development options for Wren's Cross.
			Support South East rail services and road infrastructure in line with Growth Point Status	Brian Morgan	Awaiting stakeholder consultation on the core strategy which is intended to take place in early 2010.
			Work to Deliver the framework and actions set out in the Tourism Strategy	Laura Dickson / John Foster	The Strategy has been completed but not adopted, due the current review of the value of tourism services.
			Deliver Create in Maidstone	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	Create in Maidstone Strategy out for internal/partner consultation. First draft to be presented January 2010.
			Reflect proposals in Local Development Framework Document	Michael Thornton	This is the next stage of the process following the identification of sites.
			Develop Gypsy Development Plan Document	Sue Whiteside / Sarah Anderton	Consultants are currently undertaking the first stages of the Gypsy & Traveller DPD, including stakeholder involvement. Public consultation on the draft list of sites will commence January 2010.
			Monitor progress of the Local Development Framework to ensure that the South East Maidstone Strategic Route is delivered	Brian Morgan	The need for the South East Maidstone Strategic Link will be modelled and tested as part of the strategy for distributing development in the Core Strategy.
E&P	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	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Work with the University of Creative Arts to ensure Maidstone is the location of their new campus	John Foster	A decision on location is expected in the near future. Work with course development at Maidstone Studios and Media Tree continue.
			Work with the learning skills council to improve the training in the borough	John Foster	The Learning and Skills Council is unable to provide take up information of nationally recognised qualifications at the borough level. LSC ceases to exist from April 2010. MBC focus will be on promoting awareness of national training and skills development products e.g. Train to Gain.
			Support the Maidstone skills studio initiative	John Foster	There has been a considerable delay to this project and at one point KCC announced that they were not going to pursue it. However the project has found support again and will be delivered. However the project has lost about a year.
			Identify targets at the museum (educational) for exhibitions specific educational programmes	Simon Lace	All the museums' activities for children and adults are developed with reference to generic learning outcomes. This ensures that each activity, exhibition and display has its educational content embedded within it. We have developed a range of adult education activities based on the museum's collections and are working with colleagues at KCC to expand this range.
			Continue to maintain close working relations with Kent County Council, education funding bodies (including the Learning Skills Council), other education providers, the voluntary sector and local children's partnership services board	Ian Park	The newly established LSP Health and Wellbeing subgroup, and the Economic Development and Regeneration subgroups are intended as vehicles to help achieve these objectives. The Learning and Skills Council is to be scrapped and KCC is reviewing the Local Children's Service Partnership Boards in Kent to align them more closely with Districts and LSPs.
			Improve educational attainment in GCSEs and A Levels by supporting the Local Strategic Partnership to lobby educational bodies and monitoring performance through the Local Area Agreement	Ian Park	Plans are moving forward for Senacre Hall to become a 14-16 Skills Studio in order to help improve local skills in an area of need. KCC is leading the project with the support of education and skills providers, and MBC.

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E&P	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	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Lobby further education providers including Kent Adult Education and Mid Kent College the provision of appropriate community-based courses and programmes	John Foster / Ian Park	Kent Adult Education has been approached to deliver courses at the new Skills Studio at Senacre Community Hall. Mid Kent College is actively investigating such courses.
			Deliver the West Kent Arts Partnership intergenerational project for young and older people sharing life experiences and life skills to take place in targeted estates	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	Time of our Lives intergenerational film project launched on Young People's Day. Artists have been working with young mums and grandparents in the Mangravet estate. A final film of the project will be shown in local venues (libraries, community centres, HAC) from March 2010.
			Work with offenders in partnership with the prison service and local educational providers	Simon Lace	The summer exhibition developed with Maidstone Prison was such a popular exhibit that its run was extended. It then transferred to the Prison for a weekend in October.
			Continue to identify opportunities for the Museum to contribute towards improve access to learning	Simon Lace	Meetings took place in October with KCC Adult Education to look at ways in which the museums can contribute to the provision in life long learning across the county. Further meetings will take place in December.
			Supporting Maidstone's Local Strategic Partnership to develop an action plan around improving access to education and training	John Foster	Kent Adult Education has been approached to deliver courses at the new Skills Studio at Senacre Community Hall. Mid Kent College is actively investigating such courses.
			Engage with social housing providers regarding tackling worklessness through basic skills provision	John Littlemore	Work on this has been adversely affected by the recession. The RSL forum to be held in March/April 2010 will build upon the initial work around the toolkit for tackling worklessness.
E&P	Continue to review the services the Council provides to ensure they meet the needs of local people and provide value for money	Cllr Ash - Corporate Services	Business Transformation Programme/Best Value/Scrutiny reviews	Alasdair Robertson Louise Smith Georgia Hawkes	Development of business cases and completion of reviews is as per the programme.
			Through the Business Transformation Partnership re-engineer the processes of all our key services, ensuring that customer accessibility is taken into account	Alasdair Robertson	Considerable analysis has been completed on use of websites and how to better support customers use. In addition, research has concluded on the drivers of customer satisfaction and the link to clearly presented information.
E&P	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	Leader – Cllr Garland	Create a balanced budget 2009-10	Paul Riley	The mid year monitoring report shows a income shortfall, that arises mainly from the economic downturn, of £0.6m. At this stage a combination of actions by service managers and the use of the provision available from the 2009/10 budget strategy can resource this shortfall. The factors affecting longer term recovery in these service areas will be carried through to the 2010/11 budget strategy.
			Consider the medium term impact and to create an action plan to take the Council and the borough through the downturn	Paul Riley	
SIT	Work to reduce congestion and support economic growth through development of the transport infrastructure including seeking improvements to public transport	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Continue to lobby other organisations and transport providers for improvements to infrastructure and transportation, including improving rail links	Brian Morgan/Clive Cheeseman	MBC's response to Network Rail Kent Route Utilisation Strategy has been formulated and agreed. Representations and meetings with Network rail are continuing. Support was provided to Maidstone Area Rail Users Group in representations made to the Department for Transport for retention of the Maidstone East to City service.
			Keep up to date with proposed change to a County operated Concessionary Fare scheme to ensure that we are prepared to assist Kent County Council to transfer of the Concessionary Fares service with the minimum disruption to users	Lisa Cook / Clive Cheeseman	An announcement from Department for Transport is awaited in regarding the future of Concessionary Fares scheme.

			Work with partners to minimise the impact of operation stack	Brian Morgan	There has been no change to this piece of work.
			Develop a strategic approach to sustaining the Park and Ride sites and integrate with wider transportation and planning strategies in the long term	Brian Morgan	Discussions are continuing with Kent County Council over the preparation of a transport strategy to support the Local Development framework.
C&S	Work in partnership to address issues of road safety	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Work with Kent County Council to deliver a road safety partnership	Steve Goulette	A seminar for borough and county members was hosted by MBC at the end of 2008 to provide background to the poor crash record in Maidstone over the past three years and to receive details of KCC's proposals to seek to reduce crashes. The Council's Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken an in depth review of road safety in the Borough involving KCC. Their recommendations were considered by Cabinet and passed on the KCC. KCC officers are to provide an update on progress to the O & S Committee in January 2010
C&S	Take a preventative approach to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Implement the anti-social behaviour action plan with the anti-social behaviour group which focuses on identified offenders and the Partnership and Tackling group which focuses on anti-social behaviour hotspots.	David Hewetson	This is still a priority and the P&STG is an excellent example of multi agency problem solving in hot spots. Offenders and vulnerable young people are the focus of the ASB Group. Excellent progress thus far.
			Implement Multi Agency Youth Development Action Group action plan (youth issues sub group of Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership)	Jacqueline Bobb	MAYDAG continues to progress youth issues on behalf of the SMP - activity to be reviewed in Quarter 3.
			Reduce alcohol related crime in the town centre.	David Hewetson	Multi agency activity on track in Quarter 2.
C&S	Work with the police and other partners to reduce crime and ensure that our residents feel safe	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Assess suitable systems for the upgrading and relocation of the CCTV network. Make more cost-effective use of the CCTV system	David Hewetson	CCTV relocation and equipment is still under review.
			Develop stronger licensing powers to tackle alcohol abuse and related crime.	David Hewetson/ Neil	Close liaison with Community Safety and Licensing to identify possible ways forward.
			Continue to contribute towards the delivery of the Safer Maidstone Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy	David Hewetson	Close working with the SMP and 'All Crime' categories show a steady downward trend.
			Reduce all recorded crime in hotspot locations.	David Hewetson	Hot spot locations focus for all P&TSG and CSU activity.
			Implement the Violent Crime and Criminal Damage Action Plan to reverse the trend in the crime rate.	David Hewetson	Violent Crime continues to have a downward trend in line with the Action Plan.
			Develop a multi-agency Public Community Safety Unit	David Hewetson	Section 17 training provided for MBC staff and members, to be reviewed in Quarter 3.
			Ensure training on crime and disorder is being taken into account in all we do	David Hewetson	On track for early 2010.
C&S	Work with the police and other partners to reduce crime and ensure that our residents feel safe	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Through the Environmental Crime Group, deliver a high profile service that actively discourages enviro-crime while enforcing against enviro-crime through proactive and intelligence driven enforcement efforts	Martin Jeynes	Work is being implemented to introduce new ways of working in the unit allowing proactive and intelligence driven enforcement. Stronger relationships are being built with the wider policing family through the Safer Maidstone Partnership with joint operations in the development stages for implementation by the end of the year. The team is embracing the need to publicise their successes and will shortly be releasing an information feature in the local press on noise and respect between

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			Through the new wardens tackle a broad range of environmental issues before they become problems and engage, educate and enforce environmental crime issues.	Martin Jeynes	neighbours. The team have made a number of enforcement interventions using informal and formal action to address environmental issues in the borough. Several prosecution files are being prepared for court action to be taken for more serious offenders.
H&OP	Harness the Council's Services to help partners, promote healthier lifestyles, improve the health of residents and hold healthcare providers to account.	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Ensure that the Council is well prepared to Lobby the health sector when required	Ian Park	The LSP has been restructured and a Health and Wellbeing subgroup has been set up to help drive this agenda at District level.
			Participate with the public health board for West Kent Primary Care Trust in supporting the delivery of the strategy for public health in Kent	Ian Park	
H&OP	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	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Ensure the effective use of the 'choosing health' budget for Maidstone	Ian Park	A Choosing Health budget has been allocated and a programme agreed for 2009/10. The aim of Choosing health funding is to help reduce health inequalities.
			Work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and other partners to promote and improve health and reduce health inequalities through smoking cessation programmes and by tackling substance abuse (including alcohol), obesity, mental health and sexual health issues	Ian Park	
CYPF	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.	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Promote the range of benefits available and monitor extra income through benefits	Steve McGinnes	A joint project team has been established to create a central benefits hub within the Gateway and work undertaken to promote the take up of Pension Credit and Free School meals. New technology is being introduced to provide a full benefits check for all customers at the point of claiming either Housing or Council Tax Benefit.
			Continue to improve the way the Council tackles fraud	Steve McGinnes	The joint fraud team with Tunbridge Wells has significantly increased the number of prosecutions for benefit fraud and the benefit service has increased its overall effectiveness in contacting customers to identify unreported changes in their circumstances.
CYPF	Increase the number of people (especially young people) involved in positive activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas.	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Expand the range of opportunities and activities at the museum and with the Sports and Play and Youth Development Team	Simon Lace/Jacqueline Bobb	In the first half of the year 28 young people (22 of them from Maidstone) contributed over 1,170 hours of voluntary work as part of the museums' work experience programme. This year as part of the Freefall programme the SPYDT held 2 activity days at Shepway Youth and Community Centre. This day consisted of Wii, Dance Mat and Fruit Smoothie making. Uprockin this year stayed at South Park due to the demand from young people in the area. Hotfoot took place at Oaktree Community School in Mangravel in both Easter and Summer holidays.
H&C	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	Regeneration –	Develop housing mix policy to provide a range of home types	Brian Morgan	A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (due December 2009) and a Green and Blue Infrastructure Study (being prepared in-house) will inform Core Strategy policy.

H&C	ensure that the Council responds to the market, encourages good design and maintains an awareness of the importance of architecture and	Cllr Greer	Promote inclusion of a Green and Blue infrastructure component to the Local Development Framework	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	Other evidence base work (e.g. for the Town Centre) will support policies for good design, and protection of heritage and landscape features.
H&C	Use the development control service to ensure that future developments are built to high design standards and improve planning enforcement activity as well as simplifying design	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Undertake a review of the authority’s planning enforcement systems to build on the success to date and ensure that it is able to respond to what residents and customers want	Rob Jarman	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review ongoing and changes implemented as part of the review process. 2. Current focus is on response times, once established quality of decision making will be the focus. 3. Changes implemented to date include - introduction of improved RTS targets since June 2009, usage of enforcement IT system to improve automation of service and information, amendments to signing off procedure, faster opening and closing of cases, improved relationship with legal services. 4. Future changes include - improved reporting, fast track option for non-breach cases, use of the website to give out and receive information.
H&C	Enable the Delivery of new affordable homes	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Ensure that each relevant new housing development delivers a minimum 40% affordable housing	John Littlemore/ Rob Jarman/ Michael Thornton	In 2008/09 the Council secured 40% affordable housing on all sites of 15+ units in line with policy (202 affordable units out of a total of 509).
			Engage with Social Housing Providers regarding and anti social behaviour	John Littlemore	We continue to work with MHT through quarterly liaison meetings to ensure that the promises made to tenants around tackling ASB are fulfilled.
H&C	Reduce the number of empty properties	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Implement the empty homes strategy	John Littlemore	The Empty Homes strategy has been implemented as far as resources will allow. Numbers of Empty homes brought back into use year on year continues to improve with targets exceeded.
H&C	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.	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Continue to deliver against decent homes commitment	John Littlemore	The main thrust of our Housing Assistance policy and Enforcement policy has been towards making homes decent. Targets set each year have been exceeded and the Private Sector House Conditions survey report expected shortly is expected to confirm that we have achieved the decent homes target for vulnerable people for 2010
			Maximise the use of regional housing based funding	John Littlemore	RHB funding is being used and spent. Fully spent last year and on target this year.
			In partnership ensure that all house in multiple occupation are safe for the occupants	John Littlemore	Over 80% of licensed HMOs are currently up to standard. This figure is increasing as we continue to inspect and bring the houses up to standard in liaison with the Landlords.
			Respond to the private housing stock condition survey and review outcomes	Stuart White	A draft report has been received, and a final report is expected before Christmas. We will therefore be looking to respond to the outcomes in preparation for the Housing assistance programme from April 2010.
H&C	In terms of spatial planning ensure an appropriate allocation of land for house	Regeneration –	Effectively promote the Council’s views to Government in the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	Representations to draft South East Plan resulted in amendments prior to adoption of the Plan. Submissions made to draft review of South East Plan for gypsy accommodation - EIP due February 2010.
			Maintain a local development scheme work programme.	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	Revision to LDS work programme approved by Secretary of State, and currently on target to achieve milestones.
			Achieve successful adoption following Examination in Public (EiP)	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	First Independent Examinations (Gypsy & Traveller DPD and Core Strategy) are programmed for 2011.

	building	Cllr Greer	Prepare suitable land allocation in subsequent Local Development Document	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	Currently demonstrating 6.4 years of housing land supply to meet rolling 5-year housing targets. Strategic housing sites to be allocated in Core Strategy to meet mid-term dip in 5-year supply, and in later Development Plan Documents/Area Action Plans to ensure South East Plan target of 11,080 homes is met.
			Ensure that planning policy reflects the need for an appropriate supply of housing (catering for a range of residents) to meet the needs of the economy (identified through the Housing Needs Survey and employment survey)	Michael Thornton/ Sue Whiteside	Core Strategy policies will reflect the findings of the Employment Land Review (September 2009) and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which includes an updated housing needs survey (completion estimated Dec 2009).
H&C	Reduce the number of households who become homeless (through intervention).	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Provide a range of housing options and enable vulnerable households to achieve independent living	John Littlemore	Disabled facilities grants continue to be approved within target time scales and continue to increase year on year
			Support partners to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable households	John Littlemore	
H&C	Continue to improve access to services	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Improve access to face to face services through the Council’s Gateway and by bringing services together in the Maidstone Gateway whilst also ensuring the Contact Centre maintains the high level of service	Sandra Marchant	It has been a challenging time for the Contact Centre teams with increases in Housing and Benefits Customers of over 100%; however, satisfaction has remained high. A number of initiatives including increased training in Benefits, floor walkers and staffing Maidstone House reception have been initiated to maintain the level of service. As part of the Benefits Hub, additional services are now provided in the Gateway including those for Pension Credit and Free School Meals. Working with VAM and with grant funding the Gateway will introduce a "Buddies" support system in part to support customers with self help. The councils web site www.maidstone.gov.uk has been redesigned and will be relaunched before Christmas. This has significantly more transactional capabilities and in some cases is linked to the Contact Centre's CRM system, via self serve. The Contact Centre and Revenues and Benefits teams continue to promote e-benefits.
			Provide enhanced self help facilities though payment kiosk, public wireless internet access and fully accessible self help PCs	Sandra Marchant	
			Continue to develop the transactional capabilities of the Councils web site to include use of personalisation through “web 2” technologies	Paul Taylor/ Dave Lindsay	
			Through the Business Transformation Partnership ensure that customer accessibility is taken into account in reviews	Alasdair Robertson	
			Ensure that the council continues to keep residents informed about the results of consultation (e.g. through Borough Update and Cabinet Road shows)	Roger Adley	
	Continue supporting parish councils and	Community	Review the form of the Council’s support for parishes and review delegations	David Terry/Paul Taylor	The LSP has been restructured to focus on outcomes. More robust governance arrangements have been put in place including a bidding process for Performance

H&C	representative groups in all communities of the borough	Services - Cllr Ring	Analyse the potential for synergies / links between the Council's aims and objectives and those of parishes (including links with the Local Development Framework)	David Terry	Reward Grant funding. The LSP will carry out a resource mapping exercise and strategic risk assessment this year in order to under pin priorities and strengthen partner working.			
H&C	Promote effective partnerships working with the voluntary and community sectors	Leader – Cllr Garland & Community Services - Cllr Ring	Support the Local Strategic Partnership and enable the Local Area Agreement to achieve their outcomes (for Maidstone and ensure that these local bodies are accountable)	Ian Park / Paul Taylor	The LSP and its subgroups have been reviewed to ensure appropriate representation to help achieve agreed outcomes. A performance monitoring system is being established. The action plan of the Sustainable Community Strategy which is being monitored by the LSP contains LAA indicators and targets.			
			Influence and develop the next generation of Local Area Agreements with partners	Ian Park / Paul Taylor				
			Progress and monitor the range of initiatives agreed as part of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Local Area Agreement and Service Level Agreements	Ian Park / Paul Taylor				
						Ensure that any funding for key voluntary sectors in the borough from MBC is effectively monitored, evaluated and reviewed to ensure successful outcomes	David Terry	The Borough Grants programme has a monitoring and reviewing process within in the Service Level Agreements which are outcome based.
						Promote volunteering through support for Voluntary Action Maidstone (VAM)	Ian Park	Voluntary Action Maidstone has a new three year SLA with the Council.
						Use the Museum's community volunteering services to support this objective	Simon Lace	Since April over 80 volunteers have contributed over 5,000 hours of unpaid work. Even at the national minimum wage of £5.80 per hour this represents a benefit to the Council of at least £29,000.
H&C	Promote equal opportunities, encourage greater community involvement and improve-social inclusion in the borough	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Corporate Equality Plan to be reviewed	Ian Park	A three year plan is in place ; minor amendments to be approved by the Cabinet Member.			
			Progress the neighbourhood action planning process to empower communities in disadvantaged areas and tackle inequalities.	Jim Boot	Neighbourhood Action Planning pilot is currently underway in Park Wood. First milestone achieved was the running of a training course for local residents. Next milestone the construction of a 1:500 scale 3D model of Park Wood with Bell Wood Community Primary School in November. Roadshow commenced with launch on 18th November. Key output is the completed neighbourhood action plan by end of March 2010. Currently identifying priority areas for roll out post April 2010.			
			Monitor and update the Sustainable Community Strategy	Jim Boot	For the SCS, the aim is to provide a progress report on priority objectives back to the LSP and Cabinet in January 2010.			
H&C	Encourage greater citizen participation, especially in registering to vote, elections and Council meetings and promote greater engagement with Council	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Undertake review of Council's provision in line with White Paper Communities in Control and implement identified actions	Neil Harris	The Cabinet agreed the Communities in Control Action Plan in August.			
			Continue working with schools to encourage greater participation in the democratic process	Neil Harris	This has been incorporated into the Communities in Control Action Plan.			
			Lead on the annual Maidstone Youth Forum election processes and extend to other schools	Jacqueline Bobb	Elections took place during the week of 16 November in every secondary school in the borough. These were joint elections for Kent Youth Parliament/MBC Youth Forum and simulate the real electoral voting process. Candidate meetings with Council Members are being considered.			

	members		Implement Charter for Member's development	Neil Harris/Tina Edwards	The actions arising from the Charter are being implemented in accordance with the SE Employers timetable. Member briefings have taken place, the latest on 29th October as part of the member seminar. Becoming a Councillor event scheduled date is being set at the moment.
			Continue to expand the use of the web-cast where possible	Neil Harris	Planning is now webcast and now developing further ideas to improve the service.
H&C	Improve communications and delivery of services to Gypsy and Traveller communities	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Continue to liaise with Kent County Council and other agencies to expand our involvement with the needs of the Gypsy community	John Littlemore	Negotiations are continuing with KCC over the management of the 2 MBC owned sites. Target to transfer Jan 2010. MBC are also working with consultants to prepare a Gypsy and Traveller Development plan document to meet targets for site provision
			Continue to work towards improving the quality of Council owned Gypsy and traveller sites	John Littlemore	£50,000 has been allocated from the renovation grant budget this year to carry out urgent improvements on boundary and security fencing and electrical works. Improvement works on Stilebridge Marden is to recommence shortly following some initial delays.
			Progress actions and objectives from Scrutiny Committee review to improve community cohesion between Gypsies and travellers and the wider community	John Littlemore	A process of community engagement has commenced with a meeting with Marden Parish Council, which will be followed by further meetings with other stakeholders. A new Housing Strategy is being developed with the aim of being adopted in the summer of 2010. Consultation with stakeholders and client groups is a key part of this development and will include a public meeting with the Gypsy & Traveller community in the spring of 2010.
SCC	Improve parks and green open spaces through the green spaces strategy action plan and the play area strategy and enhance Maidstone's watercourses	Leisure and Culture – Cllr Moss	Deliver improvements for Green Spaces Strategy Phase 3 action plan	Jason Taylor	Phase three of the action plan involves the production and implementation of The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), this has been produced and is currently being reviewed before adoption. Implementation of the LBAP is going to be done through Medway Valley Countryside Partnership as the resources are no longer available in house.
			Deliver the Play Area Strategy	Jason Taylor	As part of the delivery of the Play Area Strategy a new Play Area Scoring System has been developed. This is a great improvement on the old system as it takes into account not only the size of the play area, as in the old system, but also the quality of equipment, usage and the availability of other play facilities in the area. This new system allows us to direct any available resources to precisely where they are most needed.
			Progress the conservation plan for Mote Park	Jason Taylor	The Conservation Plan for Mote Park was produced by Kent Wildlife Trust. The implementation of the Plan will be done as part of the Mote Park Redevelopment Project, which is currently at the Development Stage. An Audience Development Officer is currently being recruited and a large part of this persons future role will be to implement a program of volunteering opportunities in the park, many of these will be tasks identified in the Conservation Plan.
			Enhance the river	Jason Taylor / John Foster	A review of all of the signage and memorial plaques along the river is currently taking place, this will enable a decision to be made regarding the replacement of these items.

SCC	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	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Enhance marketing for sports and leisure facilities	Jason Taylor	The Leisure Centre is currently undergoing large scale improvements which will be completed by April 2010. Whilst these works are taking place the improved Centre is being marketed in a number of ways including regular press releases, photo calls and in a shop in the local shopping centre. Cobtree Golf Course regularly advertises the services that it provides on behalf of MBC in Golfing Publications. This advertising has resulted in a significant increase in user numbers. All outdoor sports facilities are detailed on the Council website, this includes an on line booking form.
			Investigate the feasibility of obtaining external funding to carry out a comprehensive community sports and play facilities audit	Jacqueline Bobb	An audit for Indoor Sports Provision is currently being led by Brendon Neal (Principal Planning Officer) and Sport England. This is due to be completed in December. To maximise the Olympics within the Borough "Maidstone's Dream" (Sponsorship website) has been launched. 25 Athletes have signed up and some have already been successfully sponsored by local companies, including Towergate.
			Maximise the effect for the borough from the 2012 Olympics	Laura Dickson / Jacqueline Bobb	A report is planned to go to Cabinet Member in the new year setting out the options for creating a legacy around the Olympics over and above what we are already doing.
			Implement Create in Maidstone and Elemental projects	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	Create in Maidstone Arts Development Strategy out for internal/partner consultation. First draft to be submitted to Management Team by January 2010. The Maidstone Marker has been installed as part of the Elemental and future project funding has been secured through a S106 for art contribution.
			Increase school visits to the museum	Simon Lace	Since April 4,233 schoolchildren have benefitted from the museums' educational services. This represents an increase of 6.3% on the previous year's figure of 3,981.
SCC	Develop the leisure centre	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Maximise use of the facilities & the provision of a diverse programme of activity	Jason Taylor	The improvement works currently taking place at the Leisure Centre have been planned to maximise use of the facilities and to provide a diverse programme of activities.
			Develop a programme of ongoing maintenance work with the centre management	Jason Taylor	The Leisure Centre is managed by Maidstone Leisure Trust on behalf of MBC. As well as allowing the large scale works to take place, the agreement also identifies resource needed for the on going maintenance of the centre.
SCC	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.	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Through the cultural marketing group work to maximise profile and share resources through joint working	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson / Vronni Ward / Jacqueline Bobb / John Foster/ Simon Lace	Design and Production costs for Easter and Summer activity publicity shared with Sports and Play Team.
			Develop and implement a cultural calendar	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson / Vronni Ward / Jacqueline Bobb / John Foster/ Simon Lace	A cultural calendar has been in place since August 2009 and is held within the Economic Development and Tourism service.

EE&CC	Reduce the Council's carbon emissions through, amongst other activities, the introduction of Environmental Management System and Carbon reduction targets	Environment -Cllr Wooding	As part of the new environmental management post: - Create the environmental management system - Collect relevant data to prepare reports - Develop an action plan to reduce carbon emissions	John Littlemore	Environmental management systems have been put in place to collect data for the various government returns. We are part of a pilot scheme with the Energy Savings Trust (the 1 to 1 scheme) whereby the EST has audited everything we do energy efficiency/climate change wise. The report will detail what we must do as a council not only to meet the government targets for the various NIs, but also to meet our own targets of an annual reduction of 3%, 20% reduction by 2015/16 and a 30% reduction by 2020/21.
			Explore the benefits of external accreditation of the Environmental Management system and set in place action plan to carry forward findings	John Littlemore	
			Ensure the Council reduces its carbon footprint achieving a year on year annual reduction of 3% across all the Council's activities, working towards the long term targets of a 20% reduction by 2015/16 and a 30% reduction by 2020/21	John Littlemore	
EECC	Encourage and promote the reduction in Carbon emissions by residents and businesses	Environment -Cllr Wooding	Develop partnerships to share best practice and jointly tackle the issue of carbon emissions	Jim Boot / John Littlemore	We have developed partnerships with the EST to promote energy efficiency advice to the domestic sector and provide energy efficiency grants in Partnership with 7 other neighbouring authorities and Creative Environmental Networks. We are progressing with the action plan drawn up to reduce carbon emissions within buildings owned by the Council and with our contractors. We have met with SEEDA to discuss the possibility of a Community Energy Saving Partnership to tackle fuel poverty and carbon reduction measures in our lower income super output areas. Work will now commence with our RSL partners to engage them in this process with the aim of establishing a partnership to deliver significant improvements over the next two years. Further discussion to follow with the new LSP Sub-Group with responsibility for climate change once this meets in the New Year. The intention being for the Sub-Group to adopt a terms of reference to promote this initiative. (this is being co-ordinated by the LSP team).
			Promote best practice	Jim Boot / John Littlemore	
			Apply Building Research Establishment Limited Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)	Jim Boot / John Littlemore	
			Develop the Maidstone 'Go Green' partnership with support of the energy saving trust	John Littlemore	
EECC	Ensure the Local Development Document currently being prepared deals with all development in an environmentally sustainable way	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Ensure Core strategy sets appropriate targets and policy context for future Local Development Framework documents and other strategies of the Council	Michael Thornton/Sue Whiteside	Core Strategy will set targets and policy context for future Local Development Documents and other Council strategies. Public consultation will be undertaken in summer 2010. In 2008/09 four Conservation Area Appraisals were published. Two Management Plans were also progressed and should be adopted by end of 09/10. The programme has been reviewed due to a number of factors and a report to the Cabinet Member is imminent. This will recommend that 2-3 combined CAAs/MPs now be produced this year, focussing on the Bearsted CAs. Loose Road and London Road Character Area Assessments were adopted in December 2008 and consideration will be given to producing further Assessments following adoption of the Core Strategy.
			Progress the programme of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, and Character Area Assessments.	Michael Thornton/Deanne Cunningham	
EECC	Reduce fuel poverty in the borough	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Reduce fuel poverty in the borough	Stuart White	We carried out a postal survey as required last year to get a base position. This showed that around 15% of vulnerable persons were living in fuel poverty. We have targeted some of our Housing Assistance grants towards improving insulation and heating systems in homes occupied by vulnerable people. We have just commissioned this years NI 187 survey and the results are expected early 2010.
	Enhance bio-diversity in Maidstone to	Environment	Adopt and implement the bio-diversity action plan which will enhance Maidstone's natural environment.	Jason Taylor	The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) has been produced and is currently being reviewed before adoption. Implementation of the LBAP is going to be done through Medway Valley Countryside Partnership as the resources are no longer available in house.

EECC	improve the natural environment of the borough	Environment - Cllr Wooding	Work in partnership to deliver accessible sites of bio-diversity interest.	Jason Taylor	The LBAP identifies all of the sites of bio-diversity interest in the borough, not only those owned and maintained by MBC. All of these sites will be highlighted by the plan and other landowners encouraged to manage their land not only with maximum bio-diversity value in mind but also with allowing access to the public.
EECC	Reduce water and material consumption in Council-owned properties and improve energy efficiency across the borough	Environment - Cllr Wooding	Continue to reduce energy, water and material consumption	David Tibbit	Energy consumption is on course after six months for a 4.5% reduction for the full year. Water consumption is very slightly above the 6 month target due to a leak at Whatman Park. Full year's figures should be within target. A thermographic survey of some of the larger Council buildings will be commissioned shortly to identify priorities for improvements in energy efficiency. Automatic meter reading of gas, electricity and water is being investigated as a means of simplifying benchmarking consumption and early warning of spikes in consumption. Water Cycle Study for Maidstone currently being produced as part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy. Means to improve water and energy efficiency will be considered as Local Development Documents are prepared. Recent works that have taken place to improve the quality of planting in council owned green spaces include Brenchley Gardens and All Saints Conservation Area. In these areas some bedding and planting has been removed and replaced with herbaceous planting that not only improves the look of the area but also requires less water and maintenance.
			Continue to improve energy efficiency	David Tibbit	
			Through Development Plan Documents aim to improve energy efficiency	Michael Thornton/Sue Whiteside	
			Pursue sustainable landscaping through high quality planting in Council owned green spaces and by encouraging developers	Jason Taylor	
EECC	Continue to support better cleaning, waste minimisation and recycling and improve monitoring.	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Meet the targets set for national performance indicators relating to street cleansing, flytipping, fly posting and graffiti	Jonathan Scott	The targets set for street cleansing, flyposting and flytipping have generally been met and show ongoing improvement. However, benchmarking has indicated that the service could be more cost effective and a review is being undertaken to be presented to the Cabinet Member in January. The results of the Place Survey in 2008 indicated average satisfaction which did not reflect the positive performance on the national indicators. A series of focus groups and on line questionnaires are being undertaken to find the reasons for any dissatisfaction and an action plan is being produced which will also be presented to the Cabinet Member in January.
			With our Partners develop the various work streams of the Kent Waste Partnership Action Plan in order to improve performance and value for money in waste minimisation and recycling through innovation and new ways of working	Jennifer Gosling	A Best Value Review has been undertaken to identify ways of developing the waste and recycling services. As part of the implementation plan, a Waste and Recycling Strategy will be produced to look at different material streams, waste reduction and reuse initiatives and efficiencies within the existing service.
			Maintain and develop knowledge of developments in the field of waste management in order to identify good practice and to proactively develop the Council's services and working practices	Jennifer Gosling	
			Develop an optimum model for waste collection, minimisation and recycling	Jennifer Gosling	

			Undertake benchmarking to check to ensure the service is providing value for money and take appropriate steps for improvement if necessary	Jennifer Gosling	
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Agenda Item 9

Maidstone Borough Council

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 5 January 2010

Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards

Report of: Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager

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 The Terms of Reference of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee include carrying out the overview and scrutiny function in relation to "The preparation of the Council's annual budget and to review and scrutinise the Council's performance in relation to budgetary management". The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore the appropriate Committee for the Budget Strategy to be considered by.
- 1.3 The Local Government Act 2000 highlights that the role of scrutiny in the financial process is to hold the Executive to account and ensure that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable. The Centre for Public Scrutiny states that two principles of good public scrutiny are to provide the 'critical friend' challenge and to enable the voice and concerns of the public. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that the budget strategy is in the interests of the community and is achieving the best value for money while planning for the future.
- 1.4 There are four key roles and areas where scrutiny can add value to the Council's management of its finances:
 - Scrutiny can challenge whether the processes are effective and accessible: is there a level of integration between corporate and service planning and performance and financial management?
 - Scrutiny can challenge how resources are allocated, monitor how they are used and examine their impact.
 - It can test out and make explicit whether the Council is directing its resources effectively to meet its priorities and demonstrate whether it is achieving value for money.
 - Scrutiny and overview provide an additional and transparent challenge to the executive's management of the Council's finances¹.

¹ CfPS, LGiU and CIPFA *On the Money: The Scrutiny of Local Government Finance* 2007

- 1.5 As bullet points 1 and 3 above highlight, integration of strategic and financial planning is vital; the draft 2010/11 Update to the Strategic Plan 2009-12 will therefore be discussed at Agenda Item 8.
- 1.6 The Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards was considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16 December 2009; the Cabinet decision is attached.
- 1.7 A summary of the papers provided within this agenda is as follows:

	Document	Page
	Record of Decision of the Cabinet: "Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards"	90
Appendix A	Strategic Projection – Movements Since July 2009	105
Appendix B	Strategic Projection - December 2009	106
Appendix C	Savings Proposals December 2009	107
Appendix D	Capital Programme 2009/10-2012/13	114
Appendix E	General Fund Balances	118
Appendix F	Survey of Maidstone Residents	119
Appendix G	Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010 Onwards	164

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are recommended to interview the Leader of the Council, the Director of Resources and Partnerships and the Head of Finance with regard to the Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards and make recommendations on this as they see fit.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 16 December 2009

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS

Issue for Decision

To review the initial Budget Strategy agreed in July 2009, in the context of the changing economic climate, with a view to consulting Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the constitution, on the updated strategy prior to submitting proposals to Council in March 2010.

Decision Made

1. That a provisional spending level based upon the revised strategic projection set out in Appendix B of the report of Management Team, incorporating the revisions to growth items as identified in Appendix A of the report of Management Team and the savings as identified in Appendix C of the report of Management Team be agreed;
2. That updates, as soon as available, on progress to achieving the savings targets from staffing as outlined in the report of Management Team be requested;
3. That the updated Capital Programme detailed in Appendix D of the report of Management Team, along with the budget set out therein for 2012/13, be agreed;
4. That the outcome of the budget consultation exercise set out in section 1.11 and Appendix G of the report of Management Team be noted and Cabinet's gratitude be expressed to all those who participated;
5. That the updated medium term financial strategy as set out in Appendix H of the report of Management Team and its stronger connection to the strategic plan be agreed;
6. That a continued Council Tax strategy which is materially within the Government's Council Tax capping strategy as outlined in the report of the report of Management Team be agreed;
7. That the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny committee be consulted on the budget strategy based on the above decisions.

Reasons for Decision

At the July meeting, Cabinet considered the initial projection for 2010/11 onwards and agreed the following:

1. That the current Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendix B of the report of Management Team be noted and that it be updated in line with best practice to integrate service and financial planning for the next 3 year planning period.
2. That the levels of council tax set out in Appendix F of the report of Management Team be used for budget planning purposes but the final council tax level will be set as low as possible.
3. That the "Most Likely" scenario set out in Appendix F(ii) of the report of Management Team forms the basis of the need to identify savings of £1.4 million in 2010/11 and that officer's work with Cabinet Members to present proposals for savings at the December Cabinet meeting.
4. That the current Capital Programme be noted.
5. That the use of public consultation to inform the budget strategy be supported and that officers bring a report setting out the most effective consultation methods to the next Cabinet meeting.
6. That the timetable for the 2010/11 Budget Strategy, as set out below [in the July 2009 report], be approved.

The initial financial projection was selected by Cabinet as the most likely of three scenarios. The key assumptions from that scenario were:

- a) An overall inflation rate of 2.5% per annum over the period;
- b) Anticipated grant based on the indicative figures provided by Government in 2007. This allowed for a 0.5% cash increase in the grant received over the level received in 2009/10 followed by 0% increases in future years;
- c) Additional resources for the completion of the new recycling contracts and for resolution of other budget pressures following changes to disposal arrangements;
- d) A continuation of the annual increase in the national concessionary fares scheme, based on previous trends in take up of the scheme;
- e) The use of all available capital receipts to fund the capital programme, reducing the level of investment income. The investment income is also affected by the rate of interest on the current investments, estimated at an average rate of 1.5%;
- f) A need to borrow up to £2.0m to finance capital expenditure, creating a need for revenue resources to service the debt;

- g) That the current policy to maintain a minimum balance of 10% of net revenue spend is maintained;
- h) That Council Tax increase be equivalent to the 2009/10 increase for the purpose of developing the strategy;
- i) That no increase in the Council Tax Base be assumed.

A number of risks were identified as part of the initial projection as follows:

- a) The uncertainty surrounding the costs of the national concessionary fares scheme and the future proposals to transfer the function to upper tier authorities in two tier regions;
- b) The potential non-delivery of the capital receipts from sale of assets assumed during the programme period, leading to the possible need for borrowing to finance the programme.
- c) The potential future loss of HCA grant aid to the Council's capital programme following the intensive investment programme in 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- d) The continuing risk of income shortfall on the revenue budget due to the recession

Following these decisions, further reports, to approve the medium term financial strategy and to agree the approach to budget consultation for 2010/11, were approved by Cabinet.

Economic Background

During previous financial years the international economy has undergone a collapse triggered by factors such as a loss of confidence in the financial markets. This led to a significant change in the authority's financial strategy. This was coupled with a number of expected changes to the Council's investment levels which had been accelerated by this change such as the intended reduction in the level of capital receipts available for the capital programme and investment.

To put the progress of the recession into context, the table below shows the movement in some of the major indices, and the base rate over the period of the last 18 months. As can be seen the indices are all higher, at October 2009, than their lowest point in the year to date.

	April 2008	April 2009	Oct 2009	Lowest Point in 2009/10
	%	%	%	%
CPI	2.5	2.3	1.5	1.1
RPI	3.8	-1.2	-0.8	-1.6
RPI(x)	3.5	1.7	1.9	1.0

Base Rate	5.25	0.5	0.5	0.5
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Government support for the economy has taken many different approaches but has created a significant increase in the public sector borrowing requirement. At the time of writing UK debt was £825 billion and set to increase in the short term. The Government's proposed financial responsibility bill commits them to halving the budget deficit within the next four years. Although this does not necessarily mean halving the debt, the direction of change and the importance being placed on this issue by the government can be seen as a significant risk for local authorities who will be expected to bear a burden from this effort.

On 26th November 2009 the government announced the provisional settlement for revenue grant and redistributed business rates. In line with the indicative figures provided by the government in 2007, as part of the three year arrangement, the Council has received a 0.5% increase in grant. This is in line with the financial projection adopted by Cabinet in July 2009. This is the final year of the indicative arrangement and there has been no announcement about the possibility of any future indicative figures at this time.

Review of 2009/10 to date

Cabinet has received two quarterly monitoring reports for 2009/10. One in August 2009 for quarter one and another in November 2009 for quarter two. It is clear from these reports that the current year's budget has benefited from the efforts, during the 2009/10 budget strategy work, to contain the ongoing consequences of the recession.

Even with the benefit of those actions taken for 2009/10, the two monitoring reports have identified six significant budget pressures on the revenue account in the year. Following management action these areas now forecast a year-end deficit of £0.5 million. Cabinet identified half of this sum by redirecting corporate resources but requested that management continue to take action to reduce individual pressures immediately and await year-end outturn information before the use of the identified corporate resources be sanctioned.

In addition the monitoring reports identified two of these budget pressures that have an ongoing impact into 2010/11 totalling £0.25 million. Cabinet agreed that these be carried forward into this budget strategy work for 2010/11. The two items are the pressures upon the park and ride service and the level of void commercial property.

Consideration of the capital programme within the budget monitoring reports identified a further issue. The planned programme of capital receipts for the three years of the current capital programme is expected to be £7.2 million. During the current financial year the expectation from capital receipts is £3.25 million, to the end of November only £0.4 million has been received. The current year's capital programme is reporting slippage into 2010/11 and that means the expected capital receipt is not required to finance this year's capital programme. The risk from non delivery of expected capital receipts is therefore deferred to 2010/11 at the earliest.

The slippage in the capital programme mentioned above also effects other financing assumptions. In developing the budget strategy for 2010/11 the assumptions included the cost of borrowing £2m in 2009/10. As slippage has reduced the level of spend in 2009/10 to below the available resources, there will be no need to borrow to finance the capital programme in the current year.

Notwithstanding these budget and economic problems the council's financial standing remains strong and revenue balances remain intact. The current predicted position is that there will not be a significant year-end variance either positive or adverse.

Along with the quarterly budget monitoring reports Cabinet has received quarterly performance reports. At September 2009 the Council's performance shows that 86% of KPIs and LPIs are forecast to end the year at or above target. This compares favourably with 2008 performance and is being achieved in a difficult economic climate and with constrained budgets.

Review of Strategic Projection

In July 2009 cabinet considered a number of scenarios for the strategic projection and adopted the most likely scenario. Since July a number of factors have changed and attached at Appendix A to the report of Management Team is a table detailing the movement in those factors. Given below is more detail on individual changes and, in some cases, updated information that confirms the initial projection but is considered significant.

- a) Pay and price inflation has been reduced to 1%, this is now considered to be sufficient to cover the likely increase in major contracts and pay. This is based on the regular annual efficiency proposal that a low level of increase introduces efficiency into all service budgets. Finalising the calculation for contractual increases within the budget means that there is no longer a need for minor growth items and £150,000 is removed from the strategic projection.
- b) Recycling growth was originally identified as £214,000. The current forecast for the service suggests that management action can be taken to contain the necessary growth within £115,000. A full review of the service provision has shown that actions can be taken to offset the loss of financial support that has occurred due to the improvements to doorstep recycling in 2009/10. This includes revised arrangements at bring sites and efficiency within the environmental services section.
- c) The Concessionary Fares service has been a pressure item every year since the introduction of the national scheme. The policy agreed for the medium term financial strategy since the commencement of the national scheme has been to incorporate a standard £200,000 growth item and this was agreed in July 2009 as part of the financial projection. In the current year spend is forecast to be £58,000 below budget, which is a variance of less than 3% and this gap has been narrowing over the years since the schemes introduction. It is expected that, from 1st April 2011, the provision of this service will transfer to Kent County Council. Details of the proposal will be published by the Secretary of State this month, although an exact date is

not yet known. The financial arrangements for the transfer are a major risk for the Council and it remains prudent to continue to provide for the agreed growth item.

- d) The cost of potentially borrowing £2 million towards the financing of the capital programme was included in the original financial projection. The current status of the 2009/10 capital programme is detailed in section 1.6 and shows that slippage into 2010/11 has occurred to such an extent that borrowing will not be required in the current financial year. The revenue growth item of £150,000 is no longer included in the financial projection for 2010/11 but the growth item will remain for subsequent years unless alternative funding is found.
- e) The provision of Maidstone Leisure Centre now forms part of a new contract between the Council and Maidstone Leisure Trust (MLT). This contract includes arrangements for substantial capital works to the building and facilities over the coming 15 years, the need for which is underpinned by the results of the place survey. The capital programme identifies equal annual instalments of £630,000 for 15 years making up the capital payment for this work which are being completed by Serco on the Council's behalf, under the arrangements in the contract. The contract includes an annual income of £200,000 from MLT which has been redirected to the capital programme leaving the Council to contribute the remaining £430,000 from other resources. The capital programme has contained a budget of £400,000 for major works to the Leisure Centre since 2008/09. Once the details of the current arrangement were known, this was amended to £630,000. As the contract is now signed and the Council is committed to the annual payment it is prudent to insure that the council's base budgets allows for the funding of these payments for the 15 year period. It is therefore proposed that the reduction in growth in the financial projection as detailed in the paragraphs above be used as revenue resources to support capital programme. This means that in 2010/11 there will be £200,000 income plus £275,000 growth, providing revenue contributions of £475,000 to cover the £630,000 spend. The remaining £155,000 balance of the contribution forms a growth item in the strategic projection for 2011/12.

As discussed in section 1.6, the revenue pressures detailed in the current year's budget monitoring reports have identified two issues that have medium term consequences and Cabinet agreed their incorporation into this budget strategy as growth items at its meeting in November 2009

- a) There is a loss of rental income from the council's commercial properties and there is a need to allow for the ongoing consequences of vacant properties. The initial financial projection agreed in July 2009 included a loss of income of £200,000 for other income generating services. This sum has been increased by £50,000 to incorporate the need for a void allowance against the rental income.
- b) The park and ride service has been a barometer of the economic downturn since it commenced. In the past action such as savings from re-tendering the service have been directed towards maintaining cost within budget.

However the maintaining the cost of the service in this way has proven difficult and has rarely been successful. The first two quarterly monitoring reports of the current financial year suggest there is still a significant deficit that can no longer be resolved through management action. The revised financial projection includes a growth item of £200,000 to ensure full funding of the service from 2010/11 onwards.

Available Resources and the Council Tax

The initial approval of Cabinet in July 2009 identified a need for £1.9 million in savings and efficiency. Approximately £0.5m of this existed due to previous actions taken for 2009/10, leaving £1.4m to be identified. The revised strategic financial projection, incorporating some of the £0.5 million, identifies a need for £1.6 million in savings. Cabinet also asked that £0.7 million of the savings came from staff reductions. Attached at Appendix C to the report of Management Team are details of proposals that cover the required £1.6 million, including suggestions that are sufficient to meet a £0.7 million in staff savings. At this stage some of these staff savings proposals are indicative and require the process of formal consultation to be completed before the final value can be confirmed and may require redundancy costs that are not yet quantifiable.

The provisional revenue grant notification is a 0.5% increase, as was the indicative figure given by the government in 2007. Details of future provision of revenue grant, from 2011/12, are not included within any indicative figures detailed by government to date. The proposed financial projection given at Appendix B to the report of Management Team shows a continual reduction in grant of 1% per annum from 2011/12.

A primary objective of the Budget Strategy exercise is to seek the agreement of Council in March 2010 to the level of Council Tax for 2010/11. The proper practice is for the level of Council Tax to be sufficient to cover a balanced budget without significant or long term reliance on the use of balances, unidentified savings or other items that may bring into doubt the sustainability of the medium term financial strategy.

The council tax collected is a product of the level of band D equivalent council tax in the year and the tax base, which is an expression of the number of taxable dwelling in equivalent band D values. The tax base for 2010/11 will be set by General Purposes Committee in January 2010. The calculation of the tax base has been made using data from the valuation list for the Council on 14th September 2009, in line with the requirements of central government. The 2010/11 tax base will be 59,765.2, which is a 1.1% increase over the 2009/10 tax base, subject to approval at General Purposes Committee.

The strategic projection agreed in July 2009 gave a total requirement of £24.8 million. The current projection attached at Appendix B to the report of Management Team gives a total requirement of £24.4 million. The movement is detailed in Appendix A to the report of Management Team and summarised below:

£,000

July 2009 gross requirement	24,775
Reductions	-975
Increases	615
December 2009 gross requirement	24,415
Less: savings identified	-1,604
December 2009 net requirement	22,811

Assuming revenue grant at the provisional level and distribution of balances on the collection fund detailed elsewhere on the agenda, the necessary council tax increase to balance the current financial projection would be 2.5%. Details of the calculation are as follows:

	£,000
Provisional revenue grant	9,510
Collection Fund adjustment	10
Council Tax increase of 2.5%	13,290
December 2009 gross requirement	22,810

In the announcement by central government, that set the provisional revenue grant for 2010/11, the government suggested that the average Band D council tax was 3% in 2009/10, the lowest average since 1994-95, and that it was expected that it would fall further next year while councils protect and improve front line services. The above calculation sets a council tax of 2.5%, which is less than the 2009/10 average of 3%. At this stage these figures are illustrative and used only to show that a balanced budget can be set, without a direct threat of capping, within the parameters of the growth and savings currently identified.

The final level of council tax for 2010/11 will be set at Council in March 2010 following recommendation from Cabinet in February 2010. There remains an opportunity for Cabinet to consider this issue further before and with the benefit of Overview and Scrutiny comments before confirming the recommendation to Council.

Capital Programme

The currently approved capital programme 2009/10 to 2011/12, as amended by Cabinet in May 2009, August 2009 and November 2009, relies heavily on the sale of the assets identified in the programme for capital receipts. However, the current economic climate has resulted in the current year's anticipated receipts being delayed, at present, by approximately £2.8 million. Due to slippage in the programme in the current year these anticipated receipts will not be required until the year 2010/11 and the Council will not be required to borrow during the current financial year.

The revised capital programme as approved by Cabinet in May 2009 included assumptions on financing that meant the council would be required to borrow in

the region of £3 million by 2011/12, if no additional assets were sold to obtain capital receipts.

Inclusion of the additional resources from revenue, towards the capital expenditure at the Leisure Centre means that this will reduce the need to borrow over the next two years by £0.7 million.

A proposed capital programme that projects forward a year to 2012/13 is attached as Appendix D to the report of Management Team. This programme would require borrowing in the region of £3.7 million. The proposed programme provides limited resource for the Council's standard investments in housing, information technology, parks, property and regeneration for 2012/13.

The programme given at Appendix D to the report of Management Team assumes no additional assets being sold to obtain further capital receipts beyond 2011/12. However the Council is reviewing a series of additional assets to identify the option method of utilising their value, which will include the sale of suitable surplus assets. At this time information that is essential to effective decision making about the use of assets is being collated and may be available to aid the later years of the proposed capital programme.

This effectively means that the provision of a revenue budget to finance the long term programme at the Leisure Centre along with slippage in the current programme has moved the need to borrow forward by one year but has not removed it. This need to borrow is predicated on the assumption that no additional asset sales will occur after those identified in the programme.

Review of Balances

The medium term financial strategy envisages that the council will maintain a minimum level of revenue balances equating to 10% of the net revenue spend. At present this equates to approximately £2.3 million. Council has also agreed, for 2009/10, that Cabinet may utilise balances down to a level of £2 million before reporting back to Council.

Attached at Appendix E to the report of Management Team is a summary of the current level of balances, forecast to be £4.0 million at 31st March 2011. After taking into account sums that have been tentatively set aside for specific purposes, the level of uncommitted balances as at 31st March 2011, including the minimum level of balance, is forecast to be £3.1 million. Giving uncommitted balances of £0.8 million

Cabinet will be aware from the quarterly monitoring reports in November 2009 that £255,000 of corporate resources were identified and set-aside in year to mitigate the risk of the identified revenue pressures continuing through to year-end. These resources have been added to balances for that specific purpose. However, Cabinet will also be aware that management action is continuing and there is a possibility that the identified revenue pressures will have been mitigated by year-end. If that is the case the forecast uncommitted balance as at March 2010 would be £3.3 million (uncommitted £1.0 million).

In August 2009 Cabinet agreed to the use of balances already set aside for the production of the local development framework (LDF), to support the public enquiry on the Kent International Gateway. This decision recognised the fact that work completed for one project could be of benefit to the needs of the other. As the public enquiry is near completion a forecast of final costs suggests total expenditure of £1.7 million compared to current revenue budgets of £0.5 million, this clearly shows that available resources will be insufficient to complete both projects.

The analysis of balances given at Appendix E to the report of Management Team includes the projected use of balances for the development of the LDF and leaves £304,000 available to support the cost of the public enquiry. This is not enough to fully cover these costs and there are further possible courses of action:

- a) Use uncommitted balances to support the public enquiry costs;
- b) Build growth into the strategic projection to support production of the LDF in later years; and/or
- c) The use of available HPDG funds for 2010/11 that have just been announced, at a total value of over £0.5 million.

A growth item of £200,000 has been included in Appendix B to the report of Management Team for 2011/12 and 2012/13, to enable alternative options and Cabinet will receive a further report on the possible use of uncommitted revenue balances and other available resources in January 2010.

Budget Consultation

Previous budget consultations:

The Council has consulted on all its budgets since 2002-03. Various qualitative and quantitative methods have been used including a citizens' panel, focus groups, road shows, meetings, questionnaires, a Simultaneous Multiple Attribute Trade Off exercise and an online budget simulator. We have consulted to:

- a) inform residents of the budget setting process, the council's spending levels and its services;
- b) find out or check priority areas for spending;
- c) find out how best to fund schemes or options for specific service elements;
- d) find out preferences for the funding of service improvements – council tax, increased fees, cuts in services or a combination of all three;
- e) test support for levels of council tax.

As a result we can be confident that we have a good understanding of residents' preferences for service priority.

Strategic approach:

This year the Cabinet decided on a strategic approach to future budget consultation to complement the medium term financial strategy. This will be achieved in two ways:

- a) A partial shift in focus away from questions that consider the immediate future to ones that consider the medium term.
- b) A rolling programme of subject matter and consultation styles over the period of the strategy to ensure the best use is made of resources.

For the 2010-11 budget, Cabinet decided to explore resident's attitudes to fees and charges, together with attitudes to council tax levels and cuts in services.

Market research:

The Council commissioned Lake Market Research, a Maidstone based company, to carry out a survey looking at:

- a) public opinion on future council charges for parking, park & ride, waste removal and the Hazlitt Arts Centre;
- b) residents preference for increases in council tax levels or cuts in service;
- c) suggestions for cuts in service.

The research was undertaken face-to-face both in street and door-to-door covering urban and rural areas of Maidstone. Fieldwork was conducted between 12 October – 7 November 2009.

The questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes to administer depending on usage of services. Show cards were used to accompany the questionnaire. No incentive was offered as part of this research.

A total sample of 1,252 interviews were achieved for this study, of these 1,008 interviews were completed with Maidstone residents and 244 interviews completed with respondents living outside of Maidstone. Within the achieved 1252 sample, 254 interviews were completed online via the Lake Local Opinion panel.

All interviewing was conducted via CAPI (computer assisted personal interviewing) using a team of 14 local ISO20252/IQCS trained interviewers.

Main Findings:

Lake Market Research summarise the findings as follows:

Increase of council rates/charges:

- a) When given the choice of service cuts or increase in council tax and charges, the clear majority (63%) of residents wanted to see a cut in services. However, when asked to choose between no increase in council tax and charges under any circumstances and an acceptance that increases were not desirable but may have to be applied depending on where the cuts might be, 74% chose the latter course, 19% the former. The third choice of no service cuts but an increase in tax and charges was selected by 7%.
- b) The most common suggestion for cuts in service centred around economies in Council salaries and staff. 6% of residents specifically mentioned a reduction or cessation of 'artwork' projects.

- c) Residents were asked their views regarding 'pay as you use' versus increased tax for each 7 services. The overall trend was a clear preference for an increase in charge for use especially with services such as the Hazlitt, Park and Ride and town centre car parks. The one service where the majority view was for an increase in Council tax was for green waste removal.
- d) The overall level of increases in council tax and charges that residents would be prepared to pay to keep services as they are averaged 27.5p. This figure was based on the assumption (in the question asked) that an amount of 50p per week for each resident would be sufficient to keep services at the current level. This average varied across the different demographic groups but differences were relatively low ranging from 22.2p amongst lower wage earners, up to 32.9p for higher wage earners.

Parking Charges:

- a) The next section of the survey dealt with non food shopping in Maidstone and the possible affect of an increase in parking charges. Just over 90% of residents and 42% of non residents shopped in Maidstone. The cost of parking was considered quite important when using a car to shop in Maidstone but less important than the other 2 factors that respondents were asked to rate – ease of access and product range.
- b) Using the basis of parking being charged at a rate of 50p per hour shoppers were asked the point at which parking charges would have to go up before they stopped using a location. The acceptable increases were relatively large with the overall average for residents coming out at an average increase per hour of 38.1p compared with 43.0p for non residents.
- c) A comparison of acceptable increases by location revealed that Maidstone had the 5th lowest price increase 'tipping point' (the level of increase that would mean the location would no longer be used) with a figure of 40.9p. This compared with the best figure of 47.5p for Lakeside and the worst performer – Hempstead Valley with a figure of 30.3p. Overall, 39% of resident and 30% of non resident Maidstone shoppers would select the town as the first to stop using should the cost of parking be raised to the 'tipping point'.
- d) There is a high usage level of parking in Maidstone (93% of residents and 84% of non residents claim to use the town centre car parks) and about half the sample of both groups considered the cost of parking to be 'about right' while a further 30% considered it only 'a little too much'.
- e) 17% of residents and 19% of non residents considered parking to be 'much too much'.

Park & Ride:

- a) Respondents were then asked about the Park and Ride service. Of the 22% of residents and 35% of non residents who claimed to use one or other of the Park and Ride services, the clear majority (around 80%) considered that the cost of using the service was 'about right'. Only 4% of residents and 20% of non residents thought the service was 'too expensive'.
- b) By far the most common use of the service was for shopping in the town and the most important attributes were the fact that the parking was free and the convenience. When asked what they would do if there was no Park

and Ride service almost 60% of respondents stated that they would drive into the town and park while 30% of residents and 14% of non residents would use the normal bus service. However, almost 10% of residents and 15% of non residents thought that they would go elsewhere if the service was not available.

Bulky refuse collection:

- a) The next section of the questionnaire dealt with bulky refuse collection services. The clear majority of residents (73%) were aware of the bulky refuse freighters and just under half used them – of these 5% regularly and 44% occasionally. The household waste centre in Tovil was used by 74% of residents with 19% claiming to use it every month.
- b) The home collection of bulky items attained similar levels of awareness (80%) and most residents knew that a charge was made for this service. Just over half the sample of residents who were aware of this service had used it.
- c) Awareness of the wheelie bin hire was significantly lower at 62% of whom 25% had used the service. The proportion of awareness and use for the green waste sacks was 76% awareness and 50% usage with most of the sacks being purchased from local retailers (79%) or Council receptions (21%).
- d) Residents using these 3 services were then asked to rate the value for money of the charges that were made. The bulky item and wheelie bin services performed very well with poor value ratings of only 19% for the former and 12% for the latter. However, 55% of the green sack users considered the cost of the sacks to be poor value for money (28% very poor).

Hazlitt Arts Centre:

The final section of the questionnaire asked for the views of both residents and non residents towards the Hazlitt. 69% of residents and 37% of non residents had visited the theatre and both had visited similar types of events with the most common being pantomimes, plays and family shows. Perceived value for money at an average ticket price of £12.5 was quite high with only 10% rating it 'poor value' for money against 50% giving a 'good' and a further 41 % a 'fair value' for money rating.

Focus groups, Borough Update and website consultation:

The council carried out additional work during the eight week consultation period. This included - a feature in Borough Update and on the Council's website, and meetings with stakeholders – the Maidstone Cultural Group, Youth Forum, Older Persons Group, Transport Users Group, Town Centre Manager and the Chamber of Commerce. This work looked at:

- a) residents preference for increases in council tax levels or cuts in service
- b) suggestions for cuts in service

The results were consistent with the wider market research.

The Youth Forum has written to suggest:

- a) Put up council tax for all houses valued over £150,000. The higher rated the property, the higher the council tax.
- b) Request more money from the government.
- c) Dispose of the Golf Course.
- d) Introduce a small charge to go into the museum – 50p or £1.
- e) Put all chargeable services up by 5%.
- f) Introduce bi-weekly refuse rounds as long as people can have extra bins.

A total of 69 individual responses were received. Of these:

- a) 63% wanted the Council to cut services to limit any increase in council tax.
- b) 35% did not want the Council to cut services to limit any increase in council tax.
- c) 35% were not prepared to pay any extra in council tax.
- d) 15% were prepared to pay an extra 10p a week in council tax.
- e) 20% were prepared to pay an extra 20p a week in council tax.
- f) 29% were prepared to more than 20p a week in council tax.

The suggestions for savings were similar to the Market research exercise with the most common suggestion for cuts in service centred around economies in Council salaries and staff.

Attached at Appendix F to the report of Management Team is the formal response document from Lake Consulting.

Links to the Strategic Plan

The review of the Strategic Plan in preparation for 2010/11 is presented to Cabinet elsewhere on this agenda. The consultation with officers on the review has been progressed jointly by the Policy & Performance Team and Corporate Finance. The purpose of the coordinated approach was to improve the links between the strategic plan and the medium term financial strategy.

An updated draft of the medium term financial strategy document is attached as Appendix G to the report of Management Team. The final document will be published as an integral part of the budget and will therefore be directly linked to the strategic projection at Appendix B to the report of Management Team, the savings proposals at Appendix C to the report of Management Team, the capital programme at Appendix E to the report of Management Team and the full budget currently under production for consideration by Cabinet in February 2010. In addition to the direct linking of these documents, the medium term financial strategy does, where appropriate, contain links to individual key objectives in the strategic plan. These links enable Cabinet to be certain that the budget strategy outlined in this report is appropriately focused on the Council's key objectives.

The document will eventually contain cross references to the key objectives in the strategic plan through a numbering system which will be incorporated in the approved strategic plan

Alternatives considered and why rejected

A number of alternative assumptions were included in the report of Management Team and appendices for consideration.

The production of the budget for 2010/11 is an element of the statutory process of calculating the Council Tax for 2010/11. In addition, the completed and approved document is required to be robust and adequate under the Local Government Act 2003. A statement to this effect must be given by the Chief Financial Officer. On this basis the actions outlined in this report of Management Team must be considered.

Background Papers

Notification from DCLG on Revenue Grant Settlement 2010/11.

<p>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 Scrutiny Manager by: 23 December 2009</p>

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS

STRATEGIC PROJECTION - MOVEMENTS SINCE JULY 2009

	July 2009 £,000	December 2009 £,000	Movement £,000
PAY AND CONTRACTUAL COMMITMENTS	831	320	511
ADJUSTMENT FOR NATIONAL INITIATIVES			
RECYCLING	214	115	99
LOCAL PRIORITIES			
CIVIC WARDEN SERVICE	0	25	-25
COST OF BORROWING	150	0	150
LEISURE CENTRE REFURBISHMENT	0	275	-275
LOSS OF INCOME	200	250	-50
PARK & RIDE	0	200	-200
MINOR INITIATIVES			
GROWTH PROVISION	150	0	150
TOTAL	1,545	1,185	360

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
STRATEGIC PROJECTION DECEMBER 2009

2009/10 £,000		2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13 £,000	2013/14 £,000	2014/15 £,000
22,078	CURRENT SERVICE SPEND	22,295	22,811	23,103	23,419	23,748
	INFLATION INCREASES					
859	PAY AND CONTRACTUAL COMMITMENTS	320	464	329	564	692
	ADJUSTMENTS FOR CONTRACTUAL COMMITMENTS					
-80	ELECTIONS	80			-80	80
100	DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FEES					
80	REDUCTION IN BENEFIT GRANT	80	40	40	40	40
50	CAR PARK INCOME LOSS	50	50	50	50	50
	COBTREE FINAL PAYMENT	130	20			
	ADJUSTMENT FOR NATIONAL INITIATIVES					
-200	CONCESSIONARY FARES	200	150			
384	REFUSE & RECYCLING	115			300	
	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK		200	200		
	LOCAL PRIORITIES					
200	ASSET MANAGEMENT	25				
	CIVIC WARDEN SERVICE	25				
	HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY		35	30		
605	LOSS OF INTEREST	370	150	100	50	
	COST OF BORROWING		150	150	150	
	LEISURE CENTRE REFURBISHMENT	275	155			
	LOSS OF INCOME	250	100			
	PARK & RIDE	200				
-625	USE OF BALANCES 2009/10					
	MINOR INITIATIVES					
260	GROWTH PROVISION		150	150	150	150
23,711	TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT	24,415	24,475	24,152	24,643	24,760
	FINANCED BY					
9,463	RSG	9,510	9,415	9,321	9,228	9,136
17	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT	11				
12,815	COUNCIL TAX	13,290	13,688	14,098	14,520	14,956
22,295	TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE	22,811	23,103	23,419	23,748	24,092
1,416	ANNUAL SAVINGS TARGET	1,604	1,372	733	895	668

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
SUMMARY BY CABINET MEMBER	
Leader of the Council	7,000
Community Services	10,000
Corporate Services	823,290
Environment	421,370
Leisure & Culture	205,800
Regeneration	138,290
	<hr/> 1,605,750

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL	
Annual budget consultation	7,000
	<hr/> 7,000

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
COMMUNITY SERVICES	
CCTV Equipment Maintenance	7,400
Community Safety - Non Staff Advertising	2,600
	<hr/> 10,000

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
CORPORATE SERVICES	
Stage two of the 2008/09 Structure	160,000
Balance of pay provision from 2009/10 pay award	240,000
Efficiency within Chief Executives Support	9,000
Efficiency within Resources & Partnerships Directorate	245,540
Efficiency within Change and Environmental Services Directorate	33,850
Efficiency within Prosperity & Regeneration Directorate	5,000
Devolved Budget	55,000
Stop the use of Portacabins as Polling Stations at Elections	3,000
Using the Council's offices for the location of Postal vote issuing	500
Recharging Parish Councils for the cost of Elections	3,800
Reduce the allocation for by-elections.	10,000
Remove certain subsistence payments	5,000
No PC allowance for Councillors without a Council laptop	3,000
Various administrative savings in Member's Facilities	4,000
Hospitality after Council meetings	600
Reduce volume of printed diaries	1,000
Members training reduced	5,000
Various IT maintenance and software savings	39,000
	823,290

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
ENVIRONMENT	
Efficiency within Change and Environmental Services Directorate	68,870
Efficiency within Prosperity & Regeneration Directorate	8,300
Postage - Concessionary Fares	2,000
Public conveniences service changes	98,000
Waste, adjustments to structure of contract.	100,000
Street Cleansing, review of arrangement	120,000
Pest control income from outsourcing requests	12,000
Remove Health Promotion budget	6,070
Civic Warden Running Costs	6,130
	421,370

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
LEISURE & CULTURE	
Efficiency within Change and Environmental Services Directorate	62,800
Efficiency within Prosperity & Regeneration Directorate	3,000
Extra Income on the Panto / no buffet for civic night	7,000
Reduce Subsidy on the summer Shakespeare	20,000
Rental income from QORWK Regimental Museum Trust	2,000
Reduce Museum running expenses	21,000
Cemetery Headstone maintenance	20,000
Mote Park-other concessions	20,000
Crematorium	30,000
Leisure centre residual budgets	20,000
	205,800

BUDGET STRATEGY 2010/11 ONWARDS
SAVINGS PROPOSALS DECEMBER 2009

Description of Saving	Amount
REGENERATION	
Efficiency within Prosperity & Regeneration Directorate	93,290
B&B Homelessness - Reduced due to success of intervention	30,000
Peak of workload for Sustainable Community Strategy reduced	5,000
Reduce planning advertising budget	10,000
<hr/>	<hr/> 138,290

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 - 2012/13

NOVEMBER 2009

CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13
	£	£	£	£	£	£
EXPENDITURE						
Leader of the Council	2,202,070	2,868,541	26,460	0	0	0
Community Services	985,000	165,546	635,400	81,000	81,000	50,000
Corporate Services	7,118,270	1,409,699	351,350	370,000	370,000	330,000
Environment	1,326,440	117,641	1,011,120	0	0	0
Leisure & Culture	8,207,850	1,342,091	2,703,090	4,147,000	3,129,000	680,000
Regeneration	41,849,620	5,349,648	9,451,050	4,618,000	5,257,000	3,070,000
Less: Assumed Slippage / Additional Resources						
GRAND TOTAL - ALL PORTFOLIOS	61,689,250	11,253,166	14,178,470	9,216,000	8,837,000	4,130,000

FUNDING						
Revenue Support		741,588	1,144,000	1,080,000	630,000	630,000
Use of Capital Receipts - Asset Disposals		1,210,044	3,250,000	1,100,000	2,850,000	0
- Fremains		670,422	0	0	0	0
- Sale of Council Houses / VAT		981,038	0	0	0	0
- Previous Receipts/Carry Forward		5,524,862	5,010,140	2,130,300	471,986	0
Borrowing		0	0	0	1,944,014	1,771,000
Capital Grants and Contributions		1,983,647	4,774,330	4,905,700	2,941,000	1,729,000
Leasing (subject to appraisal)		141,565	0	0	0	0
GRAND TOTAL - ALL PORTFOLIOS		11,253,166	14,178,470	9,216,000	8,837,000	4,130,000

	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL							
Support for Grant Applications	26,460	0	26,460	0	0	0	
Office Accommodation	2,175,610	2,868,541	0	0	0	0	
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TOTAL	2,202,070	2,868,541	26,460	0	0	0	

	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
COMMUNITY SERVICES							
CCTV	830,000	135,661	604,400	50,000	50,000	50,000	
Village Hall Grants	155,000	29,885	31,000	31,000	31,000	0	
COMMUNITY SERVICES TOTAL	985,000	165,546	635,400	81,000	81,000	50,000	

	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
CORPORATE SERVICES							
Asset Management / Corporate Property	1,226,770	202,097	190,000	190,000	190,000	150,000	
Corporate Leasing Provision	1,091,600	141,565	0	0	0	0	
Fremfins Development	1,382,390	670,422	0	0	0	0	
Land/ Property Acquisitions	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	
Software / PC Upgrade and Replacement	1,317,510	395,615	158,100	180,000	180,000	180,000	
Upgrade Amenity lighting	100,000	0	3,250	0	0	0	
CORPORATE SERVICES TOTAL	7,118,270	1,409,699	351,350	370,000	370,000	330,000	

ENVIRONMENT	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
All Saints Link Road	50,000	0	34,550	0	0	0	
CCTV - Park & Ride Sites	60,000	0	60,000	0	0	0	
Environmental Improvements	32,030	503	30,520	0	0	0	
Improvements to the Council's Car Parks	70,000	44,221	70,000	0	0	0	
Land Drainage/Improvement to Ditches & Watercourses	161,410	0	50,670	0	0	0	
Recycling	913,000	34,338	763,960	0	0	0	
Replacement Litter Bins	40,000	38,579	1,420	0	0	0	
ENVIRONMENT TOTAL	1,326,440	117,641	1,011,120	0	0	0	

LEISURE & CULTURE	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Athletics Track	294,130	0	294,130	0	0	0	
Brenchley Gardens - Upgrading & Improvements	130,030	35,114	89,930	0	0	0	
Changing Rooms - Staplehurst	65,000	65,000	0	0	0	0	
Cobtree Golf Course	137,560	16,260	7,750	0	0	0	
Continued Improvements to Play Areas	602,860	223,226	197,340	125,000	125,000	50,000	
Exchange Studio Development	273,000	89,520	0	0	0	0	
Green Space Strategy	798,470	135,353	86,170	0	0	0	
Improvements to the Crematorium	40,000	1,296	37,800	0	0	0	
Leisure Centre Repairs & Improvements	1,557,050	155,354	342,000	630,000	630,000	630,000	
Leisure Centre Roof	385,000	0	570,830	0	0	0	
Mercury Abatement Works and Cremator Replacement	1,250,000	325,783	873,720	47,000	0	0	
Mote Park Car Park Resurfacing	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Mote Park Regeneration	1,840,000	76,810	30,000	783,000	1,723,000	0	
Museum Improvements (Access / Toilets)	304,800	165,675	86,000	2,527,000	616,000	0	
Small Scale Capital Works Programme	529,950	52,700	87,420	35,000	35,000	0	
LEISURE & CULTURE TOTAL	8,207,850	1,342,091	2,703,090	4,147,000	3,129,000	680,000	

REGENERATION	Total Capital Cost - Current Schemes	Actuals 2008/09	Adjusted Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11	Estimate 2011/12	Estimate 2012/13	Corporate Priorities
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Gypsy Site Improvements	771,510	8,906	0	624,000	0	0	
Growth Point - High Street Project	4,604,020	7,000	281,000	262,000	2,260,000	1,190,000	
Planning Delivery	152,760	63,663	22,530	0	0	0	
Renovation Grants	9,976,920	1,853,862	1,694,600	1,844,000	1,844,000	1,380,000	
South Maidstone Project	5,873,300	1,171,674	3,014,750	0	0	0	
Support for Social Housing	18,812,110	2,145,346	3,926,170	1,678,000	968,000	500,000	
Development & Promotion of Sites	304,000	0	147,000	50,000	25,000	0	
Employment Skills	60,000	0	40,000	20,000	0	0	
Response to Economic Downturn	55,000	0	15,000	20,000	20,000	0	
Regeneration Schemes	120,000	0	0	20,000	40,000	0	
Infrastructure Requirements	560,000	0	160,000	50,000	50,000	0	
Transport Improvements - Pump Priming	560,000	0	150,000	50,000	50,000	0	
Youth Café Refurbishment Works	0	99,197	0	0	0	0	
REGENERATION TOTAL	41,849,620	5,349,648	9,451,050	4,618,000	5,257,000	3,070,000	

KEY TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

- 1 - Prosperity
- 2 - Quality Living
- 3 - Quality, Decent Homes
- 4 - Lifelong Learning
- 5 - Healthy Environment
- 6 - Sustainable Communities

PROVISIONALLY ALLOCATED

	Total General Fund £000	Trading Accounts £000	Asset Replacement £000	Invest to Save £000	LDF Fund £000	Overall Total £000
Balance 31/3/2009	5,601	30	110	579	884	7,204
Less:						
Use in 2009/10 of 2008/09 carry forward	-1,341					-1,341
Use in 2009/10 of 2007/08 carry forward	-755					-755
Uncommitted Balance 31/3/09	3,505	30	110	579	884	5,108
Proposed Use 2009/10	-197	-20	-103	15	-227	-532
Projected Balance 31/03/2010	3,308	10	7	594	657	4,576
Proposed Use 2010/11	-200	10		-100	-353	-643
Projected Balance 31/03/2011	3,108	20	7	494	304	3,933

Survey of Maidstone Residents

Research Report

November 2009

Prepared by Lake Market Research

**This report complies with ISO20252
specifications**



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1.0 Objectives & Methodology

Maidstone Borough Council undertook a research survey looking at public opinion on future council charges in terms of parking, park & ride, waste removal and the Hazlitt Theatre. The research was undertaken face-to-face both in street and door-to-door covering urban and rural areas of Maidstone.

Fieldwork was conducted between 12th October – 7th November.

The questionnaire took between 10 and 15 minutes to administer depending on usage of services. Show cards were used to accompany the questionnaire. No incentive was offered as part of this research.

A total sample of 1,252 interviews were achieved for this study, of these 1,008 interviews were completed with Maidstone residents and 244 interviews completed with respondents living outside of Maidstone. Within the achieved 1252 sample, 254 interviews were completed online via the Lake Local Opinion panel.

All interviewing was conducted via CAPI (computer assisted personal interviewing) using our team of 14 local ISO20252/IQCS trained interviewers. Accompaniments and spot checks were carried out on our interviews by their local area supervisor as part of our ISO20252 requirements.

10% back-checking was conducted on each interviewer on completion of their shifts.

Percentages in tables may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2.0 Summary

Increase of council taxes / charges

When given the choice of service cuts or increase in council taxes and charges, the clear majority (63%) of residents wanted to see a cut in services. However, when asked to choose between no increase in taxes and charges under any circumstances and an acceptance that increases were not desirable but may have to be applied depending on where the cuts might be, 74% chose the latter course, 19% the former. The third choice of no service cuts but an increase in taxes and charges was selected by 7%.

The most common suggestion for cuts in service centred around economies in Council salaries and staff. 6% of residents specifically mentioned a reduction or cessation of 'artwork' projects.

Residents were asked their views regarding 'pay as you use' versus increased tax for each 7 services. The overall trend was a clear preference for an increase in *charge for use* especially with services such as the Hazlitt, Park and Ride and town centre car parks. The one service where the majority view was for an increase in Council tax was for *green waste removal*.

The overall level of increases in council tax and charges that residents would be prepared to pay to keep services as they are averaged 27.5p. This figure was based on the assumption (in the question asked) that an amount of 50p per week for each resident would be sufficient to keep services at the current level. This average varied across the different demographic groups but differences were relatively low ranging from 22.2p amongst the DE class group up to 32.9p for the AB group.

Parking Charges

The next section of the survey dealt with non food shopping in Maidstone and the possible affect of an increase in parking charges. Just over 90% of residents and 42% of non residents shopped in Maidstone. The *cost of parking* was considered quite important when using a car to shop in Maidstone but less important than the other 2 factors that respondents were asked to rate – *ease of access* and *product range*.

Using the basis of parking being charged at a rate of 50p per hour shoppers were asked the point at which parking charges would have to go up before they stopped using a location. The acceptable increases were relatively large with the overall average for residents coming out at an average increase per hour of 38.1p compared with 43.0p for non residents.

A comparison of acceptable increases by location revealed that Maidstone had the 5th lowest price increase 'tipping point' (the level of increase that would mean the location would no longer be used) with a figure of 40.9p. This compared with the best figure of 47.5p for Lakeside and the worst performer – Hempstead Valley with a figure of 30.3p. Overall, 39% of resident and 30% of non resident Maidstone shoppers would select the town as the first to stop using should the cost of parking be raised to the 'tipping point'.

There is a high usage level of parking in Maidstone (93% of residents and 84% of non residents claim to use the town centre car parks) and about half the sample of both groups considered the cost of parking to be 'about right' while a further 30% considered it only 'a little too much'. 17% of residents and 19% of non residents considered parking to be 'much too much'.

Park & Ride

Respondents were then asked about the Park and Ride service. Of the 22% of residents and 35% of non residents who claimed to use one or other of the Park and Ride services, the clear majority (around 80%) considered that the cost of using the service was 'about right'. Only 4% of residents and 20% of non residents thought the service was 'too expensive'.

By far the most common use of the service was for *shopping in the town* and the most important attributes were the fact that the *parking was free* and the *convenience*. When asked what they would do if there was no Park and Ride service almost 60% of respondents stated that they would drive into the town and park while 30% of residents and 14% of non residents would use the normal bus service. However, almost 10% of residents and 15% of non residents thought that they would go elsewhere if the service was not available.

Bulky refuse collection

The next section of the questionnaire dealt with the bulky refuse and green waste collection services. The clear majority of residents (73%) were aware of the bulky refuse freighters and just under half used them – of these 5% regularly and 44% occasionally. The household waste centre in Tovil was used by 74% of residents with 19% claiming to use it every month.

The home collection of bulky items attained similar levels of awareness (80%) and most residents knew that a charge was made for this service. Just over half the sample of residents who were aware of this service had used it.

Awareness of the wheelie bin hire was significantly lower at 62% of whom 25% had used the service. The proportion of awareness and use for the green waste sacks was 76% awareness and 50% usage with most of the sacks being purchased from local retailers (79%) or Council receptions (21%).

Residents using these 3 services were then asked to rate the value for money of the charges that were made. The bulky item and wheelie bin services performed very well with poor value ratings of only 19% for the former and 12% for the latter. However, 55% of the green sack users considered the cost of the sacks to be poor value for money (28% very poor).

Hazlitt

The final section of the questionnaire asked for the views of both residents and non residents towards the Hazlitt. 69% of residents and 37% of non residents had visited the theatre and both had visited similar types of events with the most common being pantomimes, plays and family shows. Perceived value for money at an average ticket price of £12.5 was quite high with only 10% rating it 'poor value' for money against 50% giving a 'good' and a further 41 % a 'fair value' for money rating.

3.0 Main findings

The following section reports on the results of every question in the questionnaire. The results are reported in terms of bar charts to show overall results and relevant differences amongst the various demographic groups and in some cases tabulations where it is necessary to show more complex data. In the case of the latter, the percentages are always to be read vertically with the sample size for each demographic group shown across the top of the tabulation.

These tabulations also show statistical differences at the 95% and 99% level by placing * for the former and ** for the latter. The basis for this calculation is described in full in the appendix to this report.

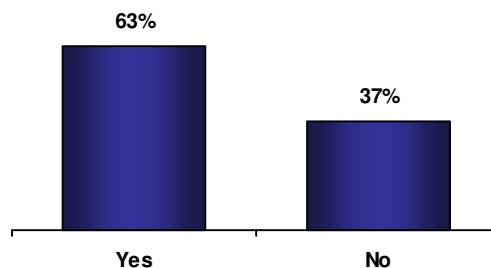
The main results are also described in words and those findings that show statistically relevant differences between population groups are commented upon.

The order of the report does not necessarily follow the order of the questionnaire.

3.1 Perceived preference for increase charges/ council taxes or reduce services

Q3 Do you want Maidstone Council to make efficiency savings and cuts in services to limit any increase in its council tax?

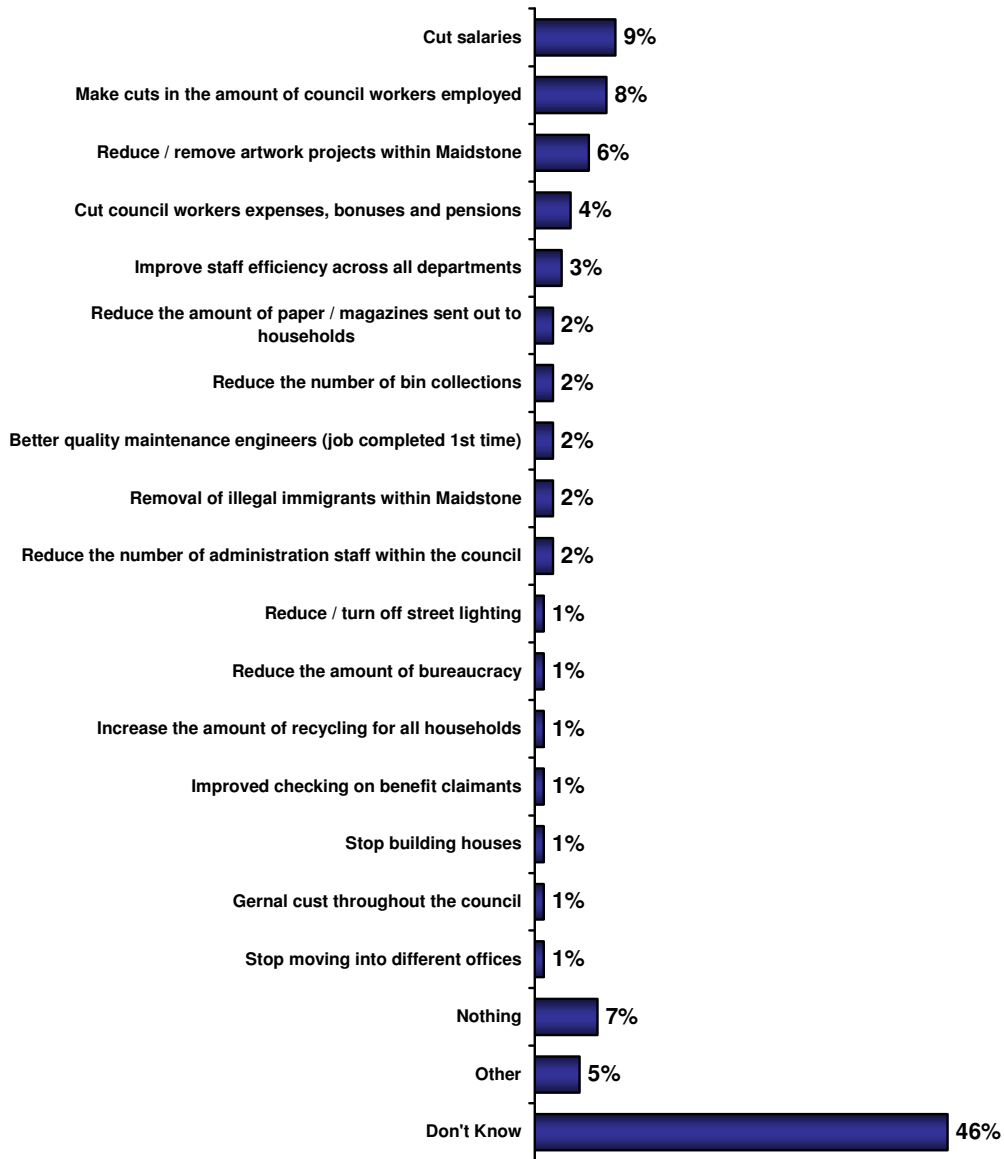
63% of all residents wanted the Council to make saving efficiencies and cuts in services to limit council tax increases and 37% did not. There were no statistically significant differences between the population groups. Those in the 16-34 year old age group were more likely to want cuts to be made while those in the AB class group were less likely to hold that view.



Base: All residents – 1008

Q4: Where do you think the council could make savings?

The complete list of responses is shown below:

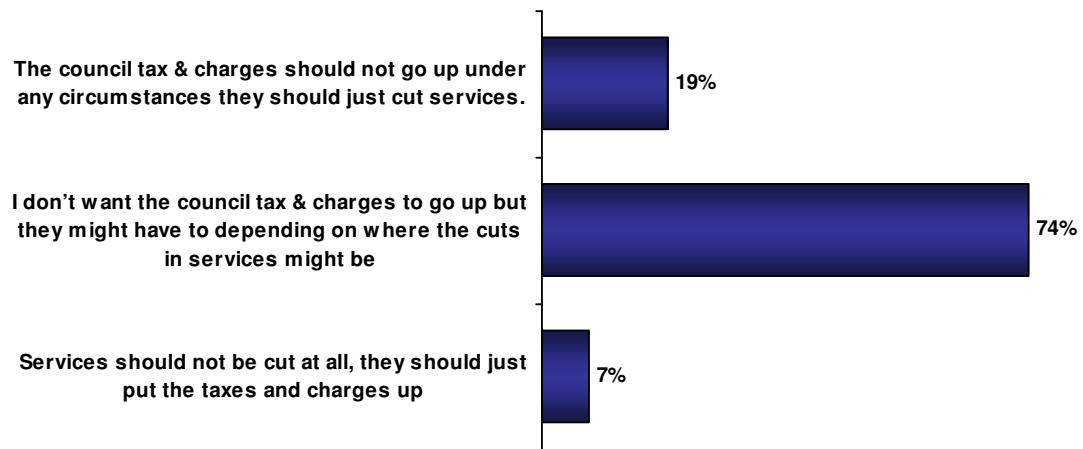


Base: All residents – 1008

Q5. In your opinion, do you think the council should put up taxes or make cuts in services - which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion?

Residents were then asked a similar question but one that had an additional answer that could reflect a compromise middle view.

To this question the clear majority – 74%, agreed that council charges may have to go up depending on where the service cuts might be. The C1 class group were significantly less likely to suggest the first statement while those aged 16-34 were significantly more likely.

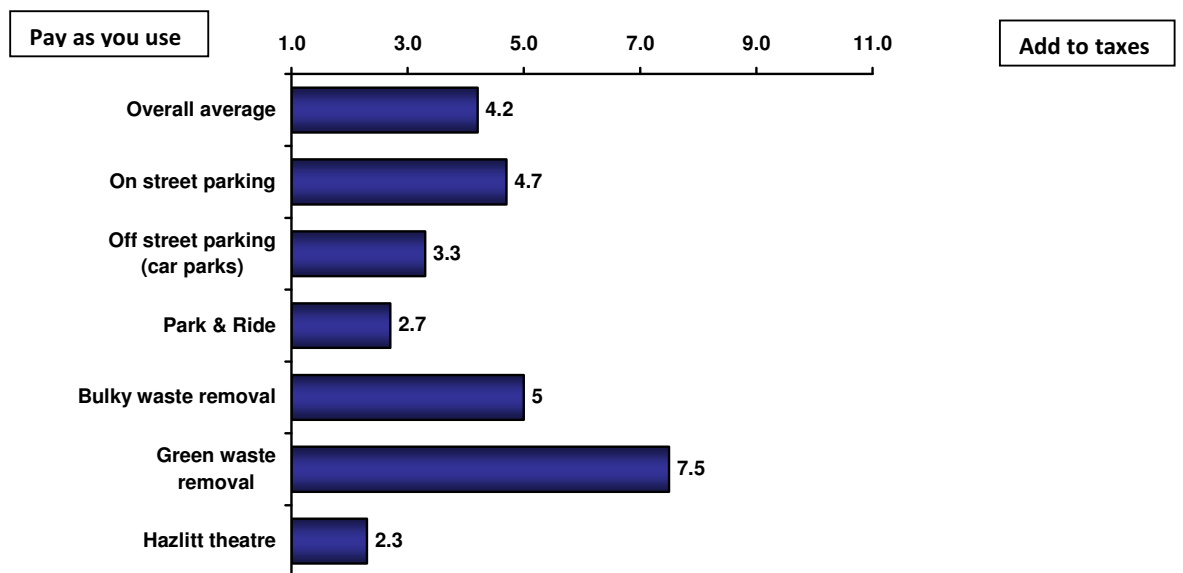


Base: All residents – 1008

APPENDIX F

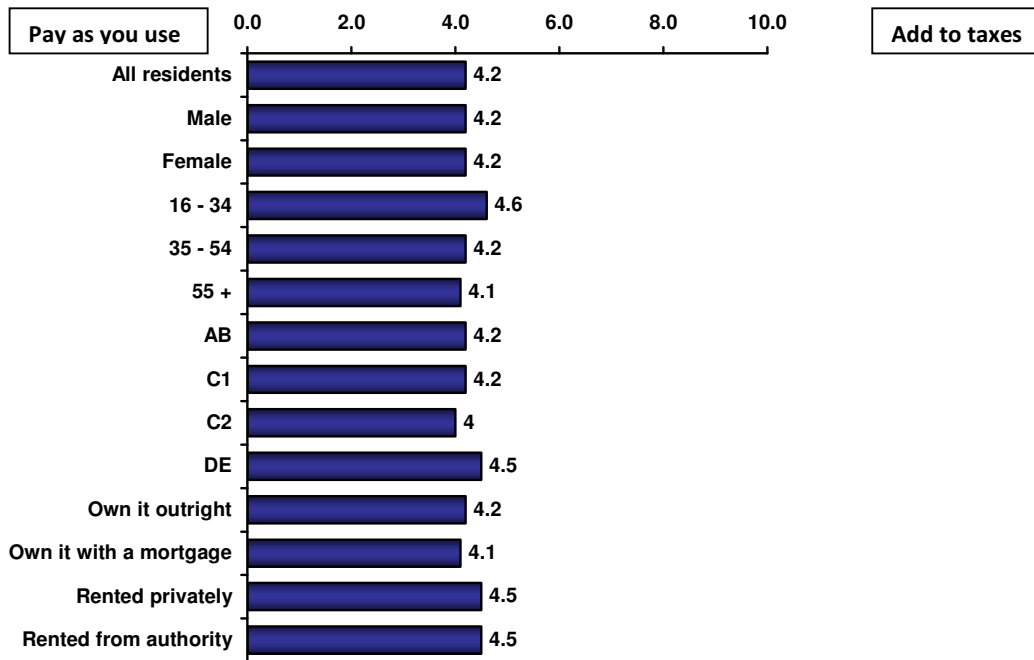
Q2 Preference for pay as you use compared with increases in council tax for each of the Council's services. A score of 0 means that respondents felt that all additional revenue should be raised by increasing 'pay as you use' while a score of 10 means that additional revenue should be raised from an increase in council taxes. The numbers in between would be ticked if respondents' views fell somewhere in between?

The average score by category is shown below with the Hazlitt theatre showing a score of 1.3 indicating that most people would like this to be 'pay as you use' while Green waste removal achieved the highest score of 7.5 indicating that on balance most people would like to see this put on the council tax (for the purposes of the scoring, 0 is scored as 1 through to 11 for the score of 10, the mid point score would therefore be 6.0).



Base: All residents – 1008

The following chart shows the differences between the various population groups. Compared with the overall average score of 4.2 the 16-34 year old age group and those in the DE socio-economic class group were significantly more likely to want an increase in taxes compared with other groups.



Base: All residents – 1028

The table below shows the breakdown by individual category and shows that the highest score was 8.0 for green waste removal amongst the 16-34 year age group while the lowest was 2.0 for the Hazlitt theatre amongst the DE class group. .

	Total	Gender		Age group			Social class				Home ownership			
		Male	Female	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	AB	C1	C2	DE	Own it outright	Own it with a mortgage	Rented privately	Rented from authority
Total	1008	499	509	230	315	463	182	344	191	281	399	292	155	159
On street parking	4.7	4.5	4.9	5.3*	4.8	4.3*	4.2	4.5	4.7	5.2*	4.4	4.4	5.3*	5.3*
Car parks	3.3	3.0*	3.6*	3.7	3.4	3.1*	2.8*	3.1	3.3	3.9**	3.1	2.9*	4.0*	4.0**
Park & Ride	2.7	2.9	2.5	3.0	2.4*	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.3*	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.4	3.0
Bulky waste removal	5.0	5.2	4.8	5.7**	5.0	4.6*	4.8	4.9	4.7	5.5*	4.9	4.8	5.2	5.3
Green waste removal	7.5	7.5	7.4	8.0*	7.5	7.2	7.8	7.5	7.0	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.9	7.1
Hazlitt Theatre	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.3
Average score	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.6**	4.2	4.1*	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.5*	4.2	4.1	4.5	4.5

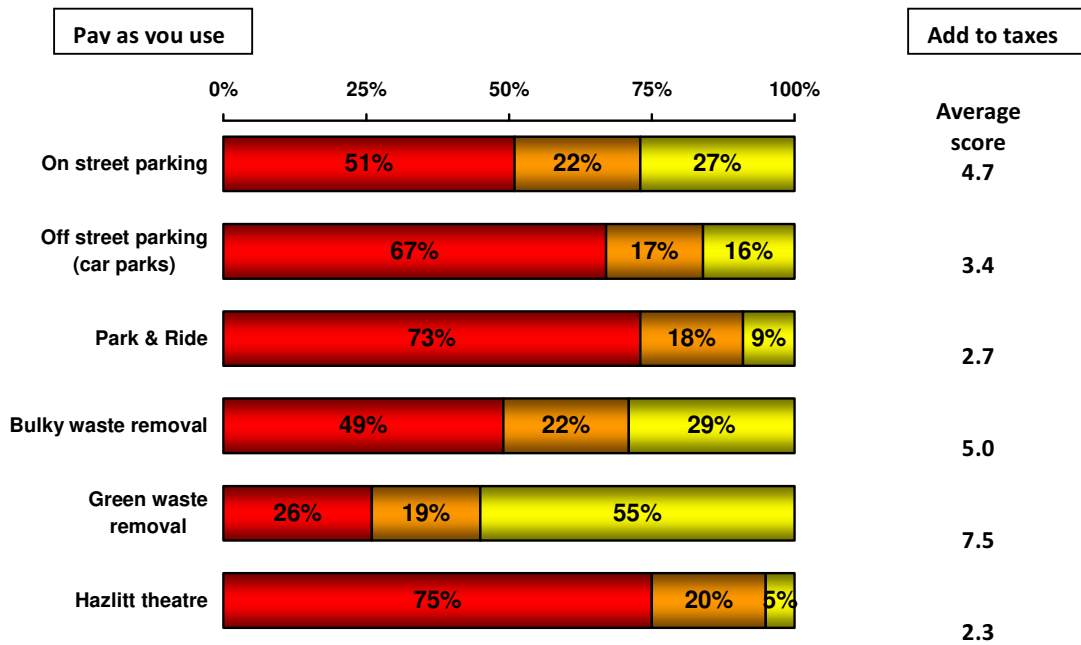
Base: All Maidstone residents

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

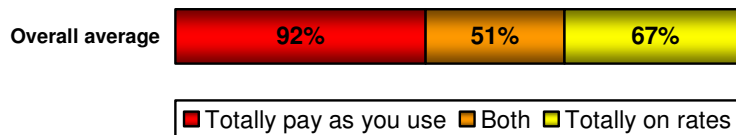
The following chart shows the percentage distribution by score. The red section shows the percentage giving a score of 0 (totally 'pay as you use'), the orange section shows the proportion giving a score between 1 and 9 while the yellow section shows the proportion giving a score of 10 (totally on the taxes).

This chart shows that 75% of all respondents gave the Hazlitt a score of 0, 20% gave a score between 2 and 9 and 5% gave a score of 10. By comparison only 26% gave a score of 0 for Green waste removal, 19% gave a score between 2 and 9 and 55% gave a score of 10.

The separate bar at the bottom of this chart shows the proportion of residents giving an answer in any of the 3 groups and shows that while each individual section performance (main bar chart) tended to show a clear majority at one end of the scale or the other, over 50% of residents at some time gave a response that suggested that they could hold a 'compromise' position.

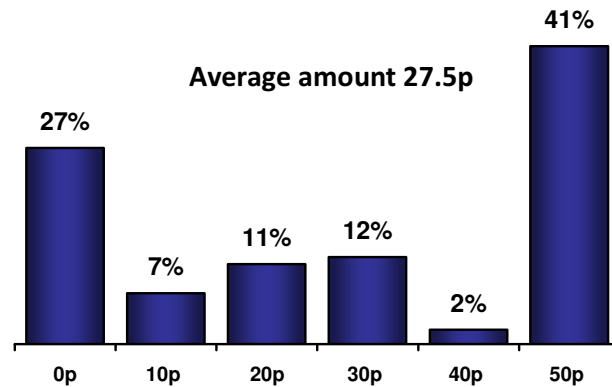


The overall average show the % of residents in each of the 3 groups for any category



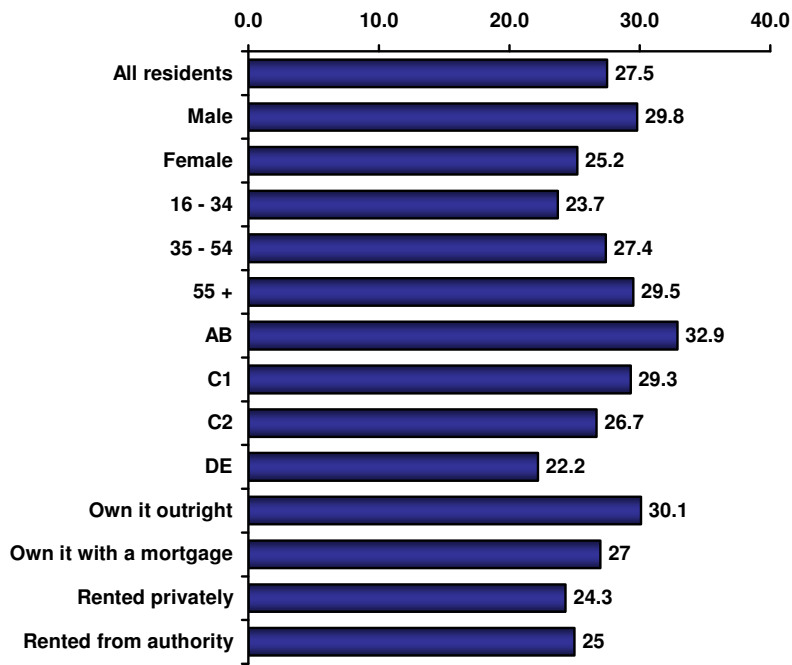
Q6. If I was to say that to keep services as they are the council would need to raise an extra 50p per week from each resident, how much of this would you be prepared to pay to keep services as they are?

27% were not prepared to spend any more to avoid service cuts while 41% were prepared to spend the full 50p. The overall average spend was 27.5p.



Base: All residents – 1008

This average spend varied between the population groups and is shown in the graph overleaf. Against the overall average of 27.5p, response was contained within a range of between the lowest of 22.2p for the DE class group up to the highest of 32.9p for the AB class group.

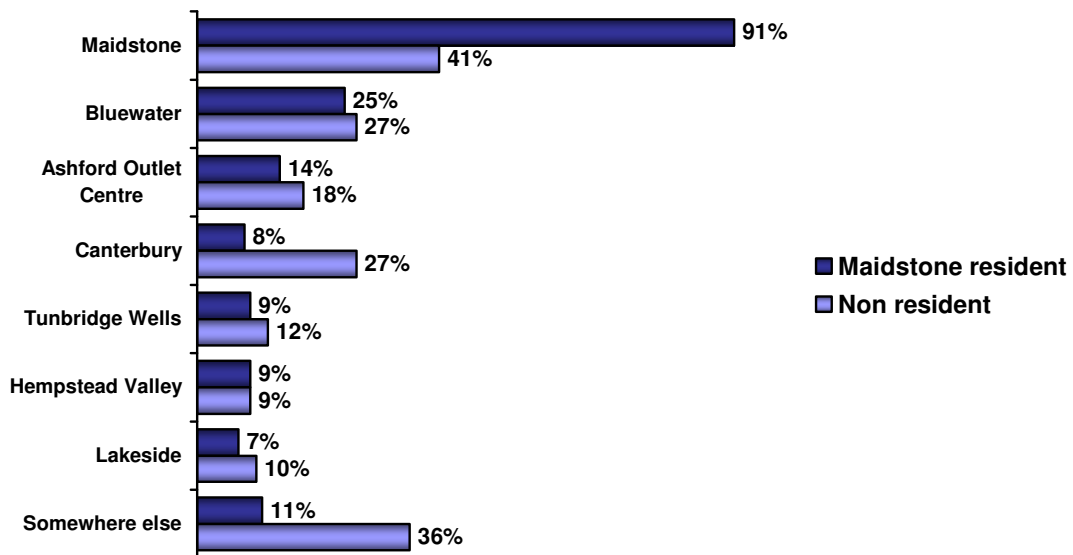


Base: All residents – 1008

3.2 Shopping in Maidstone and the perceived effects of an increase in parking charges

Q7 Looking at this list, where do you normally do your non-food shopping?

91% of the residents interviewed and 41% of the non residents claimed to normally do their non food shopping in Maidstone. Of the named areas the most popular location outside of Maidstone was Bluewater which was use by 25% of residents. For non residents, the most popular were Canterbury and Bluewater used by 27%.



Base: All respondents – 1252

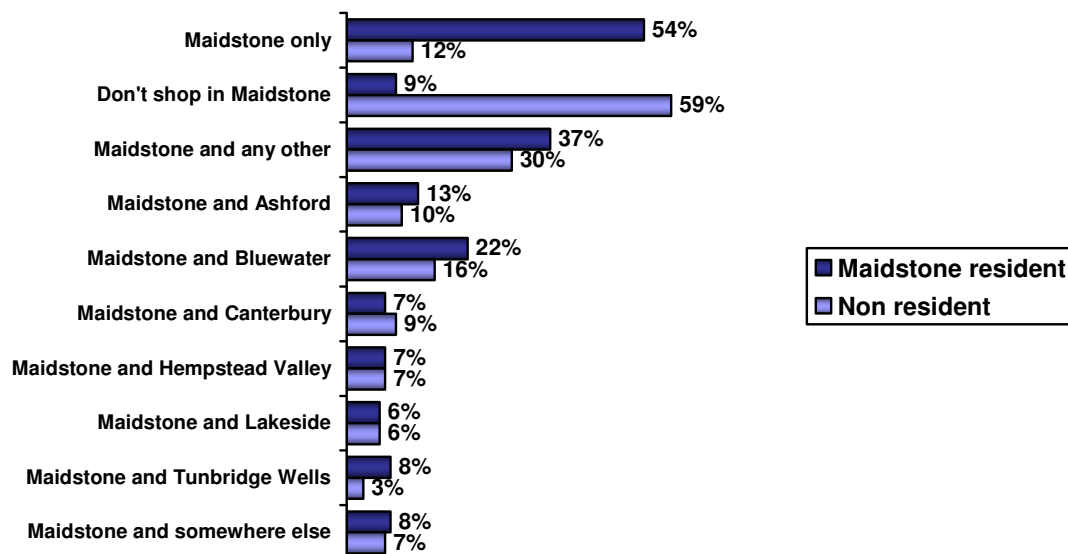
The table overleaf shows the demographic differences between those using the various sites. Maidstone tended to be used more by the 16-34 age group and the DE class group

	Total	Maidstone	Bluewater	Ashford	Canterbury	Tunbridge Wells	Hempstead	Lakeside	Somewhere else
Total	1252	1020	324	185	150	122	108	92	200
Male	48%	48%	47%	48%	45%	42%	40%	45%	57%*
Female	52%	52%	53%	52%	55%	58%	60%	55%	43%**
16 - 34	22%	24%**	24%	16%*	19%	9%**	11%**	25%	17%*
35 - 54	33%	32%	40%**	42%**	33%	34%	29%	38%	35%
55 +	44%	44%	36%**	42%	49%	57%**	60%**	37%	49%
AB	20%	18%**	27%**	22%	34%**	39%**	24%	20%	27%**
C1	34%	34%	40%*	36%	37%	34%	38%	38%	31%
C2	19%	20%	20%	26%**	13%*	13%	19%	23%	17%
DE	26%	28%**	11%**	15%**	13%**	13%**	18%*	17%*	24%

Base: All respondents - 1252

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

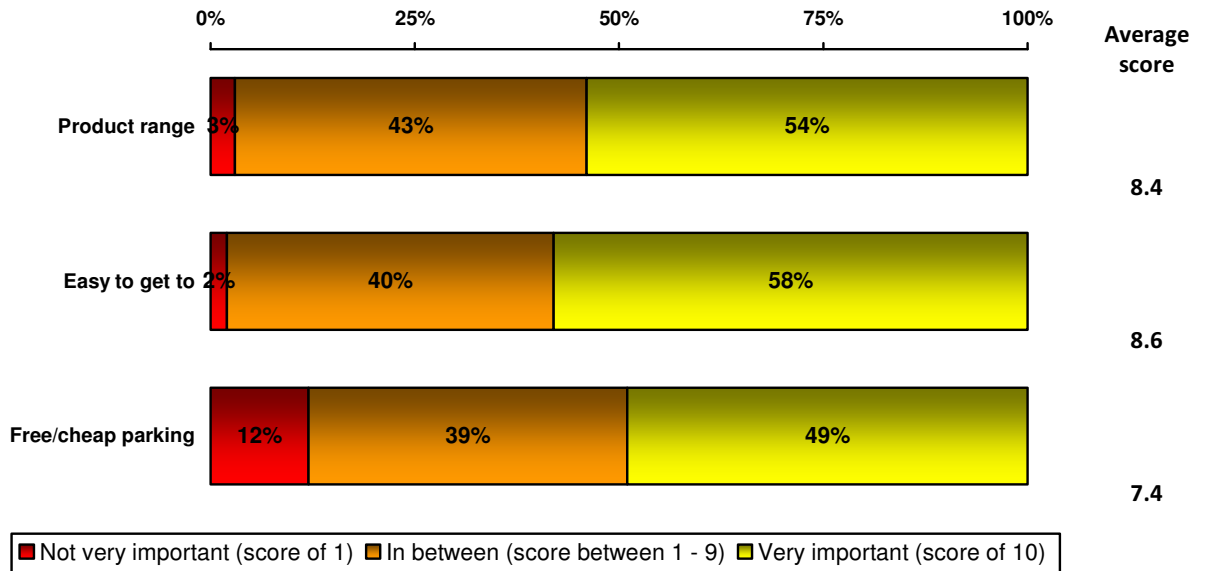
The following chart summarises the combination of areas used by respondents for non food shopping. 54% of Maidstone residents claimed to only shop in Maidstone. The most common named areas used as well as Maidstone were Bluewater – 22% and Ashford – 13%.



Base: All respondents - 1252

Q10a Rating of importance when shopping for non food items.

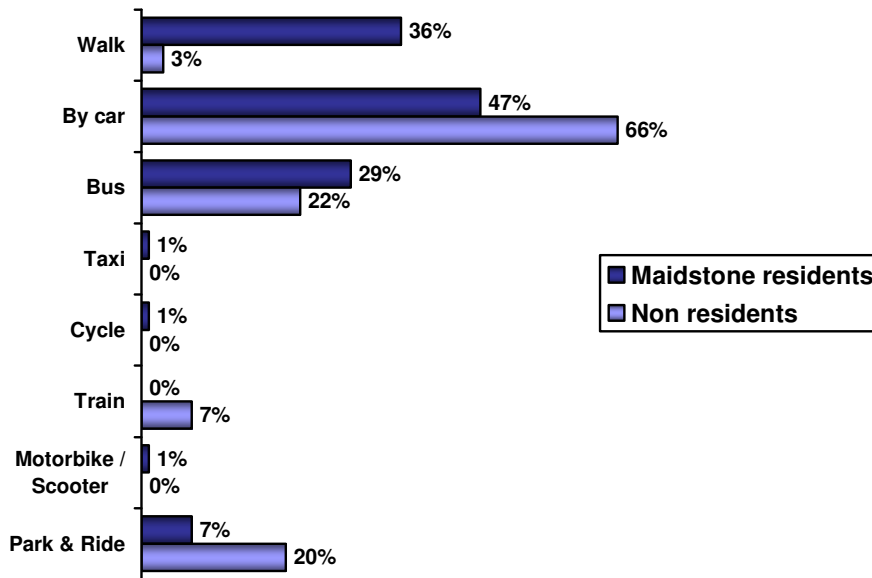
Respondents were asked to rate three factors by giving a score out of 10 where 1 = not very important, 10 very important. The scores 2 – 9 were given for views lying between these two extremes. Free/cheap parking was considered the least important of the 3 factors.



Base: All respondents – 1252

Q10 What method of transport do you use when going into Maidstone for non-food shopping?

The most common form of transport into Maidstone for non food shopping was the car used by 47% of residents and 66% of non residents. The bus was used by 29% of residents and 22% of non residents while 7% of the former and 20% of the latter used Park and Ride. Over a third of residents – 36% claimed to walk into the town.

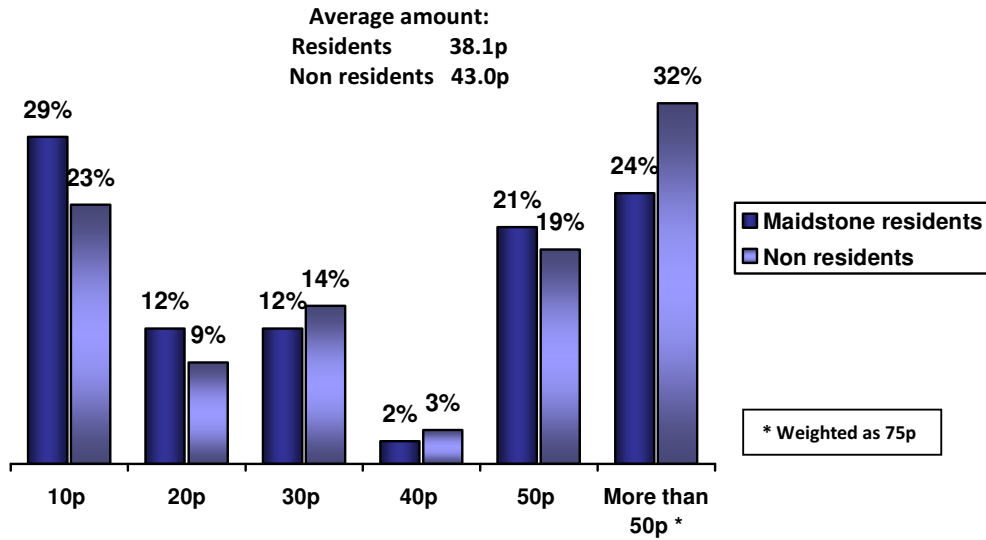


Base: All using Maidstone for non food shopping - 967

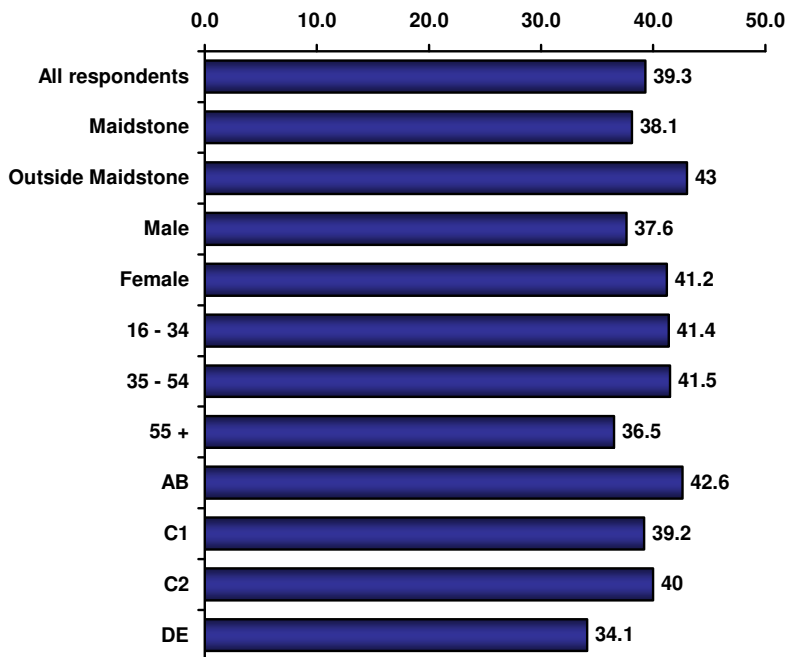
Q12 If it costs 50p per hour to park, how much would it have to go up before you would stop using the location for shopping?

Those using a car to go into Maidstone for non food shopping were asked how much parking would have to go up per hour (assuming a current cost of 50p per hour) before they stopped using a location. The 2 charts below show the distribution, average amount and the difference in average amount by demographic group. The ‘tipping point’ for residents was lower than non residents at 38.1p for the former and 43p for the latter.

Variance by demographic group showed a logical pattern with the lowest tipping points registered for the DE class group at 34.1p and those aged 55+ at 36.5p while the highest were for the AB class group at 42.6 and the 35-54 age group at 41.5p.



Base: All using the car for Maidstone non food shopping - 617



Base: All using the car for Maidstone non food shopping - 617

Q11 If the cost of parking were to be significantly increased or applied where it was currently free, which non food shopping location would be the first you would stop visiting?

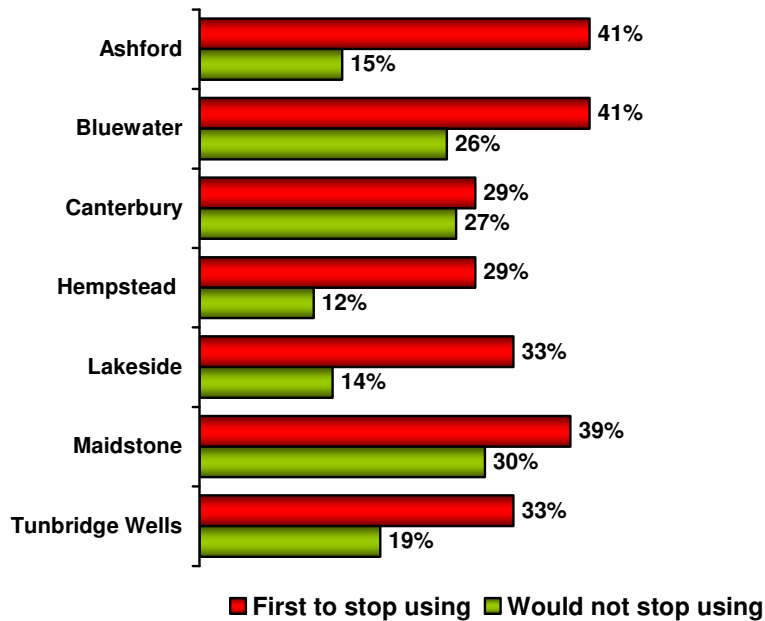
The chart overleaf shows the relative propensity for shoppers to stop using certain locations should the cost of parking be increased or introduced. The relative tipping point for each location is shown on the right side of the chart. Those residents who only use Maidstone are excluded from the analysis for ease of comparison.

Maidstone, Ashford and Bluewater appear to be the most sensitive to a parking cost increase. Obviously the situation for Bluewater is different to the other two because for Bluewater, users are responding to the concept of an introduction of parking fees where currently there are none. Maidstone appears to be the most at risk of the three because its 'tipping point' is higher at 40.9p than the other two. Hempstead Valley has the equal lowest proportion of 'first to stop using' although its tipping point is also the lowest at 30.3p.

At the bottom of the tipping point scale on the right is the tipping point for residents who only shop at Maidstone. This is a relatively low 33.0p although this is as much a reflection of disposable income than the poor performance of Maidstone as a shopping area.

Maidstone does come out top on the proportion who would not stop using a location. However given that the interviewing was being carried out in Maidstone, this proportion would be expected to be comparatively high.

All shopping by car for non food shopping



Price increase tipping point (average – 42.0p)
42.7
43.3
38.9
30.3
47.5
40.9
41.7
*33.0

Base: All respondents using car for non food shopping in Maidstone – 539
(Maidstone data excludes those only shopping in Maidstone)

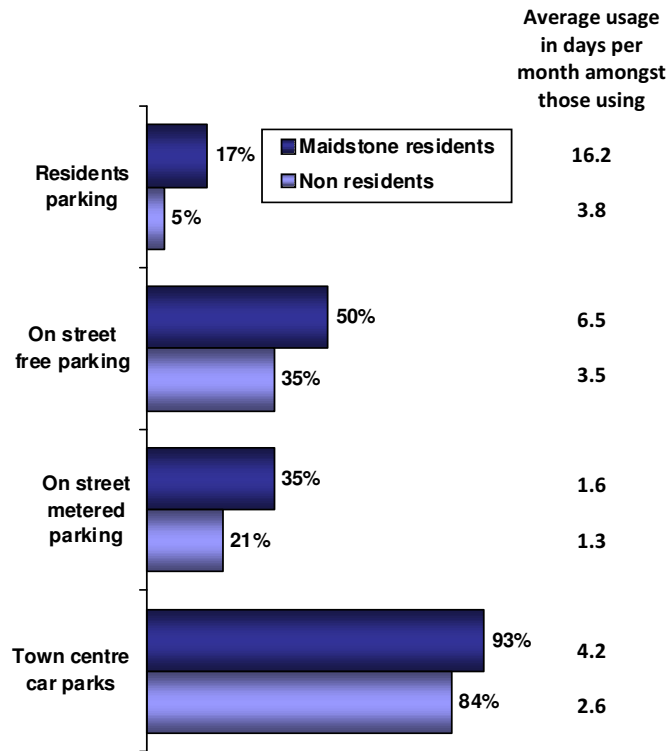
* This is the tipping point for Maidstone residents who only shop in Maidstone

Q13a Do you use any of the following in and around Maidstone? And how often do you use each?

The chart overleaf shows the percentage of residents and non residents using the various sources of parking. For residents, the use of town centre parking was nearly three times as popular as on street metered parking with usage rates of 93% and 35% respectively. For non residents the differential was 4 to 1 in favour of the car parks.

Frequency of parking use in days per month is shown to the right of the graph. Non residents used car parks twice as frequently per month as ‘on street’ metered parking with usage rates of 2.6 days and 1.3 days per month respectively.

The two tables below the graph shows the demographic differences in parking habits.



Base: All respondents using car – 644

Percentage using each type of parking

	Gender		Age group			Social class				Home ownership				
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	AB	C1	C2	DE	Own outright	Own with mortgage	Rented privately	Rented from authority
Total	640	332	307	103	259	278	167	219	132	112	256	268	58	50
Residents parking	91 14%	42 13%	49 16%	17 17%	44 17%	30* 11%	15* 9%	32 15%	25 19%	19 17%	23** 9%	40 15%	14* 24%	13* 26%
On street free parking	294 46%	173** 52%	121** 39%	56 54%	120 46%	118 42%	69 41%	96 44%	66 50%	59 53%	106 41%	126 47%	30 52%	29 58%
On street metered parking	198 31%	118** 36%	80* 26%	32 31%	91 35%	75 27%	56 34%	66 30%	44 33%	30 27%	68 27%	96* 36%	18 31%	15 30%
Town centre car parks	578 90%	296 89%	281 92%	96 93%	242* 93%	240** 86%	150 90%	195 89%	124 94%	100 89%	221** 86%	248 93%	54 93%	47 94%

Base: All using car in Maidstone for non food shopping **140**

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

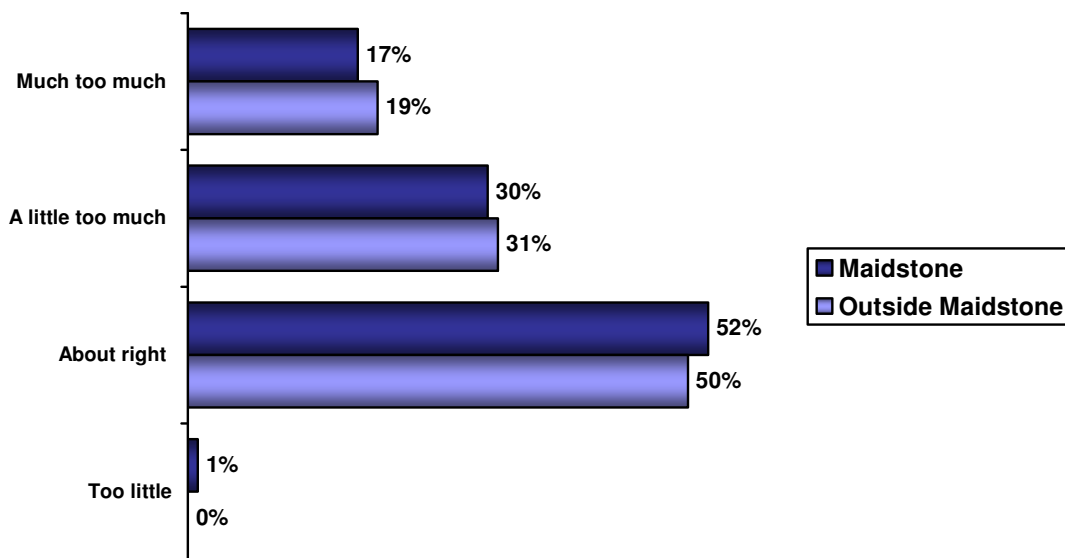
Frequency of use – days per month

	Total	Gender		Age group			Social class				Home ownership			
		Male	Female	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	AB	C1	C2	DE	Own outright	Own mortgage	Rented privately	Rented from authority
Residents parking	14.9	16.5	13.6	18.1	14.3	14.1	15.9	11.3	17.2	17.3	12.3	11.2*	26.5	19.7
On street free parking	5.9	6.5	5.1	8.8**	5.0	5.5	4.8	6.3	5.2	7.3	3.9**	6.6	7.9	8.3
On street metered	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.2	1.5	1.3	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.0	1.7
Town centre car parks	3.8	4.1	3.5	5.3**	3.6	3.3*	3.8	3.7	3.7	4.2	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.5

Base: All using residents parking in Maidstone for non food shopping
 95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q14 Generally speaking, would you say the cost of parking in Maidstone town centre is...?

At the end of the parking section, respondents were asked to give a general rating of the cost of parking in Maidstone. About half the sample of both residents and non residents felt the cost of parking was about right with a further 30% rating it as a ‘little too much’. 7% of residents and 19% of non residents felt that the cost was ‘much too much’.



Base: All respondents using car – 391

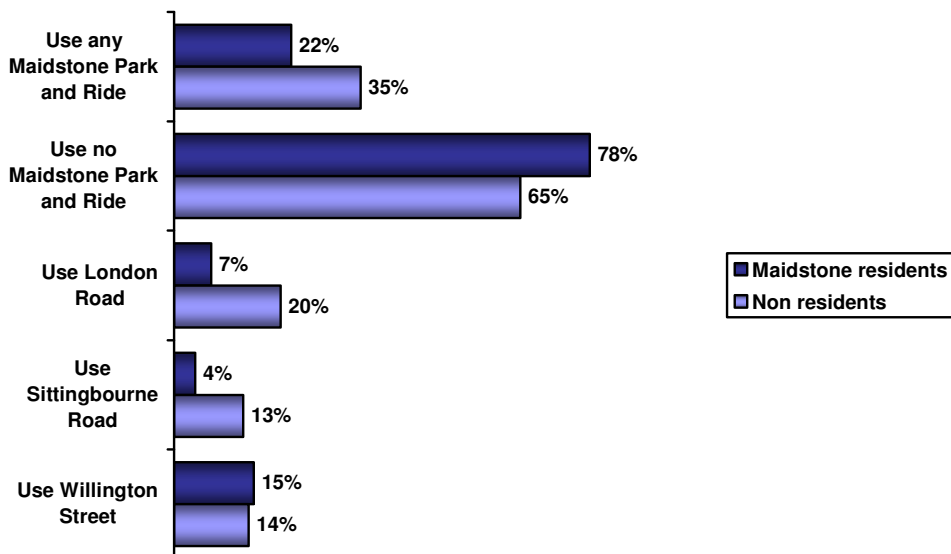
3.3 Use of and attitudes towards Park and Ride

Q18 How often have you used each of the following Park & Ride sites, if ever? - London Road (behind DFS)

The following chart shows the proportion of respondents who use the various Park and Ride sites. Overall 22% of residents and 35% of non residents claim to have used one of the Maidstone sites.

The London road site was the most commonly used by non residents with 20% claiming use while amongst residents Willington street was used the most.

The table following the chart contains frequency of use and shows the relatively low frequency. The mean score at the bottom of the table represents the average number of occasions that the site is used by users and shows that the highest frequency was attained by residents using Willington street on 2.6 occasions a month.



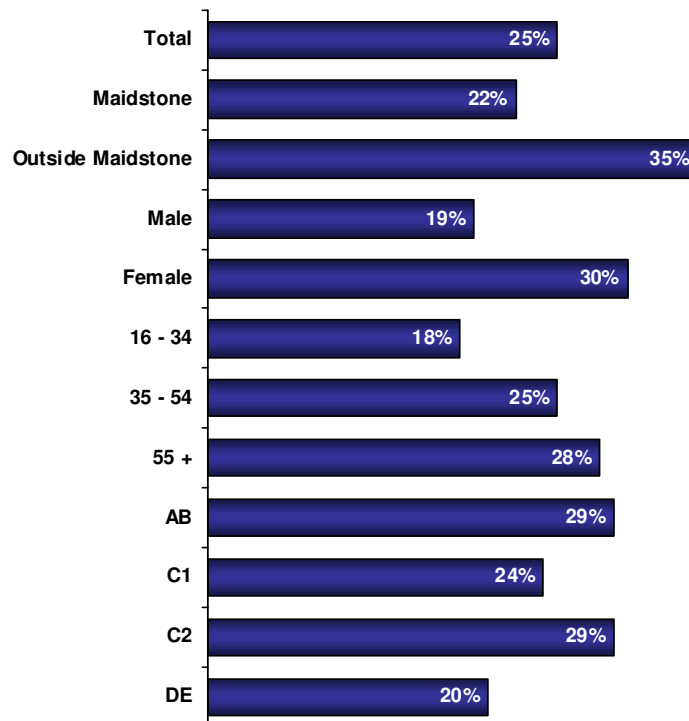
Base: All respondents – 1252

		London Road		Sittingbourne		Willington	
		Maid stone	Ou tside	Maid stone	Ou tside	Maid stone	Ou tside
Total		1008	244	1008	244	1008	244
Every day	(30.0)	*%	-%	*%	*%	*%	-%
2 - 3 times a week	(10.0)	1%	1%	*%	1%	2%	-%
Once a week	(4.0)	1%	1%	*%	-%	2%	-%
2 - 3 times a month	(2.5)	1%	1%	*%	1%	1%	1%
Once a month	(1.0)	1%	4%	*%	3%	2%	3%
Less often	(0.5)	4%	13%	3%	8%	8%	10%
Never/not aware	(0.0)	93%	80%	96%	87%	85%	86%
Mean score amongst all users		2.5	1.3	2.0	2.3	2.6	0.8

Base: All respondents - 1252

APPENDIX F

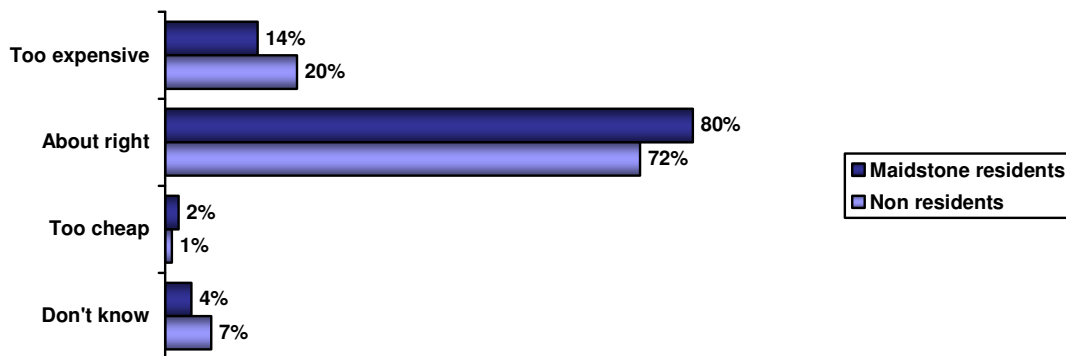
The chart below shows the percentage of the various demographic groups that claim use of any of the Park and Ride sites. Usage was significantly higher for females, AB and C1 class groups and lower amongst males, the 16-34 age group and the DE class group.



Base: All respondents – 1252

Q20 Do you think the park and ride fare is...?

Only 14% of residents and 20% of non residents felt that the Park and Ride fare was 'too expensive'. There were little significant differences between the various population groups.

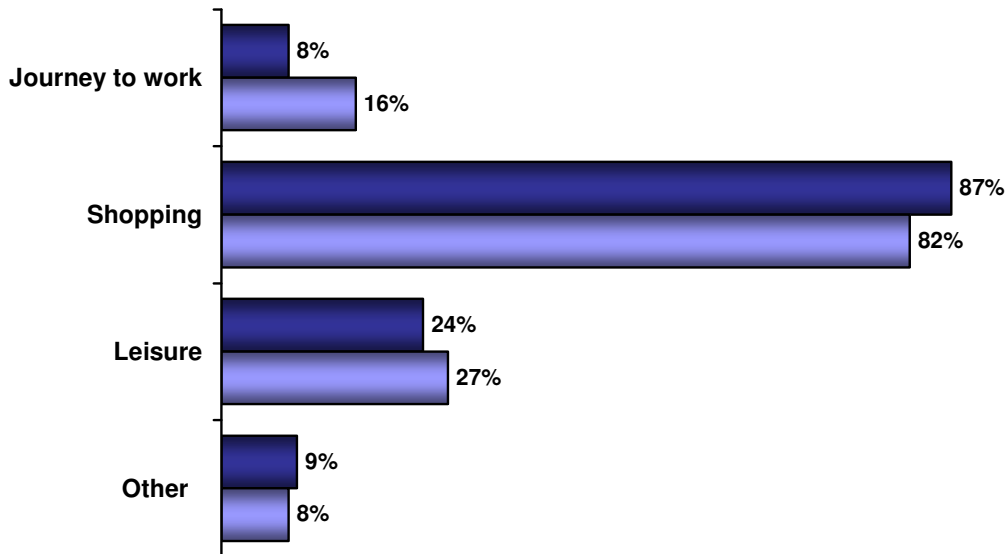


Base: All respondents using Park and Ride – 310

Q22 What do you use the park & ride service for?

The clear majority of both residents and non residents used the Park and Ride service for shopping in Maidstone with 87% of Maidstone residents and 82% of non residents using it for this purpose.

The table below the chart shows that males were significantly more likely to use the service for leisure purposes than females while the 55+ year old age group were significantly more likely at 91% to use the service for shopping.



Base: All respondents using Park and Ride – 310

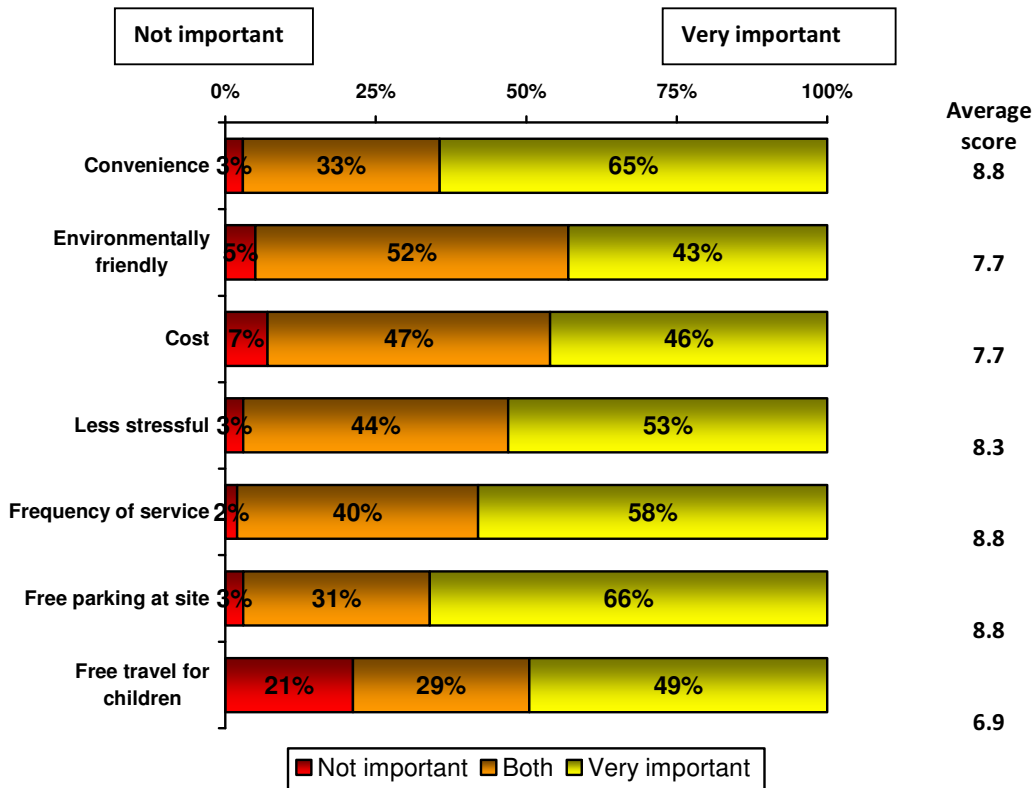
	Residency			Gender		Age group		
	Maidstone	Outside	Other	Male	Female	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +
Total	308	223	85	112	195	51	103	154
Journey to work	31 10%	17* 8%	14* 16%	12 11%	19 10%	10* 20%	11 11%	10* 6%
Shopping	263 85%	193 87%	70 82%	95 85%	168 86%	40 78%	83 81%	140** 91%
Leisure	76 25%	53 24%	23 27%	39** 35%	37** 19%	15 29%	27 26%	34 22%
Other	26 8%	19 9%	7 8%	8 7%	17 9%	3 6%	9 9%	14 9%

Base: All USING Park and Ride

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q21a On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important, please rate each of the following attributes when considering the reasons for using the Park & Ride service?

The chart below summarises the response to this question. As before, the red section shows the proportion of all respondents considering the attribute not important (score of 0), the yellow section shows the proportion rating the attribute very important (score of 10), while the orange section represents scores in between these two extremes (score of 2-9). The table following the chart shows the mean scores by the differing population groups.



Base: All respondents using Park and Ride – 294

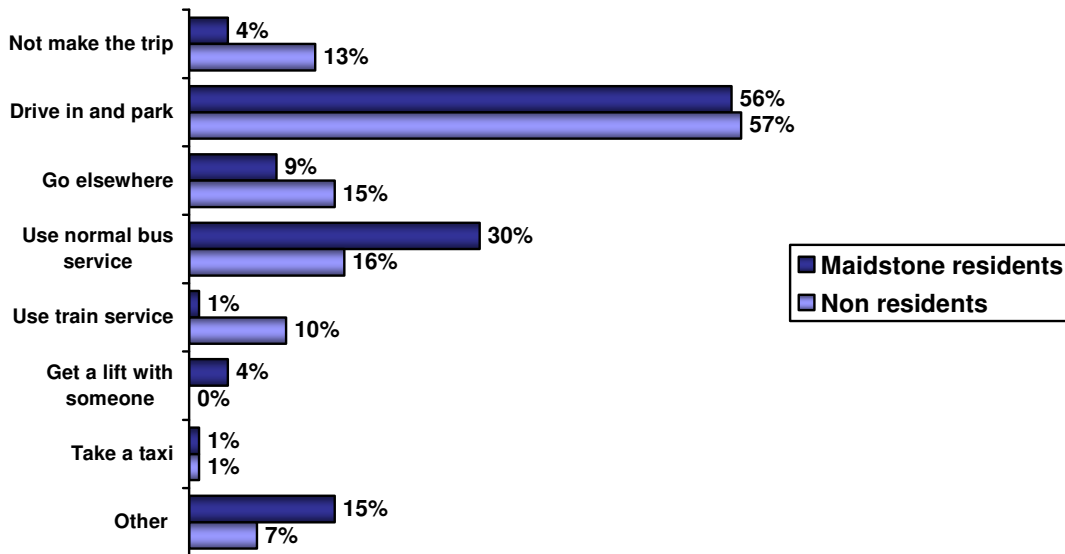
	Residency		Gender		Age group			Social class				
	Total	Maidstone	Outside	Male	Female	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	AB	C1	C2	DE
Total	294	214	80	109	184	49	96	149	67	97	63	62
Convenience	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.9	8.7	8.4*	9.1*	8.6	8.9	8.9	9.0
Environmentally friendly	7.7	7.9	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.2	7.5	8.1*	7.3	8.3*	7.4	7.6
Cost	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.1*	8.0*	7.8	7.9	7.5	7.7	7.8	7.1	8.0
Less stressful	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.0	8.5*	7.9	8.3	8.4	7.5**	8.7	8.7	8.2
Frequency of service	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.8	8.7	9.0	8.9	8.5
Free parking at the site	8.8	8.8	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.5	8.6	9.0	8.7	8.9	8.7	8.8
Free travel for children	6.9	7.3**	5.9**	6.4	7.2	7.2	7.4	6.5	6.2	7.7*	6.9	6.7

Base: All USING Park and Ride

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q23 If the Park & Ride service was no longer available, how would you then journey into the town?

If the Park and Ride was no longer available, just over half of the respondents who use it claimed that they would drive in instead while 30% of residents and 16% of non residents would use the normal bus service. 9% of residents and 15% of non residents claimed that they would go elsewhere. The table following the graph summarises the demographic differences.



Base: All respondents using Park and Ride – 310

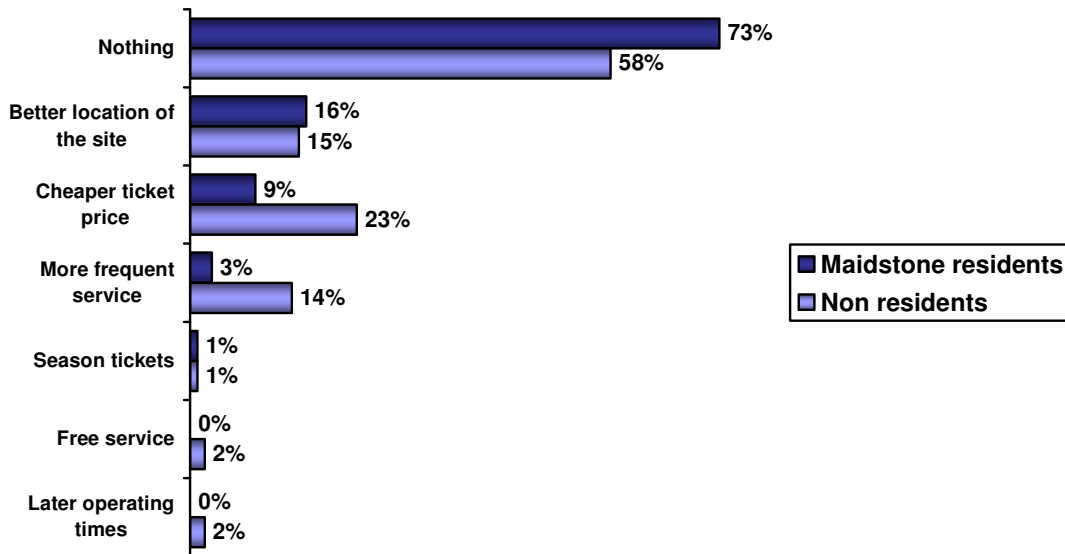
	Total	Residency		Gender		Age group			Social class			
		Maidstone	Outside Maidstone	Male	Female	16-34	35-54	55+	AB	C1	C2	DE
Total	309	226	83	112	196	52	103	154	42	77	53	42
Not make the trip	6%	4%*	13%*	6%	6%	2%	7%	7%	2%	3%	4%	—%
Drive in and park	56%	57%	55%	54%	58%	52%	73%*	47%*	62%	51%	57%	38%*
Go elsewhere	11%	9%	16%	10%	11%	8%	10%	12%	5%	5%	9%	—%*
Use normal bus service	26%	30%*	16%*	27%	26%	29%	13%*	34%*	17%	34%	26%	45%*
Use train service	4%	1%*	12%*	4%	5%	10%*	8%*	—%*	5%	—%*	2%	2%
Get a lift with someone	3%	4%	—%	2%	3%	6%	1%	3%	2%	1%	—%	5%
Take a taxi	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	—%	1%	1%	2%	1%	—%	—%
Other (No verbatim required)	13%	15%	8%	15%	12%	19%	13%	11%	21%	13%	15%	19%

Base: All respondents using Park and Ride
 95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q24 What if anything would influence your decision to use the service if you do not currently use it or do not use it very often?

A summary of the response to this question is shown below. While for 74% of residents nothing could be done to promote use of the service, non residents appear to be conducive to potential use with only 58% stating that they would not use the service.

The three most important service improvements were ‘better site locations’, ‘cheaper ticket prices’ and ‘more frequent services’.

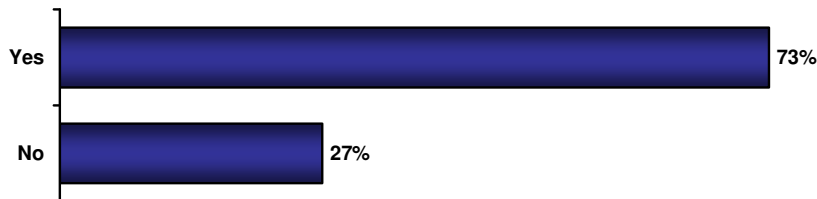


Base: All respondents – 1243

3.4 Use of and attitudes towards the bulky refuse collection services

Q25 Are you aware that there is a service available in Maidstone for the collection of bulky refuse in freighters (dust carts) in the local community such as at Allington Shopping Centre?

73% of residents claimed to be aware of the bulky refuse collection service. Of these respondents who were aware of the service, 5% claimed to use the service regularly and 44% occasionally. The table below the chart shows that use was higher amongst the 55+ age group and lower amongst the 16-34 age group. Usage was also lower amongst those residents living in privately rented property.



Base: All residents – 1028

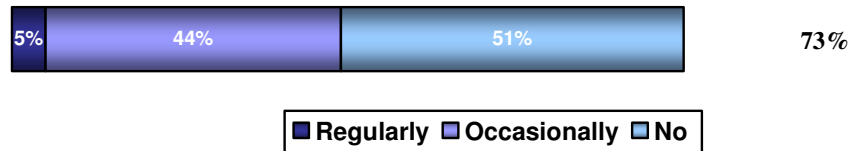
	Total	Age group			Home ownership			
		16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	Own right	Own with mortgage	Rented privately	Rented from authority
Total	1008	230	315	463	399	292	155	159
Yes	740 73%	138** 60%	236 75%	366** 79%	310* 78%	217 74%	92** 59%	118 74%
No	268 27%	92** 40%	79 25%	97** 21%	89* 22%	75 26%	63** 41%	41 26%

Base: Maidstone residents

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q26 Frequency of service usage

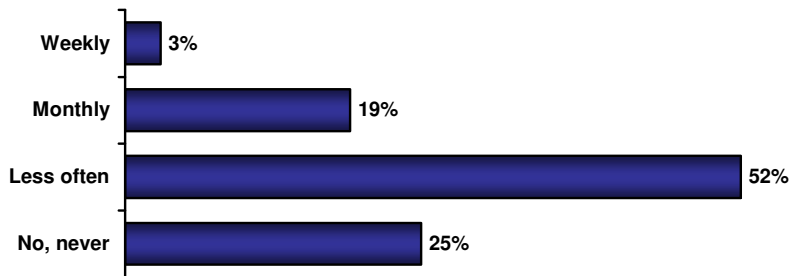
Amongst those using the service, 5% used regularly, 44% occasionally and 51% less often



Base: All users - 740

Q27 How often, if ever, have you used the household waste centre in Tovil?

3% of all residents claimed to use the centre every week, 19% monthly, 52% less often and 25% never used. The table following the chart shows usage was higher amongst older residents (55+) and lower amongst younger residents (16-34). There was also higher usage amongst those who own their own home compared with those in rented property where usage was lower.



Base: Maidstone residents 1028

	Total	Age group			Social class				Home ownership			
		16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	AB	C1	C2	DE	Own it out right	Own it with a mortgage	Rented privately	Rented from authority
Total	1008	230	315	463	182	344	191	281	399	292	155	159
Weekly	33 3%	6 3%	6 2%	21* 5%	10 5%	4** 1%	12** 6%	7 2%	16 4%	10 3%	5 3%	2 1%
Monthly	196 19%	28** 12%	71 23%	97 21%	47* 26%	81* 24%	31 16%	35** 12%	96** 24%	78** 27%	8** 5%	13** 8%
Less often	527 52%	98** 43%	168 53%	261* 56%	88 48%	184 53%	104 54%	146 52%	218 55%	160 55%	64** 41%	83 52%
No, never	252 25%	98** 43%	70 22%	84** 18%	37 20%	75 22%	44 23%	93** 33%	69** 17%	44** 15%	78** 50%	61** 38%

Base: Maidstone residents

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q28 Were you aware that the freighters (dust carts) and recycling centres are free to use?

89% of residents claimed to be aware that the freighter and recycling centres were free to use.

Again, older residents and those with their own property were more aware. Younger residents and those in rented property were less aware.



Base: All residents - 1028

Q29-Q32 Removal of bulky items

The following chart summarises the percentage of residents who were aware of the bulky item collection service, the fact that the service carried a charge, use of the service and the perceived value for money.

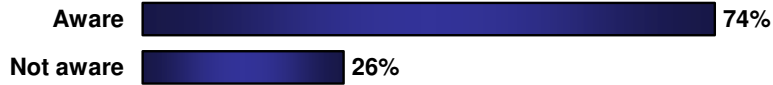
80% of residents were aware of this service, of which 74% were aware of the charge. Of these residents, 56% had used the service, of which 29% felt that the service was fair and 52% good value for money.

As with previous bulky refuse collection findings, awareness and use of the service was greater amongst older residents and those owning their own property.

Q29 If you had a bulky household item to be taken away from your home, were you aware that the council offers a collection service?
(All residents 1008)



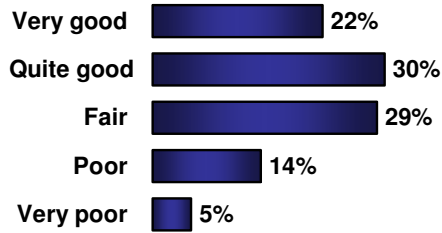
Q30 Were you aware that there was a charge to remove bulky household items from your home? (All aware 1008)



Q31 Have you ever used this service? (All aware 743)



Q32 How would you rate the collection services in terms of value for money? (All users of service 417)



Base: All residents - 1008

Q33 – Q35. Hiring a garden waste wheelie bin at £30 per year

The next chart deals with the garden waste wheelie bin service. 62% of residents were aware of the wheelie bin service, and 25% of these residents had used the service. Of these residents, 56% had used the service, of which 31% felt that the service was fair and 58% good value for money. Again the older residents and those with their own property were more likely to be aware and use the wheelie bin service while younger residents and those in rented property had a lower awareness and use.

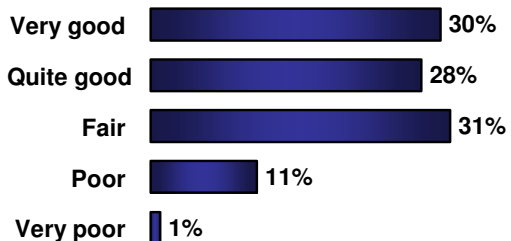
Q33 Awareness of a garden waste wheelie bin hire at £30
(All respondents)



Q34 Do you hire a garden waste wheelie bin?
(All residents aware of service 629)



Q35 How do you rate the value for money of hiring the green waste wheelie bin? (All users of service 157)

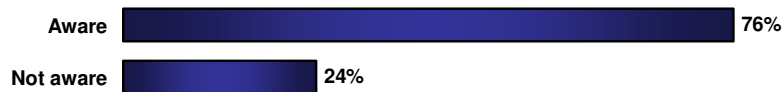


Base: All residents - 1028

Q33 – Q36, Q37 MBC green waste sacks (£2.50 for 5)?

76% of residents were aware of MBC green waste sacks and 50% of residents had used them. The rating of value for money was significantly lower than for the other refuse services with the majority of users rating the value for money of the green sacks as poor (28% very poor). There were the same demographic differences in awareness and usage.

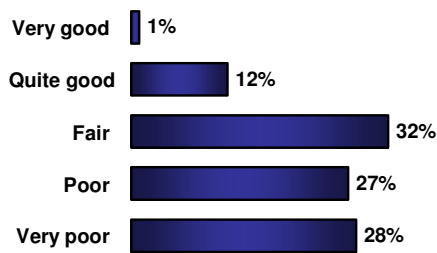
**Q33 Awareness of the purchase of MBC green waste sacks (£2.50 for 5) ?
sacks (All residents 1008)**



**Q36 Do you use garden waste sacks?
(All residents aware of service 765)**



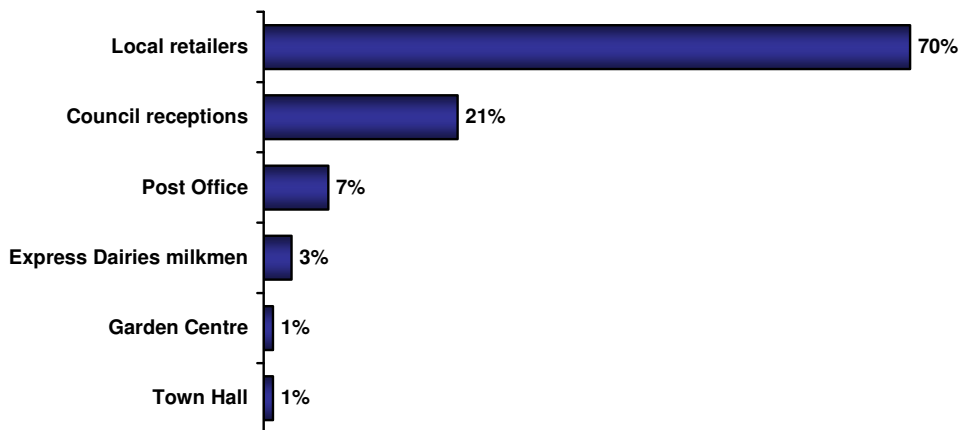
**Q37 If yes, how do you rate the cost of the waste sacks?
(All users of service 388)**



Base: All residents - 1028

Q38 Where do you purchase the waste sacks from?

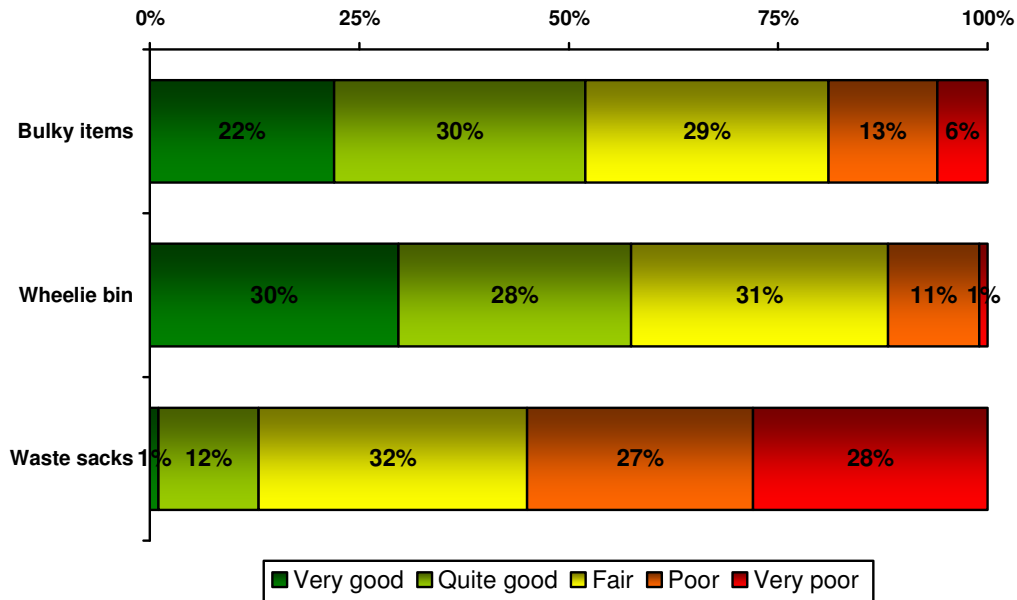
The most common sources for the green waste sacks were local retailers, which were used by 70% of users, 21% bought them from Council receptions, 7% from the Post Office.



Base: All buying waste sacks - 388

APPENDIX F

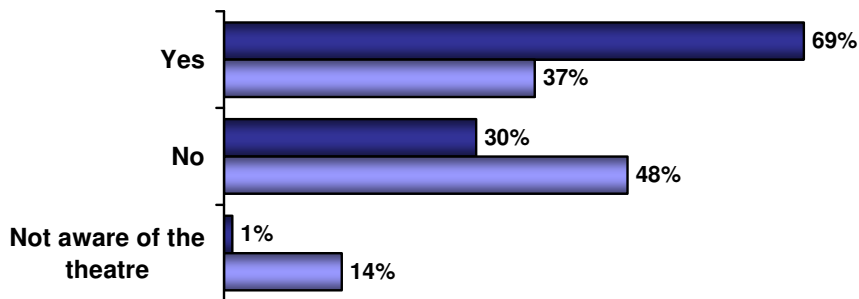
The following summary chart shows the perceived value for money of the three forms of refuse services detailed above and shows quite clearly how much lower users rate the value for money of green sacks compared with the other two services.



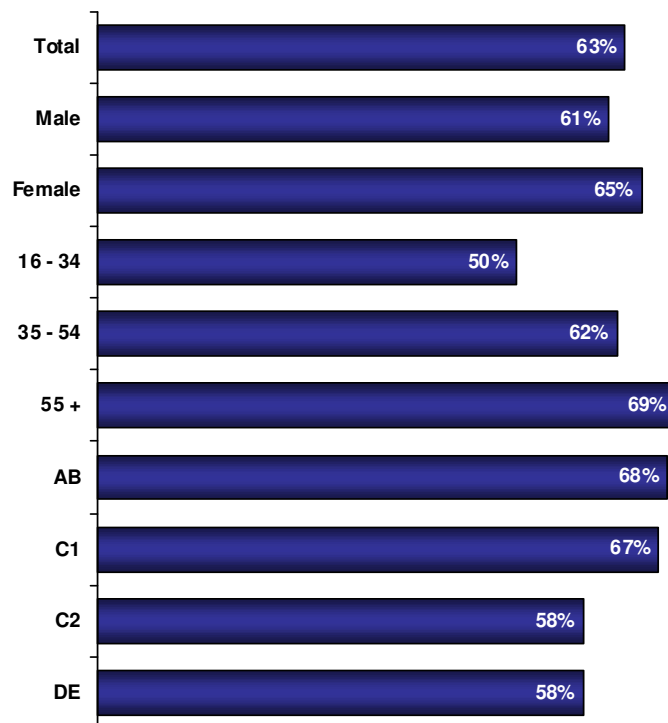
3.5 Use of and attitudes towards the Hazlitt Theatre

Q40 Have you ever visited the Hazlitt Theatre/Hazlitt Art Centre?

69% of residents and 37% of non residents claimed to have visited the theatre. 4% of non residents were not aware of it. The demographic profile chart indicates that usage was significantly higher amongst older (55+) ABCI respondents and lower amongst the 16-34 year old age group and C2DE respondents.



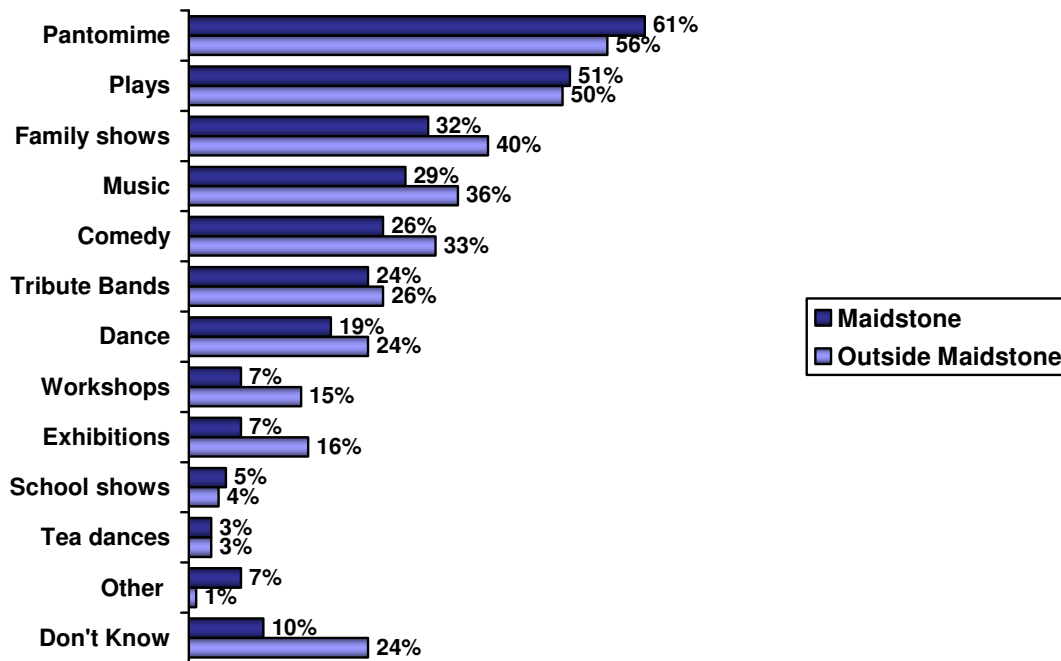
Base: All respondents – 1252



Base: All respondents – 1252

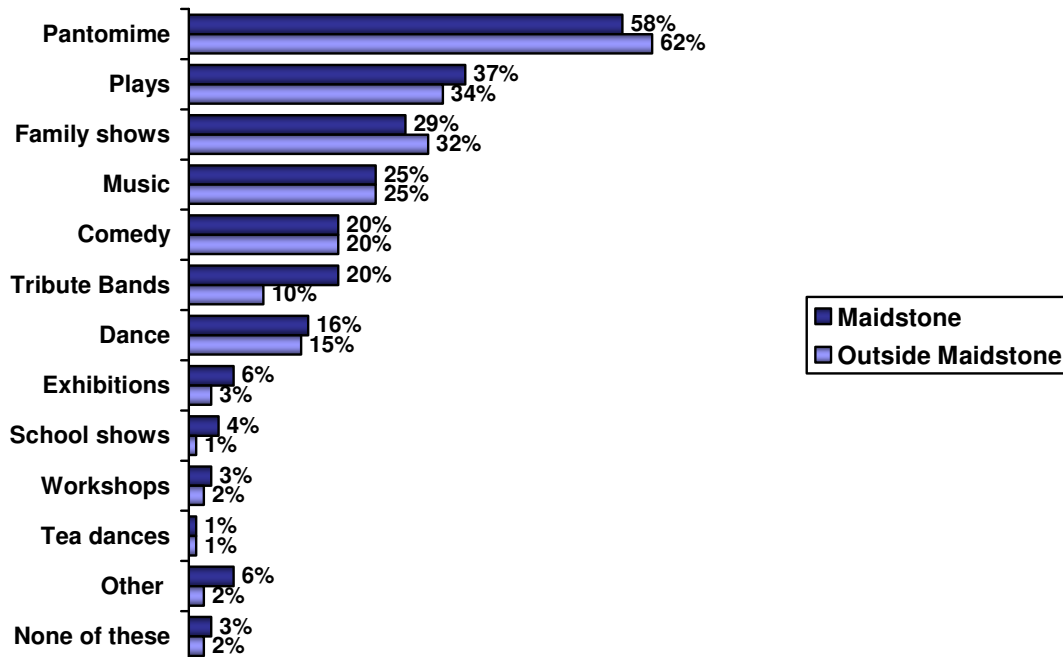
Q41 What sort of events do you think are held at the theatre?

The chart below shows the perceived content of Hazlitt theatre events and the chart that follows it summarises the events that have been visited. The pattern for both is quite similar with Pantomime plays and family shows being the events that respondents were most aware of and attended. The pattern for non residents was very similar to residents although the former appear to have a higher awareness of most events although usage was similar between the two groups.



Base: All aware of the Hazlitt theatre - 1202

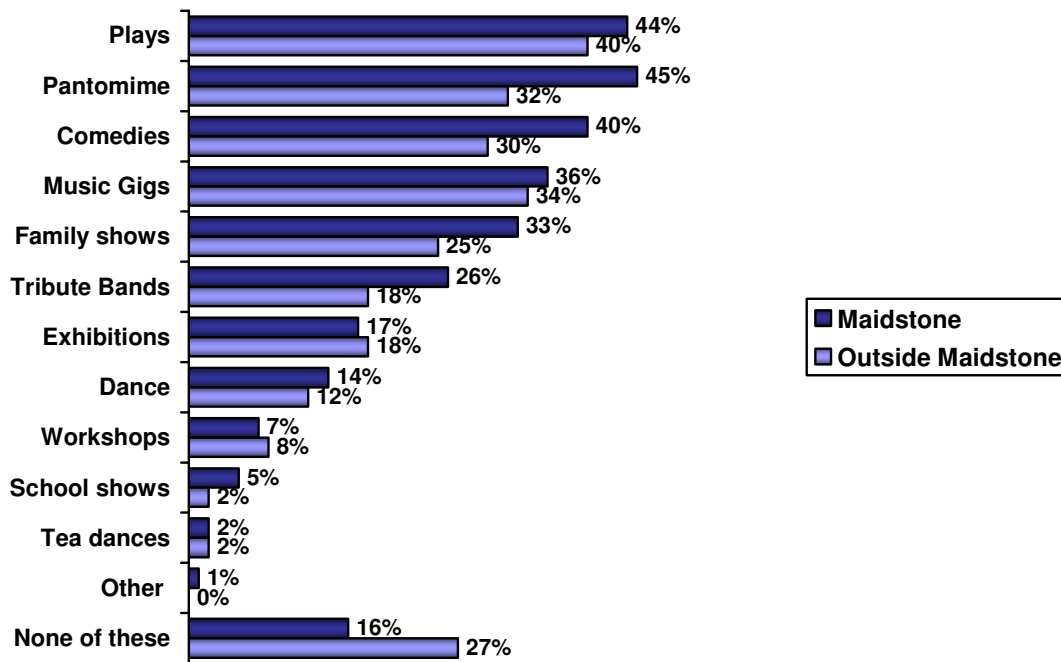
Q42 Have you ever been to any of the following events at the Hazlitt Theatre/Hazlitt Art Centre?



Base: All aware of the type of events at the Hazlitt theatre - 784

Q44 Would you consider going to any of the following events at the Hazlitt Theatre/Hazlitt Art Centre?

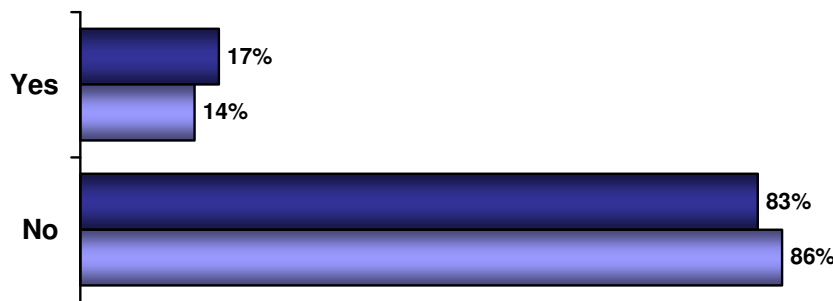
The pattern for potential future use was very similar to the previous two charts although non residents appeared to be less likely to use the theatre with 27% stating that they would not visit the theatre for any of the specified events compared with 16% of residents.



Base: All aware of the type of events at the Hazlitt theatre - 784

Q46 Have you ever looked at the Hazlitt Theatre/Hazlitt Art Centre website to check out performances?

17% of residents and 14% of non residents claimed to have used the Theatre web site for event information. The table overleaf shows that web site usage was highest amongst the 35-54 year old age group and the AB class group.



Base: All aware of the Hazlitt theatre - 1206

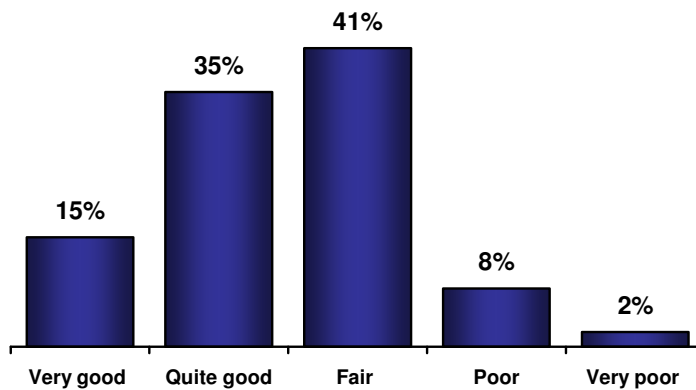
	Age group			Social class				
	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 +	AB	C1	C2	DE	
Total	1202	258	401	543	232	418	221	316
Yes	198 16%	41 16%	89** 22%	68** 13%	51* 22%	80 19%	34 15%	31** 10%
No	1004 84%	217 84%	312** 78%	475** 87%	181* 78%	338 81%	187 85%	285** 90%

Base: All aware of the Hazlitt theatre

95 percent as lower case or *, 99 percent as UPPER CASE or **

Q47 The average ticket price for the theatre is £12.50, how would you rate this in terms of value for money?

51% of respondents who were aware of the Hazlitt thought that ticket prices were good and a further 41% fair. Only 10% described them as poor.



Base: All aware of the Hazlitt theatre - 1206

Appendix

Sampling Error

The survey tabulations include either a single * or double * against cells to indicate if the data is significantly different at the 90% level or the 95% level respectively within the population group that contains the *. In the example below, the proportion of ‘Yes’ answers was significantly greater(at the 95% level) amongst the 65+ age group compared with the other age groups while male respondents were significantly more likely to say ‘yes’ (at the 90% level) than females.

		Age group				Gender	
		16-34 (a)	35-54 (b)	55-64 (c)	65+ (d)	Male (e)	Female (f)
Total	1076	67	316	299	391	444	627
Yes	239 22%	14 21%	48 15%	59 20%	117** 30%	112* 25%	125 20%
No	837 78%	53 79%	268** 85%	240** 80%	274 70%	332 75%	502* 80%

The error calculation assumes that the sample is purely random. In practice, sampling variations and non-response decay the accuracy of any sample and the sample was not designed to be a straight random sample. Sampling variations are corrected to a certain degree by weighting and we have adopted industry standard in calculating error.

Non-response comes in 2 forms; a refusal to conduct the interview and a ‘don’t know’ answer for a particular question. The level of non response to the interview was acceptable and what would be expected of the methodology. ‘Don’t know’ answers to individual questions have been excluded and percentages based on those answering.

The structure of the sample is summarised below:

Q48 Which of the following age groups do you fall into?
Base: All respondents

	Total	Maidstone	Outside Maidstone
Total	1252	1008	244
16 - 24	8%	8%	8%
25 - 34	14%	14%	12%
35 - 44	16%	16%	19%
45 -54	17%	15%	23%
55-64	22%	21%	25%
65-74	15%	16%	10%
75+	7%	8%	3%

Q49 Gender of respondent.

	Total	Maidstone	Outside Maidstone
Total	1252	1008	244
Male	48%	50%	43%
Female	52%	50%	57%

Q51 Social Grade.

	Total	Maidstone	Outside Maidstone
Total	1252	1008	244
AB	20%	18%	26%
C1	34%	34%	34%
C2	19%	19%	18%
DE	26%	28%	19%
Refused	1%	1%	3%

Maidstone Borough Council**Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010 Onwards**

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Introduction

This financial strategy aims to support the council's corporate objectives as identified in the strategic plan 2010 onwards. Whilst achieving this, major issues relating to resources and facing the council in the medium term will also be highlighted.

The intention is to set out the revenue and capital spending plans of the council at a high level. The success of these plans will depend upon the resources available to the council and the approach taken to ensure that these resources are aligned over the medium term to reflect corporate objectives and controlled in a way that ensures long-term stability.

In recent years the Government's approach to financial management in local government is to focus upon three year financial commitments. These include three year grant projections and three year comprehensive spending reviews and efficiency targets. The approach of this strategy will therefore be to develop a plan for a three year period with a further two years considered where the three year plan has a material impact on those years.

Although this document is developed for the medium term with an outlook from three to five years, the council will review the strategy on an annual basis for the following period in order to reflect changes in circumstances which impact upon the strategy. This review will be completed to coincide with the annual review of the three year strategic plan. This will enable Members and Officers to ensure changes are appropriately reflected in both documents through links to the strategic plan key objectives (SPKO). Production of this document and the balanced budget it facilitates are a key objective (see SPKO: E&P7) of the strategic plan in their own right.

In addition the council will consult with a wide range of stakeholders and partners during the development period and give serious consideration to their views and responses.

Revenue

Expenditure

The portfolio budgets in the full revenue estimates include detailed proposals for dealing with financial pressures and service demand, this strategic plan adopts a high-level review of the corporate objectives and budget pressures over the five-year period. This approach ensures a focus on factors that may influence the Council's stated aim to maintain working balances and ensure that they are used for specific and special activities and not to balance the budget. The financial projection assumes that the level of balances will be maintained over the five year period.

Pay and price inflation:

The financial projection makes an allocation for pay increases on an annual basis. This increase must allow for a staff pay award, any incremental increases earned through competence appraisal and any increase in employer contributions such as national insurance.

Other costs will need to consider a suitable inflation index. Large elements of this cost will be tied to conditions of contracts which will specify the annual increase necessary, other costs will increase by the annual increase in an inflation index such as the retail price index or the consumer price index.

Table 1 below details the factors used for each year.

Strategic Issue	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	%	%	%	%	%
Pay Inflation	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.5	2.5
Other Costs Inflation	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.5	2.5

[Table 1: Pay & price Indices]

Corporate objectives and key priorities:

In addition to these inflationary pressures the Council will develop and implement improvements to the corporate objectives identified in the strategic plan, and where significant any local objectives identified in service plans.

The financial projection will also provide, where necessary, resources for national statutory responsibilities where these are to be provided locally.

Table 2 below identifies the links between the financial projection and key objectives.

SP KO	Strategic Issue	2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13 £,000	2013/14 £,000	2014/15 £,000
E&P3	Concessionary Fares	200	150			
	Refuse & Recycling	115			300	
	Local Development Framework		200	200		
	Revenue Provision for Borrowing		150	150	159	
SCC2	Leisure Centre	275	155			
	Park & Ride	200				

[Table 2: Strategic Issues, links to other documents]

Funding

Resources available for the revenue budget are heavily constrained making the issue key to the financial planning process. The financial projection assumes that resources are maximised. The strategy identifies three separate categories of resource government grant, locally derived income from fees and charges and council tax. Where the financial projection includes the use of fixed term grant or income sources each portfolio is responsible for preparing and acting on suitable exit strategies at the end of the fixed term.

Government Grant:

The current revenue support grant settlement comes under the three year notification commencing in 2007 is an increase of 0.5% for 2010/11. This three year notification ended with the 2010/11 notification and the future level of grant settlements is in doubt due to the national economy and public sector debt levels. The strategy assumes that future grant aid will be reduced on a regular basis over the latter 4 years of the strategy by 1% per annum.

Other grants received from the government are similarly under threat from the effects of the national economy and the efficiency agenda as it effects government departments. The strategy will assume future grant aid is likely to be at risk but only consider the freezing of such grants at their 2009/10 cash values unless further data is available.

Fees & Charges

The Council has a policy on the development of fees and charges that fall within its control. This policy ensures that an

evaluation of market forces and links to the strategic or service plans drive changes to prices. This means that any increases in this funding source will be identified through each portfolio's detailed budget preparation work. At the level of this strategy the assumption is that in overall terms the increase will be commensurate with general inflation. Due to the final effects of the recession, for 2010/11 the financial projection will assume total cash income is frozen at 2009/10 values but will increase slowly in response to the predicted end to the recession.

Council Tax

The Council has a responsive approach to the level of Council tax and will set this at an appropriate level commensurate with the needs of the strategic plan. It has set a policy in recent years of an increase that avoids the threat of council tax capping but remains flexible on the level of increase, focusing the strategy on its ability to set a balanced budget.

Table 3 below details the factors used for each resource type and Table 4 details the links between the financial projection and the major risk factors.

Strategic Issue	2010/11 %	2011/12 %	2012/13 %	2013/14 %	2014/15 %
Revenue Support Grant Increase	0.5	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
Fees & Charges Increase	0.0	1.0	2.0	2.5	2.5
Council Tax Increase	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

[Table 3: Resource and income indices]

SP KO	Strategic Issue	2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13 £,000	2013/14 £,000	2014/15 £,000
CYPF1	Housing Benefit Admin Grant	80	40	40	40	40
	Homelessness Strategy Grant		35	30		
	Parking Income	50	50	50	50	50
	Interest on Investments	370	150	100	50	
	Income Generation	250	100			
	Cobtree Charity	130	20			

[Table 4: Strategic Issues, links to other documents]

Capital

Programme

The strategy for the capital programme requires consideration of two issues, the scheme specifics and the overall programme.

The overall programme is considered in terms of the prudential borrowing principles of sustainability, affordability and prudence. The overall programme assessment also considers the relative priority of schemes as they enhance the provision of corporate or service based objectives.

The inclusion of capital schemes within the overall programme requires an assessment based on affordability in revenue and capital terms and deliverability in terms of ability to complete, whole life cost and risk assessment.

Prioritisation of schemes will occur in the following order:

- a) For statutory reasons;
- b) Fully or partly self funding schemes with focus on corporate objectives;
- c) Other schemes with focus on corporate objectives;
- d) Maintenance / Improvement of property portfolio not linked to corporate objectives;
- e) Other non priority schemes with a significant funding gearing.

The programme for the period 2010/11 to 2012/13 focuses on a series of key projects reflecting the strategic plan and a series of projects providing investment in the property assets. The detailed Capital programme provides the link between the strategic plan key objectives and the current programme

The capital programme is a three year programme and Table 5 below summarises the 2010/11 to 2011/12 programme by portfolio. This table incorporates the programme for 2009/10 for information.

Portfolio	2009/10 £,000	2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13 £,000
Leader	26	0	0	0
Community Services	636	81	81	50
Corporate Services	351	370	370	330
Environment	1,011	0	0	0
Leisure & Culture	2703	4147	3129	680
Regeneration	9451	4618	5257	3070
	14,178	9,216	8,837	4,130

[Table 5: Capital programme]

Funding

Since 2004 the Council has been debt free and the major sources of funding for capital expenditure has come from capital receipts and government grant. The medium term financial strategy has, in the past, identified the time when such resources would reduce to the point where alternative funding would be required to support a continued programme of capital expenditure. The most recent strategy identifies that the most likely need for immediate funding will occur in 2011/12.

Previously the strategy required that where funding is based upon the use of capital receipts, that those receipts were received prior to capital commitments being made. The strategy can no longer maintain this commitment, a combination of economic conditions leading to low levels of asset sales and the use of reserves of usable capital receipts means that the current strategy accepts funding from in year receipts. This assumption can only be maintained up to the level of the Council's prudential borrowing limit. The quarterly monitoring of the capital programme enables Cabinet to take effective decisions based on current levels of funding before major projects commence.

Table 6 below identifies the current funding assumptions and the minimum level of prudential borrowing.

Funding Source	2009/10 £,000	2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13
Confirmed:				
Capital receipts	5,010	2,130	472	0
Capital grant	4,774	4,906	2,541	829
Revenue	1,144	1,080	630	630
Assumed:				
Capital receipts	3,250	1,100	2,850	0
External funding			400	900
Prudential Borrowing			1,944	1,771
	14,178	9,216	8,837	4,130

[Table 6: Capital financing, confirmed and assumed]

Reserves

The Council holds a series of balances and reserves in order to provide financial stability and protection from unforeseen circumstances or events. In setting the level of these balances and reserves an assessment is made of the potential risks and opportunities that could reduce or enhance those balances.

All revenue balances at 1st April 2009 total £7.27m and it is estimated that this balance will be £5.17m. The major reduction relates to approved budget carry forward of £1.7m from 2008/09 into 2009/10. The balances comprise a general balance and specific allocations are given in Table 7 below.

Balances	01/04/2009	01/04/2010	01/04/2001
	£,000	£,000	£,000
General balance	5,601	3,308	3,108
Trading account surpluses	30	10	20
Asset replacement	110	7	7
Invest to save initiatives	579	594	494
Local development Framework	884	657	304
Total	7,204	4,576	3,933

[Table 7: Revenue balances]

Available capital receipts at 1st April 2009 total £7.6m and it is estimated that this balance will be used up during the period from 2009/10 to 2011/12.

Other capital balances include grants and contributions unapplied which total £3.3m at 1st April 2009. These balances are, in most cases, received for specific schemes and applied to finance those schemes specifically.

Efficiency

The council's strategic plan has efficiency and value for money as key themes. These themes run through service plans and are one of the six values to which the Council subscribes. The Council's approach to efficiency is integrated in to all decision making.

The Council has successfully achieved all its government set efficiency targets and hopes to achieve the latest target figures as set for 2009/10 onwards. The current efficiency gains, since the commencement of the "Gershon" targets equals £2.9m.

The Council uses a number of measures to identify locations to achieve efficiency and gauge success. These include:

- a) Annual best value reviews performed by officers and by members.
- b) The Kent wide VFM price book. A benchmarking tool to measure unit cost and performance levels and compare these over time and across Kent.
- c) Other benchmarking exercises undertaken by local managers to challenge service delivery in their own area.
- d) The identification of efficiency targets that match the government's requirements over the period of this medium term financial strategy.

Efficiency proposals are carefully measured for effect upon capacity, acceptable levels of service, quality standards, and the potential of shared service provision. All efficiency proposals consider the effect of fixed costs and the effect on the base financial standing of the Council and the opportunity for reinvestment of gains into priority services or toward achievement of corporate objectives.

The adoption of efficiency and VFM as part of this strategy helps to ensure that the financial projection will remain within available resources.

The financial projection identifies the need for savings to make a balanced budget, which must be considered in line with the development of efficiency savings. Table 8 below details the required saving for each year, based on the factors used in the financial projection, and the percentage of net revenue spend the given saving represents.

Strategic Projection	2010/11 £,000	2011/12 £,000	2012/13 £,000	2013/14 £,000	2014/15 £,000
Annual Savings Requirement	1,604	1,372	733	895	668
Percentage Saving	7.00%	6.00%	3.00%	3.75%	2.75%

[Table 8: Annual savings requirement]

The savings identified for 2010/11 equate to the required £1.6 million. In general they are identified in areas where efficiency meets the requirements of the strategic plan. This is either through areas of low strategic priority or areas such as productivity, where efficiency is a specific strategic objective.

Agenda Item 10

Maidstone Borough Council

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 5 January 2010

Future Work Programme and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Report of: Acting Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. Future Work Programme

- 1.1 The Future Work Programme for the Committee is attached at [Appendix A](#); Members are requested to consider this to ensure that it is appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.

2. Forward Plan

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2009, Members 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." The Forward Plan will therefore now be included on each Committee agenda under the "Future Work Programme" item.
- 2.2 The Forward Plan for 1 January 2010 – 30 April 2010 contains the following decisions relevant to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- Draft Strategic Plan 2009-12 (2010 update);
 - Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards; and
 - Treasury Management Strategy 2010/11.

Reports with further details on these are attached at [Appendix B](#).

- 2.3 The Director of Resources and Partnerships and the Head of Finance will be in attendance at the Committee's meeting on 5 January 2010 to discuss the Review of Budget Strategy 2010/11 Onwards. The Policy and Performance Manager will present the Draft Strategic Plan 2009-12 (2010 update) at the meeting on 5 January 2010.
- 2.4 The Treasury Management Strategy will be considered by the Audit Committee.
- 2.5 Members are recommended to consider the sections of the Forward Plan relevant to the Committee and discuss whether these are items requiring further investigation or monitoring by the Committee.

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Future Work Programme 2009-2010

Date	Items to be considered
27 May 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
9 June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Cabinet Member for Corporate Services – priorities for the year • Interview with Leader of the Council – priorities for the year
7 July 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Value Performance Plan, Corporate Improvement Plan & Place Survey results • Overview & Scrutiny Function Review
4 August 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Strategy
8 September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Benefit Uptake (rec. 9/6/09) •
6 October 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with KCC Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager for the O&S Function Review • Interview with Leader of the Council re: recession • Devolved budgets
3 November 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on options for scrutiny structure
1 December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O&S Function Review – Select Committees • O&S Function Review - Structure
5 January 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Strategy • Strategic Plan
2 February 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on benefits uptake (rec. 08/09/09) • Draft OS Function Review & discussion of recommendations • Update on Enhancing Local Democracy (rec. 9/6/09)
2 March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree final OS Function review
6 April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services – Progress Over the Year

Watching Briefs:

- Enhancing Local Democracy
- Benefits Uptake

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

1 January 2010 –
30 April 2010

Councillor Christopher Garland
Leader of the Council



INTRODUCTION

This is the Forward Plan which the Leader of the Council is required to prepare. Its purpose is to give advance notice of all the “key decisions” which the Executive is likely to take over the next 4 month period. The Plan will be up-dated monthly.

Each “key decision” is the subject of a separate entry in the Plan. The entries are arranged in date order – i.e. the “key decisions” likely to be taken during the first month of the 4 month period covered by the Plan appear first.

Each entry identifies, for that “key decision” –

- the subject matter of the decision
- a brief explanation of why it will be a “key decision”
- the date on which the decision is due to be taken
- who will be consulted before the decision is taken and the method of the consultation
- how and to whom representations (about the decision) can be made
- what reports/papers are, or will be, available for public inspection
- the wards to be affected by this decision

DEFINITION OF A KEY DECISION

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Result in the Maidstone Borough Council incurring expenditure or making savings which is equal to the value of £250,000 or more; or
- Have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in Maidstone.

WHO MAKES DECISIONS?

The Cabinet collectively makes some of the decisions at a public meeting and individual portfolio holders make decisions following consultation with every member of the Council. In addition, Officers can make key decisions and an entry for each of these will be included in the Forward Plan.

WHO ARE THE CABINET?



Councillor Christopher Garland

Leader of the Council

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Tel: 01622 602683



Councillor Marion Ring
Cabinet Member for Community Services
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Tel: 01622 686492



Councillor Richard Ash
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Councillor Mark Wooding
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Tel: 07932 830888



Councillor Brian Moss
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Tel: 01622 761998



Councillor Malcolm Greer
Cabinet Member for Regeneration
malcolmgreer@maidstone.gov.uk
Tel: 01634 862876

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The Council encourages and welcomes anyone wishing to express his or her views about decisions the Cabinet plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or Cabinet Member (the details of which are shown for each decision to be made).

Alternatively, the Cabinet are contactable via our [website](#) where you can submit a question to the Leader of the Council or any Cabinet Member on-line. There is also the opportunity to invite the Leader of the Council to speak at a function you may be organising.

Cabinet Roadshows are held 3 times a year in different wards. This is an opportunity for you to meet the Cabinet Members direct and discuss any issues that may concern you.

Appendix B

Title:	Draft Strategic Plan 2009-12 - 2010 update
Portfolio:	Cabinet
This will be a "Key Decision" because:	The Strategic Plan 2009-12 sets out the council's priority themes and key objectives. This document will update the Strategic Plan for 2010.
Purpose:	To seek Cabinet approval for the first draft of the Strategic Plan 2009-12, update for 2010/11, to be distributed for consultation
Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Proposed Date of Decision:	9 December 2009
Consultation and Method:	Meetings are being held with managers to draft key objectives and actions. These will then be discussed with Cabinet members and a cross-party working group of Overview & Scrutiny members before going to Cabinet as part of the first draft of the Strategic Plan in December. Once the first draft is agreed, all council staff, members, parish councils and our partners (including community groups) will be consulted on the contents.
Representations should be made to:	Anna Collier, Georgia Hawkes, Policy and Performance Manager annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, georgiahawkes@maidstone.gov.uk
Representations should be made by:	27 November 2009
Relevant documents:	Strategic Plan 2007-10 Strategic Plan 2008-11 Strategic Plan 2009-12 Best Value Performance Plan 2009-12 Strategic Planning Process – Report to Cabinet August 2009
Wards affected:	All Wards;
Other Information:	
Director:	David Edwards, Director of Change and Environmental Services
Head of Service:	Georgia Hawkes
Report Author:	Georgia Hawkes

Title:	Budget Strategy 2010/11 onwards
Portfolio:	Cabinet
This will be a "Key Decision" because:	Involves Budget decisions over £250,000
Purpose:	Agree proposed General Fund revenue and capital estimates for 2010/11 and revised figures for 2009/10, in accordance with the Budget Strategy and the medium Term Financial and Capital Strategies and Projections, and the consequent level of Council Tax for submission to the Council.
Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Proposed Date of Decision:	10 February 2010
Consultation and Method:	Based on Budget Consultation Strategy
Representations should be made to:	Leader, Cabinet Members, Chief Executive and Head of Finance
Representations should be made by:	18 January 2010
Relevant documents:	Budget Strategy Statement of Balances Medium Term Financial Strategy and Projection
Wards affected:	None specifically but all may be affected by level of resources allocated
Other Information:	
Director:	Zena Cooke, Director of Resources and Partnerships
Head of Service:	Paul Riley
Report Author:	Paul Riley

Title:	Treasury Management Strategy 2010/11
Portfolio:	Cabinet
This will be a "Key Decision" because:	Involves financial decisions over £250,000
Purpose:	Review Treasury Management for 2009/10 and consider future Treasury Management Strategy for 2010/11. This will include Prudential Borrowing limits and a proposed Approved Investment Strategy. These matters will be submitted to Council.
Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Proposed Date of Decision:	10 February 2010
Consultation and Method:	
Representations should be made to:	Paul Riley, Head of Finance paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk
Representations should be made by:	18 January 2010
Relevant documents:	Report only
Wards affected:	None
Other Information:	
Director:	Zena Cooke, Director of Resources and Partnerships
Head of Service:	Paul Riley
Report Author:	Paul Riley