

# COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 30 November 2021  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Bartlett, Joy, McKenna, Mortimer, Newton, Purle (Chairman),  
M Rose, S Webb (Vice-Chairman) and Young

*The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.*

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## AGENDA

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| 1. Apologies for Absence  |         |
| 2. Notification of Substitute Members   |         |
| 3. Urgent Items   |         |
| 4. Notification of Visiting Members   |         |
| 5. Disclosures by Members and Officers  |         |
| 6. Disclosures of Lobbying  |         |
| 7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information. |         |
| 8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 2 November 2021   | 1 - 4   |
| 9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)   |         |
| 10. Questions and answer session for members of the public (if any)   |         |
| 11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)   |         |
| 12. Committee Work Programme  | 5       |
| 13. Reports of Outside Bodies   |         |
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**Issued on Monday 22 November 2021**

**Continued Over/:**

*Alison Broom*

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive**

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## **INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC**

In order to ask a question at this meeting in person or by remote means, please call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk) by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 26 November 2021). You will need to provide the full text in writing. If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk) by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 26 November 2021). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk). To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk).

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to the **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to the **Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: **Friday 26 November 2021**

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2021**

**Present:** Councillors Bartlett, Joy, McKenna, Mortimer, Newton, Purle (Chairman), M Rose, S Webb and Young

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

88. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

89. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman informed the Committee that he would take an urgent item on the River Len Local Nature Reserve. The reason for urgency was public concern, and the item would be taken after Item 17 – Housing Allocation Scheme.

90. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

91. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

92. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

93. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That all items be taken in public as proposed.

94. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2021

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

95. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

96. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

97. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

98. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place explained that the status of the planning application for Heather House and Pavilion had not changed since presented at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 10 February 2021. A report would be presented to this Committee once the application had been determined, however it was agreed that an update report could be brought back to the Committee in January or February 2022.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

99. REPORTS OF OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports of Outside Bodies.

100. REFERENCE FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE - DRAFT STREET TRADING POLICY 2021-2024

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the reference from the Licensing Committee and explained that the Street Trading Policy reflected the current practice and regulations on the Council's approach to the administration of the Street Trading Consent function. The new policy would be beneficial to applicants, officers and residents, and the Licensing Committee had recommended that the policy be approved.

**RESOLVED:** That the Street Trading Policy, attached at Appendix A to the reference, be approved.

101. PHASE 5 PURCHASE & REPAIR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACQUISITION

The Housing Delivery Manager introduced the report and outlined the previous four phases of the programme, which had been successful in providing council-owned temporary accommodation. The Purchase and Repair programme provided a more cost-effective solution for temporary accommodation compared to nightly paid accommodation, and the need for further properties still existed. Each property considered for purchase would continue to be approved on a case-by-case basis, with a mix of units sought to accommodate a range of need. Ward Councillors would be notified of the council's intention to purchase any property that falls within their ward.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The addition of the £481,570 underspend from previous phases of the project to the capital programme allocation, giving a total of £3,007,570 for investment in further properties for use as temporary accommodation, be noted;
2. The Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to determine the size and type of temporary accommodation required; and
3. The Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to give delegated authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation up to the total value of £3,007,570 in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources.

102. CARAVAN SITES FIT & PROPER PERSON

The Community Protection Manager introduced the report and explained that legislation introduced in 2020 required local authorities to implement an assessment process for managers of mobile home sites to be a fit and proper person. The policies presented would only apply to relevant sites, and costs could be recovered as set out in the fee policy.

In response to questions, the Community Protection Manager explained that the fees suggested had been calculated to cover the exact costs of the assessment, as set out in the legislation.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The proposed Fit & Proper Person Fees Policy and the Fit & Proper Person Determination Policy, attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, and
2. The Fit & Proper Person Fees Policy be reviewed after six months to ensure fees are appropriate and be brought back to Committee should amendments be required.

103. HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

The Head of Housing and Community Services introduced the report and explained that the effect of the temporary changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme policy introduced in April 2020 had been reviewed. The aim of the changes was to encourage households to remain in current accommodation where possible and avoid the use of temporary accommodation. An increase of 92% in the number of successfully prevented homelessness cases had occurred for the period August 2020 to July 2021, compared to the period August 2019 to July 2020. The comparison of the two periods also showed a 27% decrease in the number of households placed into temporary accommodation and vacated within

the same 12 months, although the average length of stay was slightly longer.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved and incorporated into Version 2.2 of the Housing Allocation Scheme, attached at Appendix B to the report.

104. URGENT ITEM: LEN RIVER LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

The Chairman introduced the urgent item and explained that a photograph had been received of litter accumulated in a section of the River Len within Len Valley Nature Reserve, along with reports of sewage contaminating the river. Input was requested as to whether an additional report should be brought to Committee on this issue or incorporated into existing reports.

The Director of Regeneration and Place gave a summary of actions taken and explained that a similar incident whereby sewage had leaked into the river had been reported to the Environment Agency (EA) in July 2021. A street cleansing team attended the site at that time, but a full response had not been received from the EA. Following notification of the most recent incident, another report was made to the EA who had confirmed receipt. An instruction had been issued to the duty officer to inspect the site, and it was expected that an update would be sent following the site visit. The street cleansing team would attend the site the following day to clear remaining litter.

In response to questions, the Director of Regeneration and Place indicated that the severity of the contamination reported previously had not caused a serious health and safety risk to the public visiting the nature reserve.

The Committee felt that a report should be added to the Work Programme with more information on the management, ownership and accountability of the river at the nature reserve.

**RESOLVED:** That a report on the litter and sewage leaks at the River Len within Len Valley Nature Reserve be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

105. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30pm to 7.09pm.

## 2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Review of the use and enforcement of ASB powers with a view to procuring a pronounced tightening	CHE	04-Jan-22	Cllr Request		John Littlemore	Martyn Jeynes
Review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the community safety unit	CHE	04-Jan-22	Cllr Request		John Littlemore	John Littlemore
Affordable Housing Delivery by the Council	CHE	04-Jan-22	Officer Update	Yes	William Cornall	William Cornall
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2022/23	CHE	04-Jan-22	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Housing Strategy Consultation Review	CHE	01-Feb-22	Officer Update		John Littlemore	John Littlemore
Len River Nature Reserve	CHE	01-Feb-22	Cllr Request		William Cornall	TBC
 Ensuring Fire Safety in Apartment Blocks	CHE	01-Feb-22	Officer Update	Yes	William Cornall	Nigel Bucklow / John Littlemore
Q3 Budget and Performance Monitoring 2021/22	CHE	01-Feb-22	Officer Update	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Review of the Homeslessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan, and Intentional Homeslessness Pilot (decision)	CHE	01-Feb-22	Officer Update		William Cornall	John Littlemore
Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment - Crime and Disorder Committee	CHE	01-Mar-22	Officer Update		John Littlemore	Martyn Jeynes
Possible Provision of further Council owned G&T Sites	CHE	TBC	Cllr Request		William Cornall	William Cornall
Heather House and Pavilion Update	CHE	TBC	Officer Update		William Cornall	Andrew Connors
Options on Tightening the Approach to Littering, Graffiti and Waste Crime (to incorporate Street Cleansing Monitoring)	CHE	TBC	Cllr Request		John Edwards	John Edwards
Provision of GP Services and Community Hub Update from the CCG (briefing 1 November)	CHE	TBC	Cllr Request	No	Alison Broom	Alison Broom

# Agenda Item 14

## COMMUNITIES, HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

30 November 2021

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Financial Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing & Environment Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Authors</b>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client) Carly Benville, Senior Business Analyst
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2021/22 financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee (CHE) as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (Quarter 2). The primary focus is on:

- The 2021/22 Revenue and Capital budgets; and
- The 2021/22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045.

The combined reporting of the financial and performance position enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues in their proper context, reflecting the fact that the financial and performance-related fortunes of the Council are inextricably linked.

#### Budget Monitoring

Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for the services reporting to CHE is £1.606m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £2.153m, representing an underspend of £0.546m.

Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 was £2.202m against a total budget of £27.166m. Forecast spend for the year is £10.440m.

#### Performance Monitoring

66.6% (1 of 3) targetable quarterly key performance indicators reportable to the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee achieved their Quarter 2 target.

**Purpose of Report**

The report enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues as at 30 September 2021.

**This report makes the following Recommendations to the Committee:**

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2021/22, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. That the Capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted; and
3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 2 for 2021/22, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.

**Timetable**

<b><i>Meeting</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>
Communities, Housing & Environment Committee	30 November 2021

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Financial Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2021/22

### CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is linked to the Strategic Plan and corporate priorities.</p> <p>The Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas.</p>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	This report enables any links between performance and financial matters to be identified and addressed at an early stage, thereby reducing the risk of compromising the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045, including its cross-cutting objectives.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Risk Management</b>	This is addressed in Section 5 of this report.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Financial</b>	<p>Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. Budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly enough to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities.</p> <p>Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money. The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.</p>	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>The budget for staffing represents a significant proportion of the direct spend of the Council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will be raised in this and future monitoring reports.</p> <p>Having a clear set of performance targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.</p>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget.</p> <p>There is no statutory duty to report regularly on the Council's performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. One of the purposes of the Key Performance Indicators is to facilitate the improvement of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Council services. Regular reports on Council performance help to demonstrate best value and compliance with the statutory duty.</p>	Senior Lawyer (Corporate Governance), MKLS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	The performance data is held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles contained in the Data Protection Act 2018 and in line with the Data Quality Policy, which sets out the requirement for ensuring data quality. There is a program for undertaking data quality audits of performance indicators.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA would be carried out as part of a policy or service change, should one be identified.	Equalities and Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Procurement</b>	Performance Indicators and Strategic Milestones monitor any procurement needed to achieve the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
<b>Biodiversity &amp; Climate Change</b>	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## **1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26 - including the budget for 2021/22 - was approved by full Council on 24th February 2021. This report updates the Committee on how its services have performed over the last quarter with regard to revenue and capital expenditure against approved budgets.
- 1.2 This report also includes an update to the Committee on progress against its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

- 1.3 Attached at **Appendix 1** is a report setting out the revenue and capital spending position at the Quarter 2 stage. Attached at **Appendix 2** is a report setting out the position for the KPIs for the corresponding period.
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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 There are no matters for decision in this report. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to take further action depending on the matters reported here.
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## **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget, the Capital Programme and KPIs at the end of September 2021, the Committee can choose to note this information or could choose to take further action.
- 3.2 The Committee is requested to note the content of the report as no further actions are required.
- 

## **4. RISK**

- 4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.
- 4.2 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2021/22. The budget is set against a backdrop of limited resources and a difficult economic climate, even before the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic became clear. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Committee the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.
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## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 The KPIs update ("Performance Monitoring") is reported to service committees quarterly: Communities, Housing & Environment Committee; Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee; and the Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee. Each committee will receive a report on the relevant priority action areas. The report is also presented to the Policy & Resources Committee, reporting on the priority areas of "A Thriving Place", "Safe, Clean and Green", "Homes and Communities" and "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure".
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## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 The Quarter 2 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Service Committees during November and December 2021, including a full report to the Policy & Resources Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
  - 6.2 The Council could choose not to monitor its budget and/or the Strategic Plan and/or make alternative performance management arrangements, such as the frequency of reporting. This is not recommended as it could lead to action not being taken against financial and/or other performance during the year, and the Council failing to deliver its priorities.
  - 6.3 There remains uncertainty regarding the Council's financial position beyond 2021/22, arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and the Council's role in responding to this. Future finance reports to this committee will ensure that members are kept up to date with this situation as it develops.
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## **7. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Second Quarter Budget Monitoring 2021/22
  - Appendix 2: Second Quarter Performance Monitoring 2021/22
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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

# Second Quarter Financial Update 2021/22

Communities, Housing & Environment Committee

30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Lead Officer: Mark Green

Report Authors: Ellie Dunnet/Paul Holland

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**Part C: Capital Budget Q2 2021/22**

C1) Capital Budget Page 9

# Part A

## Executive Summary & Overview



This report provides members with the financial position as at 30 September 2021, covering activity for both the Council as a whole and this committee's revenue and capital accounts for the second quarter of 2021/22.

Members will be aware of the significant uncertainty in the 2021/22 budget estimates arising from the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, both in relation to demands on the Council to respond and the speed of local economic recovery. Financial support from central government received during 2020/21 continues to support specific activities, and the unringfenced Covid-19 grant of £860,000 will be used to support recovery and renewal activities.

In addition, the Council will shortly be applying for the final round of funding under the government's sales, fees and charges compensation scheme covering income losses between April – June 2021 measured against the 2020/21 income budget. This is expected to be the final allocation of unringfenced Covid-19 funding from central government.

The headlines for Quarter 2 are as follows:

#### Part B: Revenue budget – Q2 2021/22

- Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 for the services reporting to this committee is £1.606m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £2.153m, representing an underspend of £0.546m.

#### Part C: Capital budget – Q2 2021/22

- Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 2 was £2.202m against a total budget of £27.166m. Forecast spend for the year is £10.440m.

# Part B

# Second Quarter Revenue Budget 2021/22



## B2) Revenue Budget

B1.1 The table below provides a detailed summary on the budgeted net income position for CHE services at the end of Quarter 2. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (e.g. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included).

### CHE Revenue Budget & Outturn – Quarter 2

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Cost Centre	Approved Budget for Year £000	Budget to 30 September 2021 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Forecast 31 March 2022 £000	Forecast Variance 31 March 2022 £000
Parks & Open Spaces	955	487	449	39	933	22
Playground Maintenance & Improvements	149	73	70	3	149	0
Parks Pavilions	37	18	20	-2	37	0
Mote Park	251	126	156	-30	296	-45
Parks & Open Spaces Leisure Activities	-2	-1	-0	-1	-2	0
Mote Park Leisure Activities	-19	-9	-15	6	-19	0
Allotments	13	8	5	2	13	0
Cemetery	66	56	24	32	35	31
National Assistance Act	-0	-0	3	-3	-0	0
Crematorium	-839	-373	-431	58	-897	58
Community Safety	28	-33	-37	4	28	0
PCC Grant - Building Safer Communities	0	-16	-21	5	0	0
C C T V	77	10	10	0	77	0
Drainage	32	16	12	4	32	0
Licences	-5	0	-0	0	-5	0
Licensing Statutory	-63	-31	-59	27	-83	20
Licensing Non Chargeable	8	4	4	0	8	0
Dog Control	30	13	14	-1	30	0
Health Improvement Programme	10	9	0	9	10	0
Pollution Control - General	13	7	9	-2	13	0
Contaminated Land	1	0	-0	1	1	0
Waste Crime	39	23	11	12	39	0
Food Hygiene	9	4	-2	6	9	0
Sampling	4	1	0	1	4	0
Occupational Health & Safety	-6	-3	-4	0	-6	0
Infectious Disease Control	1	1	1	0	1	0
Noise Control	1	0	0	0	1	0
Pest Control	-12	-6	-1	-5	-12	0
Public Conveniences	197	90	109	-20	197	0
Licensing - Hackney & Private Hire	-61	-33	-22	-10	-61	0
Street Cleansing	1,140	560	548	12	1,140	0
Household Waste Collection	1,271	633	624	8	1,271	0
Commercial Waste Services	-55	-29	-47	18	-55	0
Recycling Collection	745	205	196	9	745	0
Climate change	26	0	1	-1	26	0
Community Hub	0	-13	2	-15	0	0
Public Health - Obesity	0	-16	-25	9	0	0
Public Health - Misc Services	0	-3	-1	-2	0	0
Grants	166	83	82	1	166	0
Delegated Grants	2	2	1	1	2	0
Parish Services	130	65	67	-2	130	0
General Fund Residential Properties	-76	-38	-36	-2	-76	0
Strategic Housing Role	12	-25	-28	2	12	0

Cost Centre	Approved Budget for Year £000	Budget to 30 September 2021 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Forecast 31 March 2022 £000	Forecast Variance 31 March 2022 £000
Housing Register & Allocations	14	11	1	10	14	0
Private Sector Renewal	0	0	0	-0	0	0
HMO Licensing	-47	-49	-50	1	-47	0
Homeless Temporary Accommodation	-20	-10	-14	3	-75	55
Homelessness Prevention	328	129	98	31	229	98
Predictive Analysis and Preventing Homelessness	180	-908	-954	45	180	0
Aylesbury House	0	0	0	0	0	0
Magnolia House	28	14	19	-6	28	0
St Martins House	-1	-1	-13	12	-1	0
Marsham Street	4	2	3	-1	4	0
Sundry Temporary Accommodation (TA) Properties	61	31	24	7	61	0
Pelican Court (Leased TA Property)	-14	-5	-16	11	-14	0
2 Bed Property - Temporary Accommodation	0	0	0	-0	0	0
3 Bed Property - Temporary Accommodation	-16	-8	-7	-1	-16	0
4 bed Property - Temporary Accommodation	-71	-35	-50	15	-71	0
1 Bed Property- Temporary Accommodation	10	5	9	-4	10	0
Housing First Project	3	2	-2	4	3	0
Supported Accommodation	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Trinity Foyer	20	14	25	-11	20	0
Chillington House	-6	-3	-4	1	-6	0
Long Lease Properties	0	0	0	-0	0	0
Marden Caravan Site (Stilebridge Lane)	19	9	15	-6	19	0
Ulcombe Caravan Site (Water Lane)	7	1	20	-20	7	0
Head of Environment and Public Realm	110	55	37	18	110	0
Bereavement Services Section	265	133	122	10	265	0
Community Partnerships & Resilience Section	396	180	175	6	396	0
Licensing Section	115	57	52	5	115	0
Environmental Protection Section	272	136	139	-3	272	0
Food and Safety Section	267	133	0	133	267	0
Depot Services Section	887	445	420	25	887	0
Biodiversity & Climate Change	62	31	21	10	62	0
Head of Housing & Community Services	110	55	55	0	110	0
Homechoice Section	217	72	53	19	217	0
Housing & Inclusion Section	423	-55	-106	52	423	0
Housing & Health Section	277	25	-23	48	277	0
Housing Management	285	82	68	15	285	0
Homelessness Outreach	6	-176	-176	1	6	0
Salary Slippage 3CHE	-194	-97	0	-97	-194	0
Fleet Workshop & Management	225	112	89	23	225	0
MBS Support Crew	-59	-30	-22	-8	-59	0
Grounds Maintenance - Commercial	-141	-70	-92	21	-141	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,295</b>	<b>2,153</b>	<b>1,606</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>8,055</b>	<b>240</b>

B1.2 The table shows that at the end of the second quarter overall net expenditure for the services reporting to CHE is £1.606m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £2.153m, representing an underspend of £0.546m.

B1.3 The table indicates that in certain areas, significant variances to the budgeted income levels have emerged during the second quarter of the year. The reasons for the more significant variances are explored in section B2 below.

## B2) Variances

B2.1 Income from the Crematorium continues to be high due to the ongoing demand for the service, other than that there are no other significant issues in any of the other operational areas for this Committee.

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
<b>Communities, Housing &amp; Environment Committee</b>	<b>£000</b>		
<b>Crematorium</b> – Demand for the service continues to be high. This has led to the need to realign the cremator, and surplus income is being used to fund these works.	58		58
<b>Homeless Temporary Accommodation</b> – Costs have reduced due to the increase on the Council's own properties that were specifically purchased to deal with homeless families. Use has also been made of other Council and Maidstone Property Holdings properties.	30		55
<b>Homelessness Prevention</b> – There are a number of budgets in this area that are not being fully utilised, the most significant ones being those for the guaranteed rent scheme and the homefinder scheme.	45		98
<b>Food &amp; Safety Section</b> - A number of Covid-related grants are held in this section that have yet to be spent. These are Test & Trace Support, Compliance & Enforcement and Test & Trace Door Knocking Service.	133		0

# Part C

# Second Quarter Capital Budget 2021/22



## B1) Capital Budget: Communities, Housing & Environment Committee (CHE)

B1.1 The position of the 2021/22 CHE element of the Capital Programme at the Quarter 2 stage is presented in Table 3 below. The budget for 2021/22 includes resources brought forward from 2020/21.

### CHE Capital Programme 2021/22 (@ Quarter 1)

Capital Programme Heading	Adjusted	Actual to	Budget	Projected			
	Estimate	September		Q3 Profile	Q4 Profile	Total	Projected
	2021/22	2021	Remaining	£000	£000	Expenditure	Slippage to
	£000	£000	£000			£000	2022/23
							£000
<b>Communities, Housing &amp; Environment</b>							
Housing - Disabled Facilities Grants Funding	1,717	333	1,384	200	300	833	884
Temporary Accommodation	3,008	6	3,002	750	2,252	3,008	-0
Brunswick Street	233	185	48	48		233	0
Union Street	217	175	42	42		217	-0
Springfield Mill - Phase 1 & 2	3,066	1,129	1,936	1,790	129	3,048	17
Granada House Extension	954	4	950			4	950
Private Rented Sector Housing Programme	12,366	34	12,331	350	50	434	11,931
Affordable Housing Programme	2,384	73	2,311	1,100		1,173	1,211
Acquisitions Officer - Social Housing Delivery P/ship	74	98	-24	49	49	196	-122
Granada House Refurbishment Works	976		976	25	25	50	926
Street Scene Investment	50	22	28	14	14	50	-0
Flood Action Plan	244		244	80	80	160	84
Electric Operational Vehicles	84		84	84		84	
Vehicle Telematics & Camera Systems	35		35	35		35	
Rent & Housing Management IT System	19	7	12	12		19	-0
Installation of Public Water Fountains	15		15		15	15	
Crematorium & Cemetery Development Plan	378	131	247	47	200	378	-0
Continued Improvements to Play Areas	200		200	100	100	200	-0
Parks Improvements	149	1	148	74	74	149	0
Gypsy & Traveller Sites Refurbishment	1,000	3	997	50	100	153	847
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,166</b>	<b>2,202</b>	<b>24,965</b>	<b>4,850</b>	<b>3,388</b>	<b>10,440</b>	<b>16,727</b>

B1.2 Comments on the variances in the table above are as follows:

Granada House Extension and Refurbishment Works – The rooftop extension is no longer going ahead. Some of this budget may be required for the refurbishment works should the cost of the works be greater than currently anticipated. These works are not scheduled to commence until towards the end of the year.

Private Rented Sector Housing and Affordable Housing Programmes – The housing team are working on various projects which are currently at different stages. Expenditure is very much indicative at this stage and expected to increase during the last two quarters of the year once schemes have progressed further and new ones are potentially secured.

Acquisitions Officer Social Housing Delivery Partnership – The overspend is due to an extra resource being required with two acquisition officers now being in post to help deliver the housing capital programme, both of which have had contract extensions. Furthermore, the Leader of the Council has recently proposed a scaling up of the Council's investment in housing, and so this additional staffing capacity will support this ambition and will be feature in the imminent capital programme proposals for the next Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

*Gypsy & Traveller Sites Refurbishment* – The tenders for work have come in at £1.8m, which is significantly above the budget for the scheme. The additional funding for this work was approved by Policy & Resources Committee in October.

## CHE: Quarter 2 Performance Report

### Key to performance ratings

RAG Rating	
	Target not achieved
	Target slightly missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Previous data not captured
	Performance has declined
N/A	No previous data to compare

### Performance Summary

RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A <sup>1</sup>	Total
KPIs	1	2	0	8	11
Direction	Up	No Change	Down	N/A	Total
Last Quarter	4	0	6	1	11
Last Year	2	0	3	6	11

- 33.3% 1 of 3 targetable quarterly key performance indicators (KPIs) reportable to this Committee achieved their Quarter 2 (Q2) target<sup>1</sup>.
- Compared to last quarter (Q1 2021/22), performance for 40% 4 of 10 KPIs has improved, and for 60% of KPIs has declined<sup>1</sup>.
- Compared to last year (Q2 2020/21), performance for 40% 2 of 5 KPIs has improved, and for 60% 3 of 5 KPIs has declined<sup>1</sup>

### Communities

Performance Indicator	Q2 2021/22				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend	Long Trend
Number of households living in temporary accommodation last night of the month (NI 156 & SDL 009-00) (average taken from July – September)	130				
Number of households living in nightly paid temporary accommodation last night of the month (average taken from July – September)	33.3				
Percentage of successful Prevention Duty outcomes	78.89%	60%			
Number of households prevented or relieved from becoming homeless	112	112.5			
Percentage of successful Relief Duty outcomes	56.16%	60%			

<sup>1</sup> PIs rated N/A are not included in the summary calculations

Performance Indicator	Q2 2021/22				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend	Long Trend
Number of Rough Sleepers accommodated by the Council on the last night of the month	33				
Number of Rough Sleepers newly engaged in the period	16				
Number of households newly in temporary accommodation due to loss of tenancy and home ownership	12				
Number of homeless cases where the cause of homelessness is domestic abuse	41				
Percentage of CPWs to CPNs in period (CPT/SMP)	21.2%				
Percentage of noise complaints followed up with diary sheets by a customer	N/A				

The “**Number of households prevented or relieved from becoming homeless**” indicator achieved a result of 112 households against a target of 112.5, missing its target within 10%. Q2’s outcome is lower than that achieved in Q1 (135 households) and also lower when comparing to the same quarter last year (177 households). Quarter 2 has seen a reduction in the number of households prevented from or relieved of homelessness compared to previous quarters, however, this is reflective of the decreasing numbers of applications from households approaching as being homeless or threatened with homelessness and subsequently duties owed to prevent and relieve homelessness.

For example, there is a 16.5% decrease in the number of applicants owed a prevention or relief duty in the first two quarters of 2021-22 compared to same period in 2020-21; and 21.7% decrease compared to same period in 2019-20. With fewer households owed these two duties, there has seen a lower overall number of households being prevented from or relieved of homelessness in Quarter 2.

The “**Percentage of successful Relief Duty outcomes**” indicator achieved a result of 56.16% against a target of 60%, missing its target within 10%. Q2’s outcome is a higher result when comparing to last quarter (38.04%) but slightly slower than the same quarter the previous year (57.48%). As reiterated in quarter one’s report, the target of 60% successful Relief Duty outcomes is an ambitious target, significantly higher than national figures on the percentages of homelessness being successfully relieved. When the target was originally set, there were no national figures to benchmark against, so the target will be adjusted next year accordingly.

The performance of 56.16% of homelessness relieved in the quarter demonstrates good performance and is significantly higher than the national average of homelessness relieved for the quarter of 40.7%, taken from the new MHCLG interactive data dashboard.

It is recognised that relieving homelessness is more difficult than preventing homelessness and this has been seen in the previous quarter, which saw significant challenges with accessing the private rented sector, as there is an ever-growing demands on the sector. Additionally, applicants who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless, can only be owed the relief duty of 56 days, before they become owed the main housing duty, giving only a short window of opportunity to relieve homelessness.

**Notes**

Please note that at the time of writing this report, the “**Percentage of noise complaints followed up with diary sheets by a customer**” indicator was unavailable for Q2’s outcome, following a technical issue in gathering the data. The Information & Analytics team are working with the ICT team to resolve this as soon as possible and an update will be provided in Q3’s reports.

**Update from Q1**

The following data was unavailable at the time of reporting the quarter one figures, but has since been provided.

Performance Indicator	Q1 2021/22				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend	Long Trend
Number of Rough Sleepers newly engaged in the period	13	N/A			

## COMMUNITIES HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**30 November 2021**

### Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2026/27

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Council
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out a draft new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the Council. The new MTFS rolls forward the existing strategy to cover the five-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27 and reflects emerging budget priorities. It is currently subject to consultation with the Service Committees and will be further updated to take account of the Local Government Finance Settlement, due to be announced in December 2021, prior to final approval by Policy & Resources Committee and by Council in February 2022.

#### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That it considers and comments on the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 at Appendix A.

#### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Policy and Resources Committee	24 November 2021
Communities Housing & Environment Committee	30 November 2021
Strategic Planning & Transportation Committee	7 December 2021
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	14 December 2021
Policy & Resources Committee	9 February 2022
Council	23 February 2022

# Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2026/27

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Risk Management</b>	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Financial</b>	The budget strategy and the MTFS impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	The process of developing the Strategic Plan and the associated budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Legal</b>	The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget and development of the MTFS and the strategic revenue projection in the ways set out in this report supports achievement of a balanced budget.	Legal Services
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	Privacy and Data Protection is considered as part of the development of new budget proposals. There are no specific implications arising from this report.	Policy and Information Team

<b>Equalities</b>	The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council's future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed, an evidence based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations will be identified.	Equalities and Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Procurement</b>	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 21 July 2021 Policy & Resources Committee agreed the approach and timetable for the development of an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to cover the five-year period 2022 to 2027. This report provides an update on progress and sets out a draft MTFS. The MTFS remains subject to further consultation and the government's announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23, which is expected in December 2021.
- 2.2 The vision and priorities set out in the Council's existing Strategic Plan are clear and remain relevant. However, within the framework of the existing Strategic Plan, priority initiatives are under development, including a new Town Centre Strategy and the commitment to invest in 1,000 new affordable homes. The governance framework within which these priorities will be delivered is also due to change, with the reintroduction of a Cabinet system in 2022.

- 2.3 The draft MTFS is attached as Appendix A. It sets out in financial terms how it is intended to deliver the Strategic Plan, given the Council’s capacity and capability. It builds on the existing MTFS, but reflects emerging priorities and developments in the external environment.
- 2.4 A key outcome of the process of updating the MTFS is to set a balanced budget and agree a level of council tax for 2022/23 at the Council meeting on 23 February 2022. This report is a key step towards achieving that objective.

### **Revenue Projections**

- 2.5 The MTFS incorporates revenue projections for the five year planning period. Various potential scenarios were modelled, described as adverse, neutral and favourable. Key assumptions made in the projections are as follows.

Council Tax – It has been assumed that the government continues to set a limit of 2% to increases, above which a referendum would be required (as in 2021/22), and that the Council increases Council Tax to this limit.

Business Rates - The Business Rates baseline, which dictates the amount of business rates that local authorities may retain locally, will be increased in line with inflation in 2022/23, as part of an expected roll forward of the existing 2021/22 financial settlement.

Inflation – In the neutral scenario, the core assumption is for CPI inflation of 2% over the medium term, in line with the government’s target. However, it is recognised that inflation is currently higher than this level and this will create pressures, in the short term at least.

Updated Strategic Revenue Projections are set out in Appendix B.

### **Budget Consultation**

- 2.6 As in previous years, and in line with legal requirements and good practice, a public consultation has been carried out to ascertain residents’ views on what the Council’s priorities for spending should be. The consultation attracted over 1,000 respondents and the results are considered to be statistically robust. A report on the outcomes is included at Appendix C. Respondents identified Environmental Enforcement, Parks & Open Spaces and Housing & Homelessness as the top priorities for additional expenditure. Members will no doubt wish to take these views into account when considering detailed budget proposals in January 2022.

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## **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft MTFS attached at Appendix A. Any changes and comments will be considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting prior to recommending a final MTFS to Council for approval in February 2022.

3.2 The Committee could choose not to comment on the draft MTFS.

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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft MTFS. This will ensure that its views are taken into account as part of the development of the MTFS.

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#### **5. RISK**

5.1 The Council's financial position is subject to a number of risks and to considerable uncertainty. In order to address this in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, it has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting.

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#### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

6.1 Policy and Resources Committee reviewed the background to setting a new Medium Term Financial Strategy at its meeting on 21 July 2021.

6.2 The three Service Committees – Economic Regeneration & Leisure, Strategic Planning & Infrastructure and Communities, Housing & Environment – are considering the draft MTFS in the current cycle of meetings. The outcomes will be reported back to Policy & Resources Committee when it is asked to consider the MTFS again for recommendation to Council at its 9 February meeting.

6.3 A survey has recently concluded, in which residents were consulted on what they wish to see in the budget. This is attached as Appendix C.

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#### **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 An outline timetable for developing the Council's Strategic Plan and the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget for 2022/23 is set out below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>
24 November 2021	Policy and Resources Committee	Consider draft MTFS
November / December 2021	Service Committees	Consider draft MTFS
December 2021		Finalise detailed budget proposals for 2022/23
January 2022	Policy and Resources Committee, Service Committees	Consider 2022/23 budget proposals
9 February 2022	Policy and Resources Committee	Agree MTFS and 2022/23 budget proposals for recommendation to Council
23 February 2022	Council	Approve MTFS and 2022/23 budget

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27
- Appendix B: Strategic Revenue Projection 2022/23 – 2026/27
- Appendix C: Budget Consultation Survey

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL  
MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY  
2022/23 – 2026/27**

DRAFT

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# 1. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council will deliver its Strategic Plan over the next five years. The Council’s Strategic Plan, agreed in December 2018, covers the period 2019 to 2045. The Strategic Plan incorporates four key objectives: embracing growth and enabling infrastructure; homes and communities; a thriving place; and safe, clean and green. Further details are set out in **Section 2**.
- 1.2 Delivering the Strategic Plan depends on the Council’s financial capacity and capability. Accordingly, the MTFS considers the economic environment and the Council’s own current financial position. The external environment (**Section 3**) is challenging because of uncertainty about the pace of recovery from Covid-19 and the risk of continuing high levels of inflation. In assessing the Council’s current financial position (**Section 4**), attention therefore needs to be paid to its resilience, including the level of reserves that it holds.
- 1.3 Most key variables in local authority funding are determined by central government, such as the Council Tax referendum limit and the share of business rates that is retained locally. The three year Spending Review announced by the Chancellor in October 2021 set out a more favourable outcome for local government than expected but the impact at the individual authority level remains unclear. A consideration of the funding likely to be available in the future is set out in **Section 5**.
- 1.4 In view of these different elements of uncertainty, it is imperative that the MTFS both ensures Maidstone Council’s continuing financial resilience and is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of potential scenarios. The Council has prepared financial projections under different scenarios, continuing a practice that has been followed for a number of years. Details of the assumptions made in the different scenarios are set out in **Section 6**.
- 1.5 The MTFS sets out the financial projections in **Section 7**. Various potential scenarios have been modelled, described as adverse, neutral and favourable. The table below shows projections under the neutral scenario, before taking account of budget changes, which are due to be considered by members at Service Committee meetings in January 2022.

**Table 1: MTFS Revenue Projections 2022/23 – 2026/27**

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax	18.2	18.8	19.5	20.2	20.9
Retained Business Rates	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.8
Business Rates Growth	1.2	-	0.2	0.4	0.5
Collection Fund adjustment	-0.2	-0.7	-	-	-
Budget requirement	22.7	21.7	23.3	24.3	25.2
Fees and Charges	21.9	23.3	24.5	24.9	25.4

Total Funding Available	44.6	45.0	47.8	49.2	50.6
Predicted Expenditure	43.8	47.0	48.6	49.7	50.7
Budget Surplus / Gap	0.8	-2.0	-0.8	-0.5	-0.1

In accordance with legislative requirements the Council must set a balanced budget. The MTFS sets out a proposed approach that enables the Council to do this for 2022/23.

- 1.6 The Council's strategic priorities are met not only through day-to-day revenue spending but also through capital investment. The Council has adopted a Capital Strategy, which sets out how investment will be carried out that delivers the strategic priorities, whilst remaining affordable and sustainable. As set out in **Section 8** below, funds have been set aside for capital investment, using prudential borrowing, and further funding may be available by taking advantage of opportunities to bid for external funding, eg the Levelling-Up Fund.
- 1.7 The MTFS concludes by describing the process of agreeing a budget for 2022/23, including consultation with all relevant stakeholders, in **Section 9**.

## 2. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES

2.1 The Council has a Strategic Plan which was approved by Council in December 2018. It sets out four key objectives, as follows:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place
- Safe, Clean and Green.

'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' recognises the Council's role in leading and shaping the borough as its economy and population grows. This means taking an active role in policy and master planning for key sites in the borough, and where appropriate, investing directly and delivering projects ourselves.

'Homes and communities' expresses the objective of making Maidstone a place where people love to live and can afford to live. This means providing a range of different types of housing, including affordable housing, and meeting our statutory obligations to address homelessness and rough sleeping. It also recognises that, as reflected in our Covid 19 recovery and renewal objectives and plans, we will work with our partners to improve the quality of community services and facilities and to encourage and support residents to volunteer and play a full part in their communities, the need for which has been accentuated by the impacts of the pandemic.

'A thriving place' is a borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents. We will work to regenerate the County town and rural service centres and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer. Our recovery and renewal strategy responds to the challenges in achieving this priority by identifying investment opportunities, for example bringing forward employment sites and a Town Centre Strategy for renewal and rejuvenation .

A 'safe, clean and green' place is one where the environment is protected and enhanced, where parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are looked after, well-managed and respected, and where people are and feel safe.

2.2 Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in December 2018, the objective of 'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' has started to be realised, for example through our work on the Innovation Centre and a new Garden Community. The Maidstone Local Plan is due to be updated and a new Town Centre Strategy will be developed, setting out a clear framework for delivery of regeneration and growth.

2.3 Amongst initiatives to help make Maidstone a 'Thriving Place' are MBC investment at Lockmeadow and on the Parkwood Industrial Estate. Preparations for the future include options appraisal for our leisure provision. We will continue to leverage the Council's borrowing power, if appropriate in conjunction with partners, to realise our ambitions for the borough.

- 2.4 Our 'Homes and Communities' aspirations are being achieved by investment in temporary accommodation and the Trinity Centre and the Leader's commitment to build 1,000 new affordable homes.
- 2.5 The objective of a 'Safe, Clean and Green' place has been emphasised by the Council's commitment to a carbon reduction target and the capital investment to help enable this to be delivered and timely preparation for new waste management arrangements.
- 2.6 Within the framework of the existing Strategic Plan, the Council is therefore prioritising:
- development of the Local Plan and related strategies and policies, in particular the Town Centre Strategy
  - continued investment to make Maidstone a thriving place
  - investment in 1,000 new affordable homes
  - measures to enable the Council's carbon reduction target to be met
  - recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic.

The governance framework within which these priorities will be delivered is due to change, with the reintroduction of a Cabinet system in 2022, which will itself have financial implications in terms of potential additional support costs.

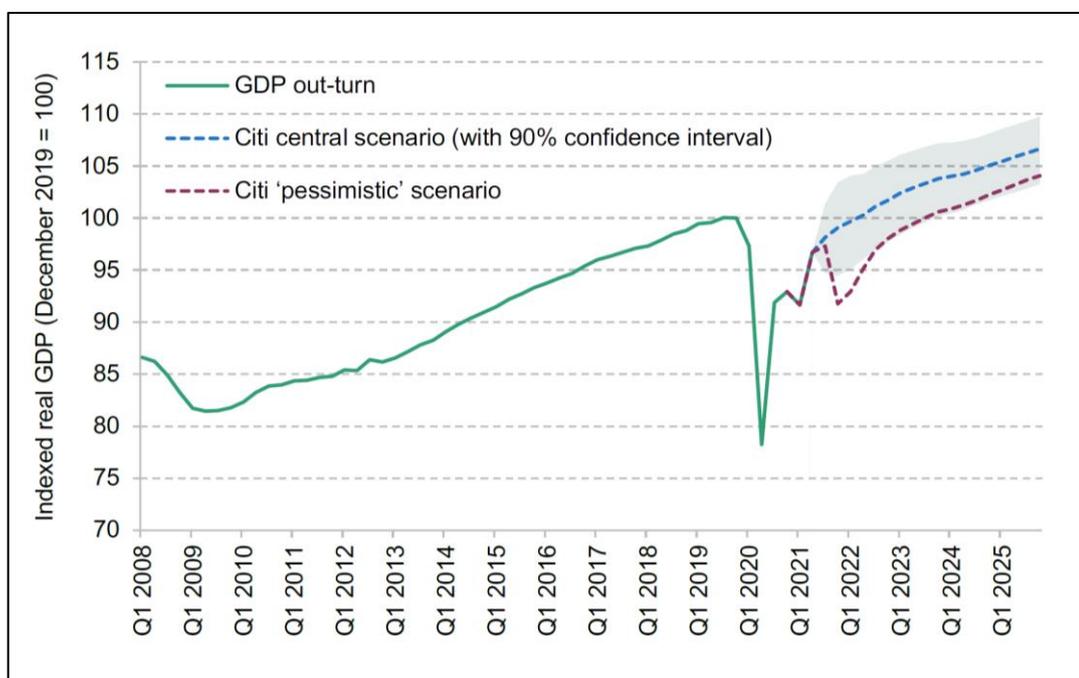
- 2.7 The overall funding envelope within which these priorities must be delivered remains broadly unchanged for 2022/23, meaning that savings will be required in some areas in order to fund growth in others, as well as to meet the savings already identified and agreed in earlier MTFS and budget setting decisions. Looking further ahead, considerable uncertainty remains about the financial position for future years, meaning that the financial strategy must remain flexible. The financial implications are set out in section 7 below.

### 3. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

#### Macro outlook

- 3.1 The UK economy initially recovered strongly from the Covid recession. However, a combination of supply shortages, withdrawal of furlough and government support for businesses, and a growing reluctance to spend on the part of consumers, are all weighing down the recovery. It remains to be seen how much long-term damage Covid will do to the economy, but at present the economy remains significantly smaller than it would have been in the absence of the pandemic. This slower growth has been exacerbated by Brexit, which the ONS estimates to have led to a permanent 1% reduction in the size of the economy.

**Figure 1: Real GDP in central and pessimistic scenarios, 2008-2025**



Source: IFS Green Budget 2021

- 3.2 The recovery has been uneven, with some sectors (eg transport and storage) recovering much more quickly than others (eg retail and hospitality), which points towards a permanent adjustment in the structure of the economy.
- 3.3 Inflation is now running at 3.1% (September 2021). This is driven by a number of factors, some of which may only be transitory. For example, the cost of energy can be expected to stabilise, as can price increases caused by supply bottlenecks. However, inflation arising from wage increase expectations and the depreciation of the pound may be more difficult to eradicate.

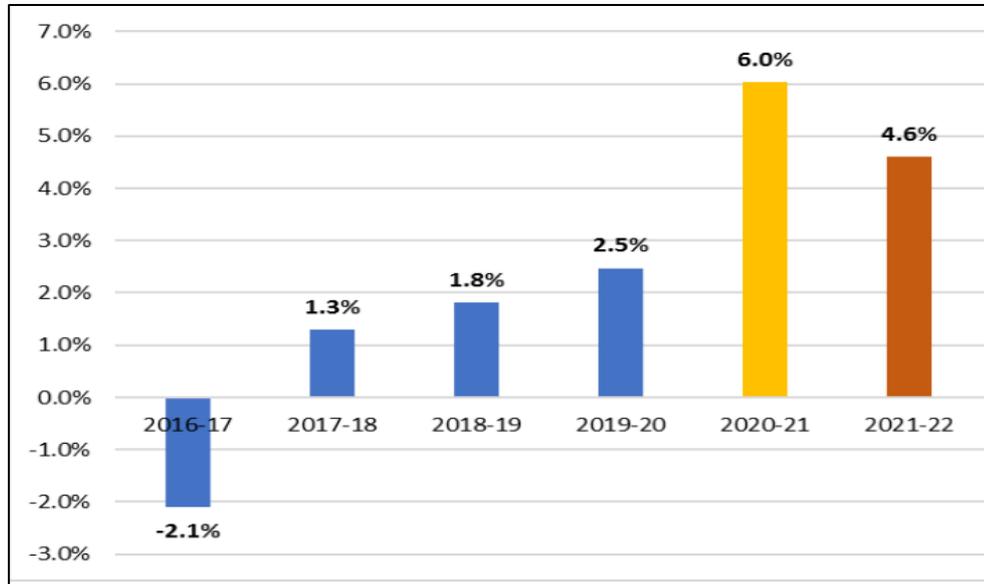
## Public Finances

- 3.4 Covid has led to a massive increase in public expenditure. The government has increased taxes to help pay for this, and seems to accept that the public sector will account for a permanently higher share of national economy for the foreseeable future. Currently it accounts for 42% of GDP, the highest level for over 50 years.
- 3.5 The increase in public expenditure has been concentrated in specific areas. Above all, health expenditure, which was already rising in proportion to total public expenditure in response to demographic trends, is expected to continue to grow more quickly than other areas of public expenditure.

## Local Government Funding

- 3.6 For many years, local government expenditure has seen steeper reductions and lower rates of growth than overall public expenditure. However, in recent years, the reduction in central government funding for local government has been mitigated by increases in locally generated sources of income, with Council Tax rising by more than the overall rate of inflation. Upper tier authorities in particular have been able to raise additional tax through a social care precept. This has allowed the government to claim that so-called 'Council spending power' has increased.

**Figure 2: Changes in Council Spending Power**



Source: Pixel Spending Review Briefing 2021

- 3.7 Authorities like Maidstone no longer receive unringfenced central government grant (Revenue Support Grant - RSG) and are instead largely reliant on Council Tax for their funding. The only impact of increases in central government allocations to local government is a higher share of business rates income collected locally.

- 3.8 The apparent benefit of higher Council Tax income is not felt as strongly as it could be, because the local government tax base has gradually moved out of synch with the reality of local service pressures. Council Tax continues to be based on 1991 valuations, which means that authorities in the south-east of England have seen much lower increases in income than the increase in house prices would imply. Meanwhile, Council Tax increases in more deprived areas do not provide adequate compensation for the loss of central government grant.
- 3.9 The other main element of local government funding, beside central government grant and Council Tax, is Business Rates. The 2010-15 Coalition Government transferred a notional 50% of locally-collected Business Rates income back to local government, but the requirement to adjust the amount of business rates retained between authorities, based on respective service needs, means that authorities with an active commercial sector and low perceived levels of need, like Maidstone, retain a low proportion of business rates (just 7% in Maidstone's case). It was originally intended to increase the 50% share of business rates retained locally to 75%, but the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) has now signalled that this is not a government priority.
- 3.10 Although local government funding is now both complex and inconsistent with good fiscal practice, central government has not addressed the issues. The lack of clarity arising was mitigated to an extent in 2015, when David Cameron's Conservative government provided some certainty for local government by announcing a four-year settlement, albeit that this incorporated a reduction in funding. However, since 2019/20, local government funding settlements have been announced on an annual basis, usually just three months before the start of the new financial year.
- 3.11 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a three-year Spending Review on 27 October 2021. This included assumptions about real terms growth in Council Spending Power (the government's preferred measure) over the next three years. It should be noted that the calculation of Council Spending Power assumes that local authorities will increase Council Tax by the maximum permissible without a referendum, which in Maidstone's case is a 2% increase. The term spending power should not be conflated with actual resources available.
- 3.12 Details of what the overall increase in spending power means for individual authorities remain to be announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement, which is due in December 2021. A potential issue for Maidstone is that an 'across the board' increase in funding for Councils would use the current basis of assessing funding requirements, which in 2019/20 indicated that the Council would have to pay negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to government, rather than receiving RSG from the government. The first element of any increase in funding could therefore simply be used to reverse negative RSG, giving no benefit to the Council.

- 3.13 Although the Spending Review covered three years (2022/23 to 2024/25), it is not clear whether this will translate into a three-year local government funding settlement.
- 3.14 The Chancellor's announcements included various capital funds (£300m grant funding to unlock brownfield sites, £1.5bn to regenerate unused land, UK Shared Prosperity Fund £2.6bn, Levelling-Up Fund £4.8bn). Access to this funding will be through a bidding process; it is not clear what the criteria will be. Reflecting its low standing in the levelling up agenda, Maidstone is a Priority 2 area.

### **Conclusion**

- 3.15 The economic recovery from Covid-19 appears to be slowing down, and is accompanied by higher levels of inflation, which it may prove difficult to eradicate. Whilst public expenditure has increased to levels not seen for many years, the main beneficiary has been the NHS rather than local government. The three-year Spending Review announced by the Chancellor in October 2021 set out a more favourable outcome for local government than expected but the impact at the individual authority level remains unclear.

**4. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION**

4.1 As a lower tier authority, Maidstone Borough Council is not subject to the extreme pressures currently faced by upper tier authorities arising in particular with respect to adults’ and children’s social care. It is nevertheless appropriate to assess the Council’s financial resilience. There are a number of elements that contribute to financial resilience, according to CIPFA<sup>1</sup>:

- level of reserves
- quality of financial management, including use of performance information
- effective planning and implementation of capital investment
- ability to deliver budget savings if necessary
- risk management.

An assessment is set out below of how the Council performs on these measures.

**Level of Reserves**

4.2 Maidstone Borough Council’s financial position, as shown by its most recent balance sheet, is as follows (unallocated General Fund balance highlighted, previous year shown for comparative purposes).

**Table 2: Maidstone Borough Council balance sheet**

	31.3.20 £ million	31.3.21 £ million
Long term assets	158.6	163.5
Current assets	28.0	36.5
Current liabilities	-44.0	-57.3
Long term liabilities	-80.8	-96.9
Net assets	61.8	45.9
Unusable reserves	-44.6	-12.2
	17.2	33.7
Represented by:		
Unallocated General Fund balance	8.8	10.3
Earmarked balances	7.8	22.9
Capital receipts reserve	0.6	0.5
Total usable reserves	17.2	33.7

4.3 The main changes between the two balance sheet dates and the principal reasons are as follows:

<sup>1</sup> CIPFA Financial Management Code, Guidance Notes, p 51

#### *Increase in current liabilities*

Government grants, eg for distribution to local businesses, which have been received by the Council but not yet deployed, are accounted for as liabilities at the balance sheet date.

#### *Increase in long term liabilities*

The liability to pay employee pensions in the future is re-assessed by actuaries each year. When interest rates are low, as at present, this leads to an increased liability as the discount rate applied to the obligation is correspondingly low.

#### *Increase in earmarked balances*

The main element in the increase is a £14.7 million timing difference, arising because the Collection Fund deficit incurred in 2021/22 as a result of Covid-19 has to be accounted for in 2022/23.

#### *Decrease in unusable reserves*

This is the impact on reserves of the increased pension liability and the Collection Fund timing difference (as described above), ie an equal and opposite amount to these increases in liabilities / earmarked balances.

- 4.4 The maintenance of the unallocated general fund balance is an essential part of the Council's strategic financial planning, as this amount represents the funds available to address unforeseen financial pressures.
- 4.5 For local authorities there is no statutory minimum level of unallocated reserves. It is for each Council to take a view on the required level having regard to matters relevant to its local circumstances. CIPFA guidance issued in 2014 states that to assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves the Chief Financial Officer should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing their authority. The assessment of risks should include external risks, such as natural disasters, as well as internal risks such as the achievement of savings.
- 4.6 Maidstone Council historically set £2 million as a minimum level for unallocated reserves. In the light of the heightened risk environment facing the Council, it was agreed when setting the 2021/22 budget that this minimum should be increased to £4 million.

#### **Current Position**

- 4.7 Current indications are that the Council will deliver a balanced budget for 2021/22, allowing the level of reserves to be maintained.

#### **Financial management**

- 4.8 Financial management at Maidstone Borough Council contains a number of elements. Officers and members are fully engaged in the annual budget

setting process, which means that there is a clear understanding of financial plans and the resulting detailed budgets

- 4.9 Detailed financial reports are prepared and used on a monthly basis by managers, and on a quarterly basis by elected members, to monitor performance against the budget. Reports to members are clear, reliable and timely, enabling a clear focus on any areas of variance from the plan.
- 4.10 Financial reports are complemented by performance indicators, which are reported both at the service level to the wider leadership team, and at a corporate level to members. Member reports on performance indicators are aligned with the financial reports, so that members see a comprehensive picture of how services are performing.
- 4.11 Financial management and reporting is constantly reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purposes and meets the organisation's requirements. Quarterly financial reports to members have been redesigned over the last two years to make them more user-friendly.
- 4.12 Where variances arise, prompt action is taken to address them. Action plans are put in place at an early stage if it appears that there is likely to be a budget overspend.
- 4.13 The authority consistently receives clean external and internal audit opinions.

### **Capital investment**

- 4.14 Capital expenditure proposals are developed in response to the Council's strategic priorities as part of the annual budget cycle. Capital investment must fall within one of the four following categories: required for statutory reasons, eg to ensure that Council property meets health and safety requirements; schemes that are self-funding and meet Strategic Plan priority outcomes; other schemes that are clearly focused on Strategic Plan priority outcomes; and other priority schemes which will attract significant external funding. All schemes within the capital programme are subject to appropriate option appraisal. Any appraisal must comply with the requirements of the Prudential Code.
- 4.15 Member oversight is ensured, first by inclusion of schemes in the capital programme that is approved as part of the annual budget setting process. Subsequently, prior to any capital commitment being entered into, a report setting out details of the capital scheme is considered by the relevant service committee.
- 4.16 The Council has a corporate project management framework that applies to most of the projects included within the capital programme. This provides for designation of a project manager and sponsor and includes a mechanism for progress on major projects to be reported to a Strategic Capital Investment Board.
- 4.17 Financial monitoring of capital projects is incorporated within the quarterly reports to Service Committees.

## **Ability to deliver budget savings**

- 4.18 The Council has a good track record of delivering budget savings, whilst sustaining and investing in services. Savings initiatives are planned so far as possible across the five-year period of the MTFS, rather than the focus being simply on achieving whatever savings are necessary in order to balance the budget for the coming year.
- 4.19 A common criticism of local authority financial planning is that proposed savings are often over-optimistic and are not based on realistic evidence of what is achievable. The Council aims to mitigate this risk with a robust process for developing budget savings proposals:
- New and updated savings proposals are sought on a regular annual cycle, with Service Managers typically briefed on the savings remit in August/September
  - Savings proposals are then developed over a period of around two months
  - Savings proposals have to be formally documented and signed off by the Service Head who will be responsible for delivering them.
- 4.20 Once savings have been built into the budget, their achievement is monitored as part of the regular financial management process described above.

## **Risk management**

- 4.21 The Council's MTFS is subject to a high degree of risk and uncertainty. In order to address this in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, the Council has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting.
- 4.22 The major risk areas that have been identified as potentially threatening the Medium Term Financial Strategy are as follows.
- Financial impact from resurgence of Covid-19 virus
  - Fees and Charges fail to deliver sufficient income
  - Adverse impact from changes in local government funding
  - Collection targets for Council Tax and Business Rates missed
  - Adverse financial consequences from a disorderly Brexit
  - Capital programme cannot be funded
  - Planned savings are not delivered
  - Failure to contain expenditure within agreed budgets
  - Inflation rate predictions in MTFS are inaccurate
  - Constraints on council tax increases
  - Litigation costs exceed budgeted provisions

- Commercialisation fails to deliver additional income
- Business Rates pool fails to generate sufficient growth
- Shared services fail to meet budget
- Council holds insufficient balances
- Increased complexity of government regulation.

It is recognised that this is not an exhaustive list. By reviewing risks on a regular basis, it is expected that any major new risks will be identified and appropriate mitigations developed.

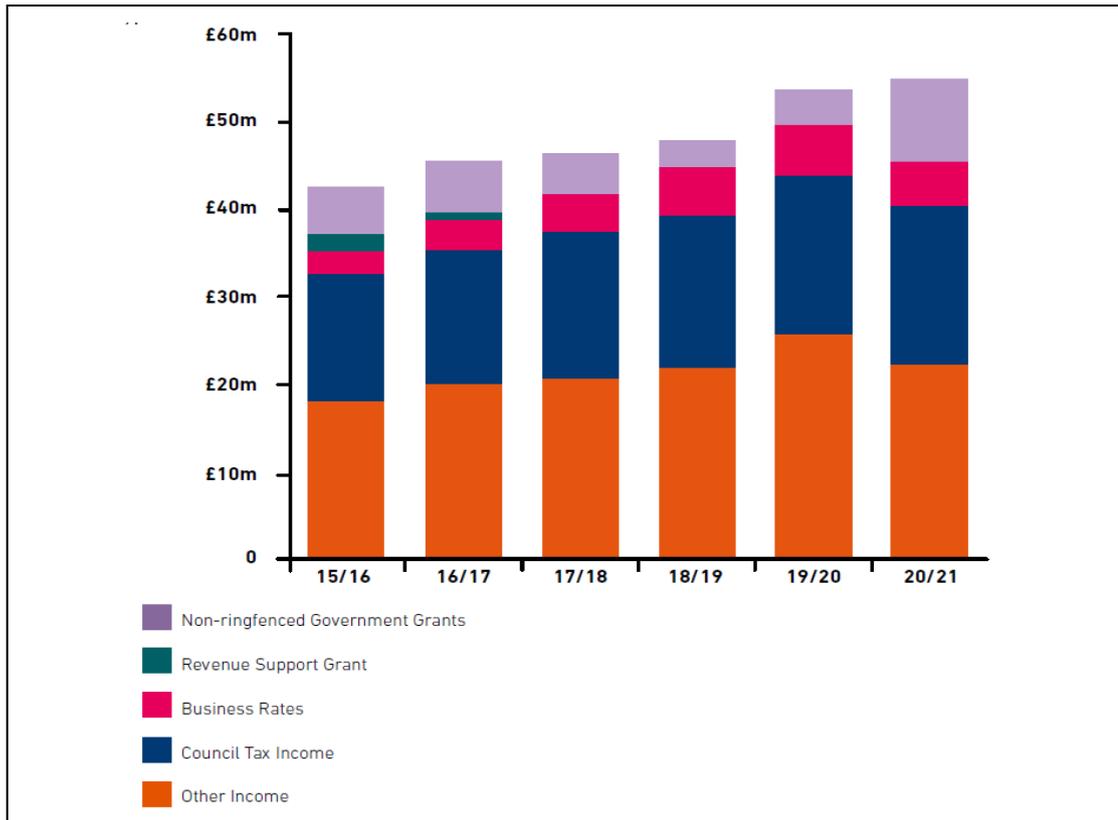
### **Conclusion**

- 4.23 When assessed against the CIPFA criteria for financial resilience, the Council can be seen to have adequate reserves in the short term and to be positioned well to manage the financial challenges it will face. The following section considers whether this position is sustainable.

## 5. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

5.1 The Council's main sources of income are Council Tax and self-generated income from a range of other sources, including parking, planning fees and property investments. It no longer receives direct government support in the form of Revenue Support Grant; although it collects around £60 million of business rates annually, it retains only a small proportion of this.

**Figure 3: Sources of Income (£ million)**



### Council Tax

5.2 Council Tax is a product of the tax base and the level of tax set by Council. The tax base is a value derived from the number of chargeable residential properties within the borough and their band, which is based on valuation ranges, adjusted by all discounts and exemptions.

5.3 The tax base has increased steadily in recent years, reflecting the number of new housing developments in the borough. See table below.

**Table 3: Number of Dwellings in Maidstone**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of dwellings	69,633	70,843	71,917	73,125	75,034
% increase compared with previous year	1.63%	1.74%	1.52%	1.68%	2.61%

Note: Number of dwellings is reported each year based on the position shown on the valuation list in September.

- 5.4 Whilst the effect of the increased number of dwellings is to increase the Council Tax base, this is offset by the cost of reliefs for council tax payers, in particular Council Tax support, and any change in the percentage of Council Tax collected. Covid-19 has led to both an increase in the number of Council Tax support claimants and a fall in the collection rate, which is likely to offset to an extent the benefit of an increased number of dwellings. The increase in the number of households and people living in the borough also impacts on the cost of service delivery, for example refuse collection and street cleansing.
- 5.5 The level of council tax increase for 2022/23 is a decision that will be made by Council based on a recommendation made by the Policy and Resources Committee. The Council's ability to increase the level of council tax is limited by the requirement to hold a referendum for increases over a government set limit. The referendum limit for 2021/22 was the greater of 2% or £5.00 for Band D taxpayers. Council Tax was increased by the maximum possible, ie £5.31 (2%).

### **Other income**

- 5.6 Other income is an increasingly important source of funding for the Council. It includes the following sources of income:
- Parking
  - Shared services (as agreed in collaboration agreements and where MBC is the employer)
  - Commercial property
  - Planning fees
  - Cremations
  - Garden waste collection
  - Income generating activity in parks

Where fees and charges are not set by statute, we apply a policy that guides officers and councillors in setting the appropriate level based on demand, affordability and external factors. Charges should be maximised within the limits of the policy, but customer price sensitivity must be taken into account, given that in those areas where we have discretion to set fees and charges, customers are not necessarily obliged to use our services.

- 5.7 Other income, particularly parking, was seriously affected by Covid-19. Whilst the government has committed to compensating local authorities for 75% of lost income above a 5% threshold for the first quarter of 2021/22,

there has been no guarantee of ongoing support in the event that income fails to return to pre-Covid-19 levels. Commercial property income was adversely affected by the pandemic, and whilst it has now recovered, it remains potentially at risk from a resurgence.

### **Business Rates**

- 5.8 Under current funding arrangements, local government retains 50% of the business rates it collects. The aggregate amount collected by local government is redistributed between individual authorities on the basis of perceived need, so that in practice Maidstone Borough Council receives only around 7% of the business rates that it collects.
- 5.9 Prior to the 2017 General Election, the Government was preparing to move to 100% business rates retention with effect from 2020. This was subsequently reduced to 75%, but the Secretary of State has now announced that this is no longer a government priority.
- 5.10 The amount of business rates retained by individual authorities is currently based on a needs assessment that dates back to 2013/14. A reset is expected at some point, based on a 'Fair Funding Review'. The overall amounts to be allocated as part of the Fair Funding Review are yet to be determined. It is therefore difficult to predict with any degree of accuracy whether the proportion of business rates retained by Maidstone will remain the same, increase or decrease.
- 5.11 The current local government funding regime gives authorities the opportunity to pool their business rates income and retain a higher share of growth as compared with a notional baseline set in 2013/14. Maidstone has been a member of the Kent Business Rates pool since 2014/15. Its 30% share of the growth arising from membership of the pool has hitherto been allocated to a reserve which is used for specific projects that form part of the Council's economic development strategy. A further 30% represents a Growth Fund, spent in consultation with Kent County Council. This has been used to support the Maidstone East development.
- 5.12 It should be noted that, when re-allocating business rates according to need, following a Fair Funding Review, the business rates baseline is likely to be reset, so all growth accumulated to that point will be reallocated between local authorities as described in paragraph 5.10 above.
- 5.13 Total projected business rates income for 2021/22, and the ways in which it is planned to deploy it, are summarised in the table below.

**Table 4: Projected Business Rates Income 2021/22**

	£000	
Business Rates baseline income	3,430	Included in base budget
Growth in excess of the baseline	620	Included in base budget
Pooling gain (MBC share)	349	Funds Economic Development projects
Pooling gain (Growth Fund)	349	Spent in consultation with KCC, eg on Maidstone East
Total	4,748	

- 5.14 These are budgeted amounts. The actual amounts received will be lower if Covid-19 continues to have an adverse impact on collection performance.

### **Revenue Support Grant**

- 5.15 Maidstone no longer benefits directly from central government support in the form of Revenue Support Grant, as it is considered to have a high level of resources and low needs. In fact, Councils in this situation were due to be penalised by the government under the previous four-year funding settlement, through a mechanism to levy a 'tariff / top-up adjustment' – effectively negative Revenue Support Grant. Maidstone was due to pay negative RSG of £1.589 million in 2019/20. However, the government faced considerable pressure to waive negative RSG and removed it in the 2019/20 and subsequent Local Government Finance Settlements.
- 5.16 Any increase in overall funding for local authorities could simply be used to reverse negative RSG for those authorities where it was payable. More generally, a needs-based distribution of funding will continue to create anomalies like negative RSG, so it cannot be assumed that the threat of an adverse impact, such as Maidstone was due to experience in 2019/20, has gone away.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.17 It can be seen that ongoing revenue resources are subject to uncertainty, owing to the economic environment and lack of clarity about the government's plans for funding local government. The previous section indicated that the Council's reserves, while adequate, do not leave it with a large amount of flexibility. This puts a premium on accurate forecasting and strong financial management.

## 6. SCENARIO PLANNING

- 6.1 Owing to uncertainty arising from the economic environment, and from the lack of clarity about what the government's plans for local government funding will mean for the Council, financial projections have been prepared for three different scenarios, as follows.

### *Favourable*

There is strong economic growth, with inflation pressures contained within the government's long term target rate of 2%. This allows the Council's external income to recover to pre-Covid levels in 2022/23 and grow strongly thereafter. New house building continues at pre-Covid levels (ie around 2% growth per annum). Cost pressures are contained, allowing scope for budget growth.

### *Neutral*

Growth is slower, with external income returning to pre-Covid levels over a period of 3-4 years. There continues to be growth in the Council Tax base, but constraints in the construction sector mean there is a slow-down for the first 2-3 years of the planning period. The Council maintains existing service levels and is able to fund inflationary increases in expenditure.

### *Adverse*

Government measures to stimulate the economy are constrained by the economy's capacity to grow and the need to keep public expenditure under control. Capacity constraints and low economic growth compared with other national economies lead to prolonged inflation in excess of the government's 2% target. As a result, there is minimal growth in Council external income and increased cost pressures lead to spending cuts in order to ensure that statutory services are maintained.

Details of key assumptions underlying each of these scenarios are set out below.

### **Council Tax**

- 6.2 It is assumed that the Council will take advantage of any flexibility offered by central government and will increase Council Tax up to the referendum limit, which is 2% in 2022/23. This is consistent with the Government's spending power assumptions.
- 6.3 The other key assumption regarding Council Tax is the change in the Council Tax base. The number of properties in Maidstone has grown by over 1.5% for the past four years. However, if there is a downturn in the economy, this rate of increase could fall. Moreover, Covid-19 is likely to reduce the amount of Council Tax collectible from each household. Assumptions are as follows:

	22/23	23/24 onwards
Favourable	2.5%	2.0%
Neutral	2.0%	1.5%
Adverse	1.5%	1.0%

## Business Rates

- 6.4 For 2022/23 the government is rolling forward the existing arrangements. Business rates are frozen for ratepayers but local authorities will be compensated with an increase in the business rates baseline to reflect inflation.
- 6.5 After 2023, the proportion of business rates retained by the authority is likely to be adjusted to reflect the findings of the Fair Funding Review. It is very difficult to predict what this will mean in practice. However, for the purposes of revenue projections, a number of assumptions have been made.
- 6.6 A further factor to be considered is the resetting of the government's business rates baseline. This represents the level above which the Council benefits from a share in business rates growth. It is likely that the government will reset the baseline in order to redistribute resources from those areas that have benefitted most from business rates growth in the years since the current system was introduced in 2013, to those areas that have had lower business rates growth. Accordingly, cumulative business rates growth has been removed from the projections for 2023/24, then is gradually reinstated from 2024/25.
- 6.7 Given these assumptions, the specific assumptions for business rates growth in each scenario are as follows:

	2022/23		2023/24 onwards	
	Baseline growth	Local growth	Baseline growth	Local growth
Favourable	5.0%	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Neutral	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Adverse	-5.0%	-10.0%	0.0%	0.0%

## Inflation

- 6.8 CPI inflation is currently (September 2021) running at 3.1%. The Bank of England expects it to peak at around 5% in April 2022 before falling back materially in the second half of the year. For the purpose of forecasting, it is assumed that the government's target rate of inflation is 2% is achieved over the medium term in the favourable and neutral scenarios. A higher rate of 3% is assumed in the adverse scenario.

## Pay inflation

- 6.9 Pay is the Council's single biggest item of expenditure, accounting for around 50% of total costs. Although the Council sets pay rates independently of any national agreements, in practice it has to pay attention to overall public sector and local authority pay settlements, as these affect the labour market in which the Council operates. It is assumed for the first three years of the MTFS planning period that the annual increase will be 2%. An additional amount of 1% has been allowed for in pay inflation assumptions, arising from the annual cost of performance related incremental increases for staff, giving a total assumed increase of 3%.
- 6.10 Whilst the planning assumption remains a 2% pay increase, it is important that the Council continues to pay a competitive rate in order to retain and attract staff. This position is therefore under review. The Council maintains a corporate contingency budget which allows a measure of flexibility if a higher increase than 2%, or market factor supplements for in-demand roles, are required in order to keep pace with the job market.

## Fees and charges

- 6.11 Fees and charges are affected by changes both in price levels and in volume. The projections imply that the level of fees and charges will increase in line with overall inflation assumptions, to the extent that the Council is able to increase them. In practice, it is not possible to increase all fees and charges by this amount as they are set by statute. Accordingly, the actual increase in income shown in the projections is 50% of the general inflation assumption in each scenario.
- 6.12 The sensitivity of fees and charges income to overall economic factors varies across different income streams. Parking income is highly sensitive, and has been very severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Other sources of income, such as income from industrial property holdings, are more stable.

## Contract costs

Costs are generally assumed to rise in line with inflation, but a composite rate is applied to take account of higher increases on contracts like waste collection where the growth in the number of households leads to a volume increase as well as an inflation increase. A relet of the waste contract in October 2023 is likely to lead to permanently higher contract costs.

- 6.13 Inflation assumptions are summarised as follows.

**Table 5: Inflation Assumptions**

	Favourable	Neutral	Adverse	Comments
General	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	2% is the government's target inflation rate but in reality it is likely to be higher in the short term.

	Favourable	Neutral	Adverse	Comments
Employee Costs	1.00%	2.00%	3.00%	Neutral assumption is in line with the most recent pay settlement and government inflation targets
	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	The annual cost of performance related incremental increases for staff
Contract costs	2.00% - 5.00%	2.00% - 5.00%	2.00% - 8.00%	A composite rate is applied, reflecting different pressures on individual contracts
Fees and charges - price	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	In line with general inflation assumptions
Fees and charges - volume	2.00%	0.00%	-2.00%	Reflects overall economic conditions

The government has said that it will compensate public sector employers for the increase in employer national insurance announced earlier in 2021. However, this does not address pressures faced by employees from increased national insurance and higher prices. Pay structures will be reviewed to consider how best to mitigate these pressures within the overall spending envelope.

### **Service Spend**

- 6.14 Strategic Revenue Projections under all scenarios will take account of savings previously agreed by Council, assuming that they are still deliverable. In addition, the following potential budget pressures have been identified and will be addressed by incorporating budget growth, subject to member agreement, as part of the budget setting process.

#### *Communities and Housing*

This service area supports the corporate priority 'Housing and Communities' and specifically the objective of delivering 1,000 new affordable homes. This may require a level of revenue subsidy, which would represent budget growth.

#### *Environment & Public Realm*

A provision of £1 million has been built into the Strategic Revenue Projections to recognise the likely increase in waste collection costs arising from the forthcoming contract relet in October 2023.

#### *Heritage, Culture & Leisure*

The Serco leisure contract comes to an end in 2024. Depending on the scope of any new contract, budget growth may be required. The objective of making Maidstone Town Centre a thriving place may also require budget growth, eg to provide leisure and cultural activities in the town centre.

### *Planning Services*

In addition to core development management and spatial planning services, there is a requirement for more extensive planning policies and a Town Centre Strategy.

### *Corporate & Shared Services*

Additional expenditure is likely to be required to support the new governance structure and to meet the Council's aspirations for better quality data analysis.

- 6.15 The projections include provision for the revenue cost of the capital programme, comprising interest costs (2%) and provision for repayment of borrowing (2%).

### **Summary of Projections**

- 6.16 A summary of the financial projections under the neutral scenario is set out in section 7.

## 7. REVENUE PROJECTIONS

- 7.1 Strategic revenue projections have been prepared based on the assumptions set out above and are summarised in table 6 below for the 'neutral' scenario. Additional growth to accommodate new pressures described in the previous section, together with any offsetting savings, are still to be included in the projections.
- 7.2 In light of the many uncertainties around future funding, it is important to note that projections like these can only represent a 'best estimate' of what will happen.

**Table 6: Strategic Revenue Projections 2022/23-2026/27**

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax	18.2	18.8	19.5	20.2	20.9
Retained Business Rates	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.8
Business Rates Growth	1.2	-	0.2	0.4	0.5
Collection Fund adjustment	-0.2	-0.7	-	-	-
Budget requirement	22.7	21.7	23.3	24.3	25.2
Fees and Charges	21.9	23.3	24.5	24.9	25.4
Total Funding Available	44.6	45.0	47.8	49.2	50.6
Predicted Expenditure	43.8	47.0	48.6	49.7	50.7
Budget Surplus / (Gap)	0.8	-2.0	-0.8	-0.5	-0.1

- 7.3 The above table shows a modest surplus in 2022/23. However, the likely impact of a business rates reset and the cost of accommodating the costs of a new waste collection contract means that a deficit is projected in 2023/24. On current projections, this deficit will reduce over the remaining term of the MTFS to achieve a broadly balanced position in 2026/27. It should be noted, however, that at this stage these figures do not incorporate growth to reflect the new pressures described in the previous section. Proposals for the relevant budget changes will be considered by members at Service Committees in January 2022.

## **8. CAPITAL STRATEGY**

- 8.1 The capital programme plays a vital part in delivering the Council's strategic plan, since long term investment plays an essential role in realising our ambitions for the borough. The cost of the capital programme is spread over the lifetime of investments, so does not have such an immediate impact on the revenue budget position. However, there are revenue consequences to the capital programme. Maidstone Borough Council borrowed to fund its capital programme for the first time in 2019/20. The cost of borrowing is factored into the 2021/22 budget, along with a Minimum Revenue Provision which spreads the cost of loan repayments over the lifetime of an asset. The budgeted total revenue costs of the capital programme in 2020/21 amounted to £1.870 million.
- 8.2 Typically, local authorities fund capital expenditure by borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, which offers rates that are usually more competitive than those available in the commercial sector. Prior to 2019/20, Maidstone Borough Council had not borrowed to fund its capital programme, instead relying primarily on New Homes Bonus to fund the capital programme. The cost of any borrowing is factored into the MTFS financial projections.
- 8.3 Public Works Loan Board funding has for several years offered local authorities a cheap source of finance, which has been used more and more extensively. The government has revised the terms of PWLB borrowing to ensure that local authorities use it only to invest in housing, infrastructure and public services. Given the Council's capital strategy, this should not prevent us accessing PWLB borrowing.
- 8.4 There has been a reduction of the period for which New Homes Bonus would be paid from six years to five in 2017/18 and then to four in 2019/20 and 2020/21. The government paid New Homes Bonus on a one-year only basis in 2021/22 and is likely to do so again in 2022/23. Under any new Local Government funding regime a new, unspecified mechanism for incentivising housebuilding is envisaged.
- 8.5 External funding is sought wherever possible and the Council has been successful in obtaining Government Land Release Funding for its housing developments and ERDF funding for the Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre.
- 8.6 Funding is also available through developer contributions (S 106) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Community Infrastructure Levy was introduced in Maidstone in October 2018.
- 8.7 The current funding assumptions used in the programme are set out in the table below.

**Table 7: Capital Programme Funding**

	21/22 £000	22/23 £000	23/24 £000	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	Total £000
New Homes Bonus	3,995	1,373	1,373	1,373	1,373	9,487
Capital Grants	4,064	850	850	850	850	7,464
Internal Borrowing	3,114	336	803	1,080	1,050	6,383
External Borrowing	37,838	25,311	14,655	16,305	11,280	105,389
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,011</b>	<b>27,870</b>	<b>17,681</b>	<b>19,608</b>	<b>14,553</b>	<b>128,723</b>

- 8.8 The use of New Homes Bonus to fund the capital programme arises from previous Council decisions. It could alternatively be used to fund revenue expenditure and therefore address relevant growth pressures, in particular the requirement for more extensive planning policies and a Town Centre Strategy (see paragraph 6.14 above). This would have the effect of increasing the revenue cost of funding the capital programme by £40,000 per annum for every £1 million of New Homes Bonus that was deployed in this way.
- 8.9 Under CIPFA's updated Prudential Code, the Council is now required to produce a Capital Strategy, which is intended to give an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services, along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The existing Capital Strategy was approved by Council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and will be refreshed in February 2022.
- 8.10 The existing capital programme was approved by Council at its budget meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Major schemes include the following:
- Completion of Brunswick Street and Union Street developments
  - Purchase of housing for temporary accommodation
  - Flood Action Plan
  - Mote Park Improvements
  - Further investment at the Lockmeadow Leisure Complex
  - Commercial Property Investments
  - Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre
  - Mall Bus Station Improvements
  - Biodiversity and Climate Change.
- 8.11 A review of the schemes in the capital programme is currently under way. Proposals will be considered for new schemes to be added to the capital programme, whilst ensuring that the overall capital programme is sustainable and affordable in terms of its revenue costs.
- 8.12 In particular, the updated capital programme will reflect the Council's ambition to deliver 1,000 new affordable homes. As this implies a significant expansion of the existing capital programme, its overall affordability and the extent to which it exposes the Council to risk will be addressed in the Capital Strategy.

8.13 An updated capital programme will be considered by Policy and Resources Committee in January 2022 and recommended to Council for approval.

## **9. CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS**

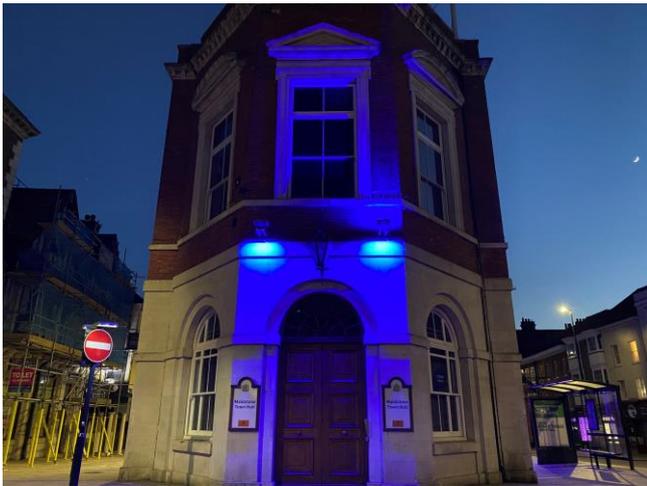
- 9.1 Each year the Council carries out consultation as part of the development of the MTFS. A budget survey has been carried out and will be considered by Service Committees.
- 9.2 Consultation will be undertaken with the business community, including a presentation to the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership.
- 9.3 Consultation with members will take place in January 2022 on the detailed budget proposals. Individual Service Committees will consider the budget proposals relating to the services within their areas of responsibility.

Document History

Date	Description	Details of changes
11.11.21	Draft to Corporate Leadership Team	
16.11.21	Draft to Policy & Resources Committee	Changes requested by CLT

**REVENUE ESTIMATE 2022/23 to 2026/27**  
**STRATEGIC REVENUE PROJECTION - NEUTRAL SCENARIO**

2021/22 £000		2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
17,216	COUNCIL TAX	18,204	18,845	19,508	20,195	20,906
3,430	RETAINED BUSINESS RATES	3,498	3,568	3,640	3,713	3,787
620	BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	1,164	0	180	362	546
-114	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT (COUNCIL TAX)	343	-164			
-13,243	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT (BUSINESS RATES)	-585	-585			
11,786	SECTION 31 GRANT					
<b>19,695</b>	<b>PROJECTED NET BUDGET</b>	<b>22,625</b>	<b>21,664</b>	<b>23,328</b>	<b>24,270</b>	<b>25,238</b>
21,924	OTHER INCOME	21,335	21,890	23,328	24,545	24,944
-3,186	FORECAST CHANGE IN INCOME	555	1,439	1,217	399	432
84	SALES FEES & CHARGES COMPENSATION					
<b>38,517</b>	<b>TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE</b>	<b>44,514</b>	<b>44,992</b>	<b>47,874</b>	<b>49,214</b>	<b>50,615</b>
42,996	CURRENT SPEND	41,058	43,990	46,378	47,766	49,173
	<b>INFLATION &amp; CONTRACT INCREASES</b>					
850	PAY, NI & INFLATION INCREASES	1,274	1,186	1,205	1,244	1,285
	<b>EXTERNAL BUDGET PRESSURES</b>					
40	PENSION DEFICIT FUNDING	40	150	150	150	150
	<b>LOCAL PRIORITIES</b>					
-10	ADDITIONAL GROWTH AGREED BY P&R					
	<b>OTHER SERVICE PRESSURES</b>					
221	PROVISION FOR MAJOR CONTRACTS		1,000			
-1,589	REVENUE COSTS OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME	837	630	834	453	
50	CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE PRESSURES	500				
	GENERAL GROWTH PROVISION	50	50	50	50	50
<b>42,559</b>	<b>TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>43,759</b>	<b>47,007</b>	<b>48,617</b>	<b>49,663</b>	<b>50,658</b>
<b>-4,042</b>	<b>SURPLUS / (SAVINGS REQUIRED)</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>-2,014</b>	<b>-744</b>	<b>-449</b>	<b>-44</b>



# BUDGET SURVEY

## 2022/2023

Undertaken Autumn 2021

### ABSTRACT

The Budget Survey is undertaken on an annual basis to assist in the identification of spending priorities for the Council.

Report prepared by Corporate Insight,  
Communities and Governance Team

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## Introduction

Maidstone Council are committed to providing high quality and good value services to meet the needs of the local community.

Reductions in central government funding and the coronavirus pandemic have had a major impact on the Council's finances and will continue to do so. Looking further ahead, the financial outlook for Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is uncertain, given the lasting impact of the pandemic and lack of information about the level of central government support in the future.

As part of that process, the Council sought to understand residents' views on where they think savings should be made and what the Council's priorities for spending should be.

## Methodology

The survey was open between 17 September and 31 October 2021. It was promoted online through the Council's website and its social media channels. Residents who signed up for consultation reminders were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation. A reminder email was also sent to this group.

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology, residents are free to choose whether to participate or not. It was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. As a result, this report discusses the weighted results to overall responses, by demographic questions, to ensure that it more accurately matches the known profile of Maidstone Boroughs population by these characteristics.

The results have been weighted by age and gender based on the population in the ONS mid-year population estimates 2020. However, the under-representation of 18 to 34 year olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group. Results for this group should be treated with caution. It should also be noted that respondents from BME backgrounds are under-represented at 4.9% compared to 5.9% in the local area. The results for this group should also be treated with caution.

There were a total of 1073 responses to the survey, after weighting this reduced to 1041. Based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over, the overall results are accurate to  $\pm 2.54\%$  at the 90% confidence level. This means if we repeated the same survey ,100 times, 90 times out of 100 the results would be between  $\pm 2.54\%$  of the calculated response. Therefore the 'true' response could be 2.54% above or below the figures reported (i.e., a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 47.46% to 52.54%).

**Please note that not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.**

The data has been z-tested at the 95% confidence level. The z-test is a statistical test which determines if the percentage difference between subgroups is large enough to be statistically significant or whether the difference is likely to have occurred by chance. An equivalent test, known as a t-test has been used to assess differences in mean scores.

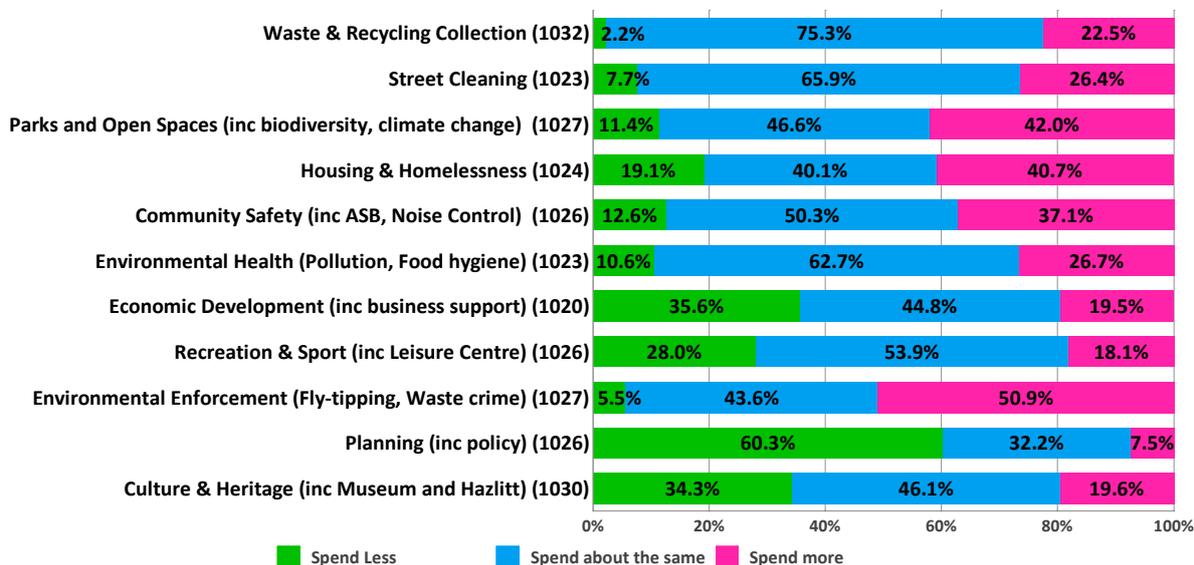
**Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.**

## Findings

- Half of all respondents (50.9%) said that the Council should increase spending for Environmental Enforcement.
- Six in ten respondents (60.3%) said that the Council should reduce spending on Planning.
- Parks and Open Spaces had the second greatest proportion responding, 'spend more' and was ranked the second most important investment priority for the third year running. It was also ranked the third 'most important' service.
- Just under a quarter of respondents said there should be a Council Tax increase. The proportion responding 'no', there should not be an increase in Council Tax has increased from 60.8% in the 2021/22 Survey (undertaken Autumn 2020) to 66.0% ( $\pm 2.9\%$ ) for this year.
- A greater proportion of respondents said there should be a Council Tax increase when presented with options for incremental increase. 42.8% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) indicated that Council Tax should be raised by selecting a percentage increase compared to 24.6% ( $\pm 2.6\%$ ) when directly asked if Council Tax should increase.
- The proportion responding 'no increase' when asked about specific proportional increases in Council Tax has increased by 9.7 percentage points since the 2020/21 survey (undertaken in Autumn 2019).
- The top three investment priorities remain in the same order as in the 2021/22 Budget survey:
  1. Infrastructure
  2. Parks & Open Spaces
  3. Leisure & Culture
- Respondents selected Waste Collection Services, Street Cleaning and Parks & Open Spaces as the most important services. Parks and Open Spaces also featured as the second area with the greatest proportion saying 'spend more' when asked about spending approaches.
- The most common comment about the Budget and the Council's spending approaches was in relation to financial concerns. Respondents raised concerns about affording increases in Council Tax, increases in the cost of living and decreases in income.
- Since 2018, when the 2019/20 survey was undertaken, the proportion agreeing that Maidstone Council provides value for money has declined year on year. In this time, it has dropped 5.3 percentage points to the current figure of 28.1% ( $\pm 2.7\%$ ).
- Half of respondents said they were 'satisfied' with their local area as a place to live (51.0% ( $\pm 3.2\%$ )), half said they were proud of Maidstone (50.4% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ )) and just over a quarter of respondents agreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential (27.8% ( $\pm 2.7\%$ )).

## Spending Priorities

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services provided by Maidstone Borough Council. They were asked to indicate what approach they thought MBC should take to funding with three answer options: 'spend Less', 'spend about the same' and 'spend more'.



The top three areas where respondents said 'spend more' were:

1. Environmental Enforcement
2. Parks & Open Spaces
3. Housing & Homelessness

The top three areas where respondents answered 'spend less' were:

1. Planning
2. Economic Development
3. Culture & Heritage

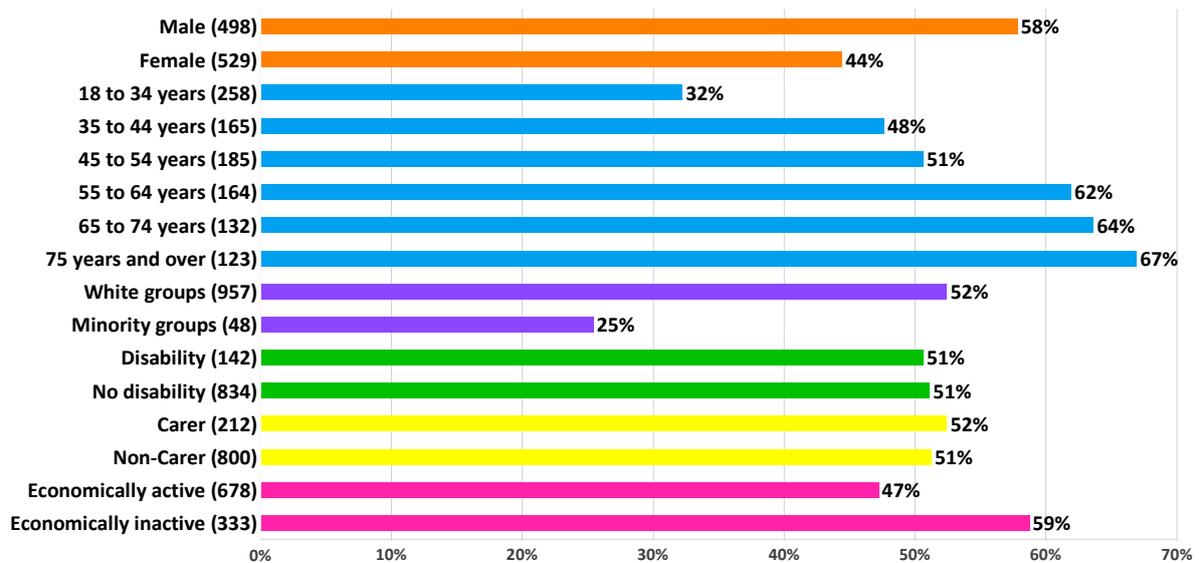
These spending areas are explored in more detail below.

### Top Three Areas – Spend More

#### Environmental Enforcement

A total of 1,027 respondents indicated a spending approach to Environmental Enforcement. The most common response was 'spend more' with 523 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend more' across the different demographic groups and the table that follows highlights any differences in response.

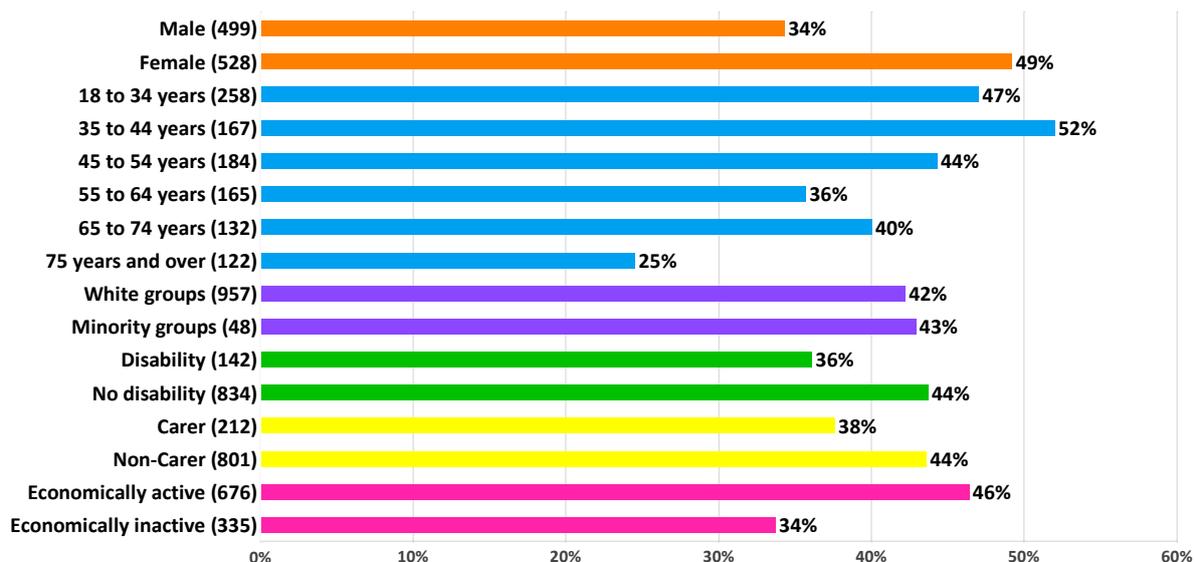


	<p>While there was no significant difference between the proportion of male and female responders answering 'spend less', male respondents were significantly more likely to respond 'spend more' on Environmental Enforcement than female respondents. The most common answer for female responders was 'spend about the same'.</p>
	<p>The data shows that the proportion responding 'spend more' on Environmental Enforcement increases as age increases and is significantly lower for the 18 to 34 age group when compared to the other age groups. The most common response for those aged 18-34 was 'spend about the same', whereas the most common response for the other age groups was 'spend more'.</p>
	<p>There was no significant difference in the proportion of respondents from white groups and those from minority groups answering 'spend less'. Minority group respondents were significantly more likely to respond 'spend about the same' with 67.1% (<math>\pm 13.2\%</math>) answering this way compared to 42.2% (<math>\pm 3.1\%</math>) answering the same from white groups.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents had a greater proportion responding, 'spend about the same' than economically active respondents and a lower proportion answering 'spend more'. These differences are significant however the gap is smaller than for other differences assessed between demographic groups.</p>

## Parks & Open Spaces

A total of 1,027 respondents indicated a spending approach to Parks & Open Spaces. The most common response was 'spend about the same' with 479 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend more' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

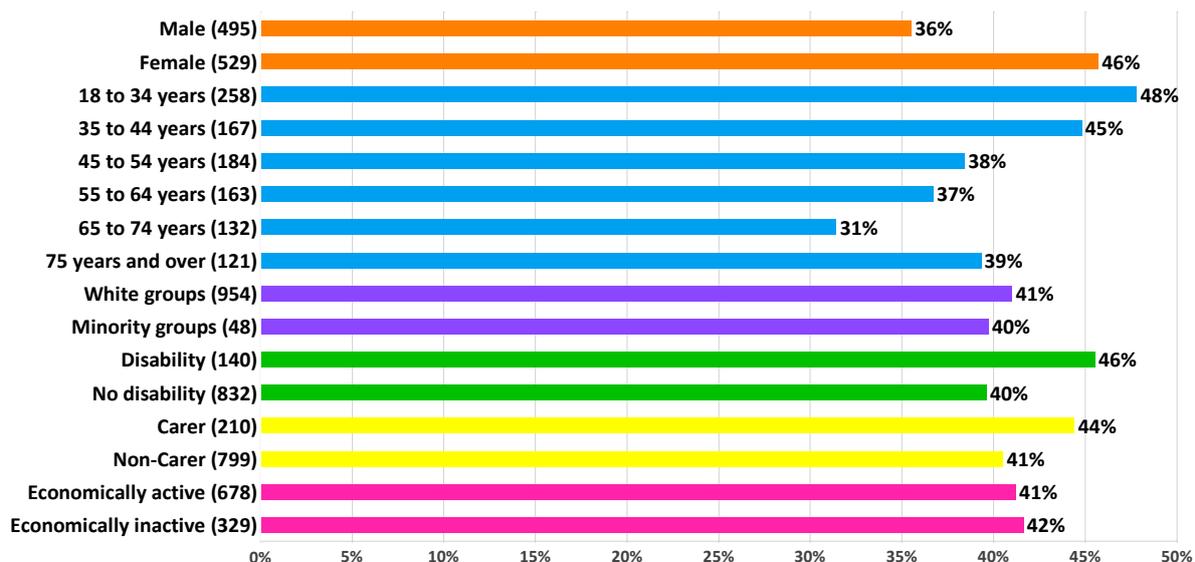


	<p>There were significant differences in the proportions of male and female respondents selecting each answer option. The greatest difference was between the proportions responding 'spend more' with 34.3% (<math>\pm 4.2\%</math>) of male respondents answered this way, compared to 49.2% (<math>\pm 4.3\%</math>) of female respondents.</p>
	<p>There was variation across the age groups in the proportions answering 'spend less', but no trend was identified. The 75 years and over group had a significantly lower proportion responding 'spend more' compared to the other age groups. The 75 years and over group and the 55 to 64 age group had the greatest proportions responding 'spend more' at 15.0% (<math>\pm 6.3\%</math>) and 15.6% (<math>\pm 5.5\%</math>) respectively. The 35 to 44 years had the lowest proportion answering 'spend less' at 8.1% (<math>\pm 4.1\%</math>).</p>
	<p>There was a significant difference in the proportion responding 'spend less' between respondents that are carers and those that are not. 15.4% (<math>\pm 4.9\%</math>) of carers said there should be less spending on Parks &amp; Open Spaces compared to 9.2% (<math>\pm 2.0\%</math>) of non-carers answering the same.</p>
	<p>Comparable proportions of economically active and economically inactive respondents answered 'spend less'. The most common response for economically inactive respondents was 'spend about the same' at 53.6% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>). This was significantly greater than the proportion of economically active respondents answering this way at 43.1% (<math>\pm 3.7\%</math>).</p>

## Housing & Homelessness

A total of 1024 respondents indicated a spending approach to Housing & Homelessness. The most common response was 'spend more' with 417 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend more' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.



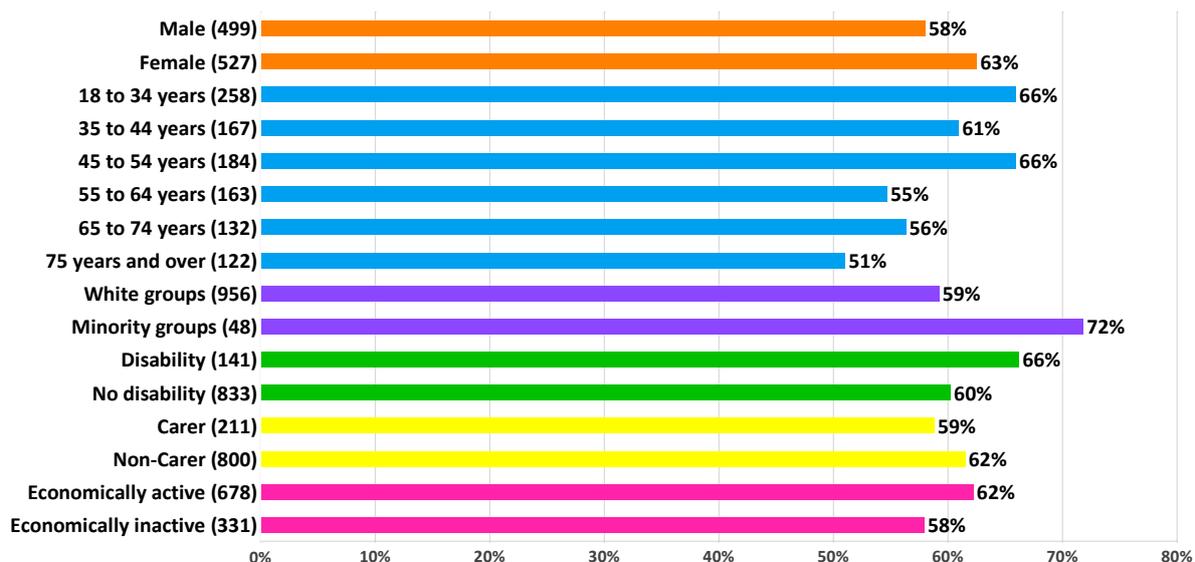
	<p>There are significant differences between how male and female respondents have answered this question. The most common response for male respondents was 'spend about the same' at 37.2% (<math>\pm 4.3\%</math>), and for female respondents it was 'spend more' with 45.7% (<math>\pm 4.2\%</math>) answering this way. The biggest difference between these groups was for the answer 'spend less', with 27.3% (<math>\pm 2.9\%</math>) of male respondents answering this way compared to 11.5% (<math>\pm 2.7\%</math>) of female respondents.</p>
	<p>There was no significant difference across the age groups in the proportions responding 'spend less'. The 65 to 74 years group had the lowest proportion responding, 'spend more' (31.4% (<math>\pm 7.9\%</math>)) and the greatest proportion responding 'spend about the same' significantly different from the proportions responding the same for the 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 year age groups.</p>
	<p>Non-carers had a significantly greater proportion responding 'spend less' on Housing &amp; Homelessness with 19.6% (<math>\pm 2.8\%</math>) answering this way compared to 13.5% (<math>\pm 4.6\%</math>) of carers.</p>

## Top Three Areas – Spend Less

### Planning

A total of 1026 respondents indicated a spending approach to Planning. The most common response was 'spend less' with 618 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend less' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

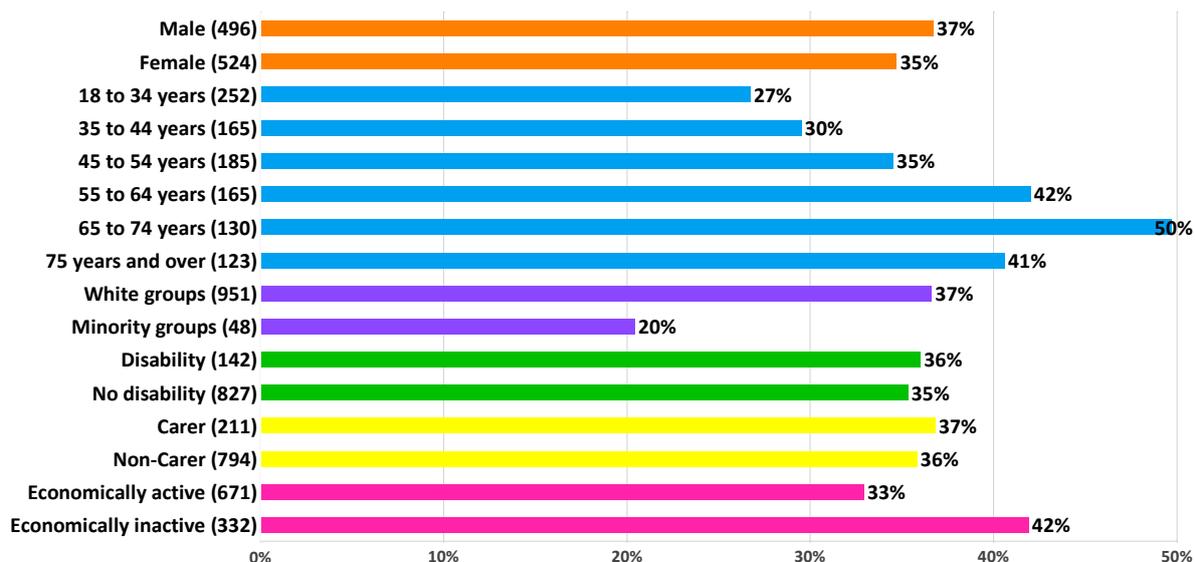


	<p>Comparable proportions of male and female respondents answered, 'spend less' and 'spend about the same' when asked about spending approaches for Planning. 'Spend about the same' was the most common response for both sexes. 10.3% (2.7%) of Male respondents answered, 'spend more', compared to 4.9% (<math>\pm 1.8\%</math>) of females answering the same – this difference is significant.</p>
	<p>'Spend less' was the most common response across all age groups. The 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 11.2% (<math>\pm 3.8\%</math>), the 64 to 74 years and 75 years and over age groups had the lowest proportions responding 'spend more' at 4.8% (<math>\pm 3.8\%</math>).</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability had a lower proportion responding 'spend more' than non-disabled respondents when asked about Planning. 3.4% (<math>\pm 3.0\%</math>) of disabled respondents answered this way compared to 8.3% (<math>\pm 1.9\%</math>) of non-disabled respondents.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents had a greater proportion responding 'spending less' than economically active respondents at 36.9% (<math>\pm 5.2\%</math>) compared to 29.0% (<math>\pm 3.4\%</math>) respectively. Economically active respondents had a greater proportion responding 'spend more' at 8.7% (<math>\pm 2.1\%</math>) compared to economically inactive respondents with 5.2% (<math>\pm 2.4\%</math>) answering this way.</p>

## Economic Development

A total of 1,020 respondents indicated a spending approach to Economic Development. The most common response was 'spend about the same' with 457 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend less' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.

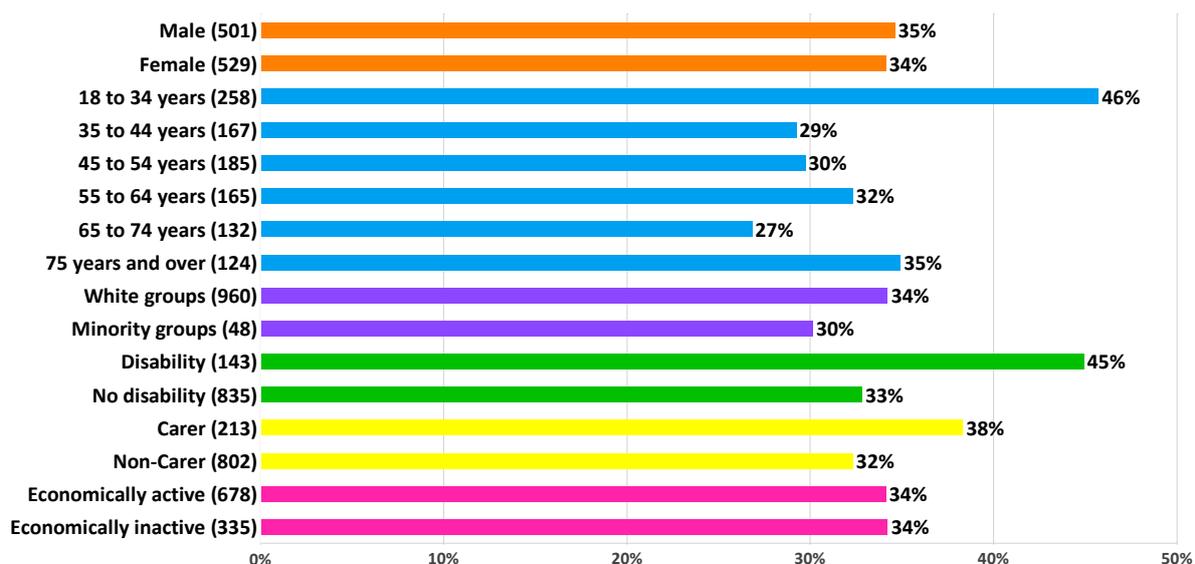


	<p>The most common response for the 64 to 74 years and the 75 years and over age groups was 'spend less'. For all other age groups the most common response was 'spend about the same'.</p> <p>The 18 to 34 age group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 24.3% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>). The 64 to 74 age group had the lowest proportion responding this way at 15.1% (<math>\pm 6.2\%</math>) – this difference is significant.</p>
	<p>A significantly greater proportion of respondents from white groups answered 'spend less' than respondents from minority groups. 36.6% (<math>\pm 3.1\%</math>) of white groups answered this way compared to 20.4% (<math>\pm 11.3\%</math>) of minority groups. No other significant differences were observed.</p>
	<p>A significantly greater proportion of economically inactive respondents answered 'spend less' than economically active respondents. 41.9% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>) of the economically inactive group answered this way compared to 32.9% (<math>\pm 3.6\%</math>) of the economically active group. No other significant differences were observed.</p>

## Culture & Heritage

A total of 1,028 respondents indicated a spending approach to Culture & Heritage. The most common response was 'spend about the same' with 475 answering this way.

The chart below shows the proportions responding 'spend less' across the different demographic groups and with the table highlighting any differences in response.



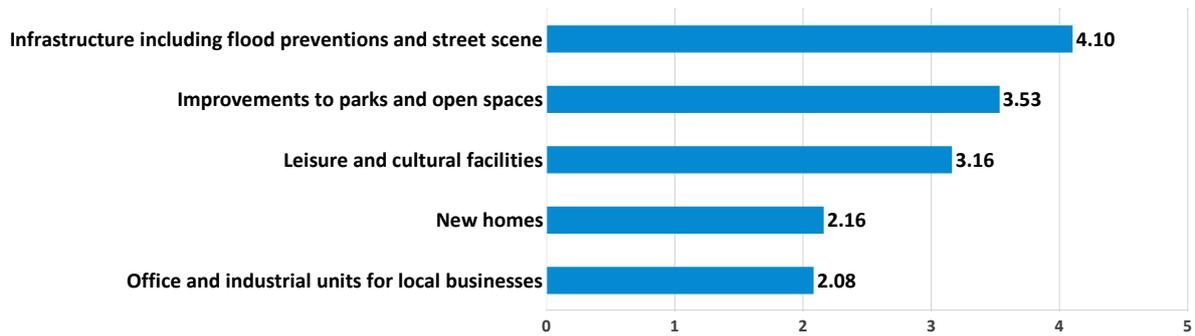
	<p>The most common answer for the 18-34 years group was 'spend less' with 45.7% (<math>\pm 6.1\%</math>) answering this way. This was significantly greater than the proportion responding this way across the other age groups. The most common response for the remaining age groups was 'spend about the same'. The 35 to 45 years group had the greatest proportion responding 'spend more' at 24.4% (<math>\pm 6.5\%</math>). The 55 to 64 years and the 75 years and over groups had the lowest proportions responding this way at 14.1% - the difference here is significant.</p>
	<p>The most common answer for disabled respondents was 'spend less' with 44.9% (<math>\pm 8.1\%</math>) answering this way. This was significantly greater than the proportion responding this way for non-disabled respondents. The most common answer for non-disabled respondents was 'spend about the same'. Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion answering 'spend more' with 20.8% (<math>\pm 2.8\%</math>) answering this way compared to 12.5% (<math>\pm 5.4\%</math>) of disabled respondents.</p>
	<p>The proportion of carers and non-carers answering 'spend less' were comparable. Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering 'spend more' on Heritage and Culture with 21.1% (<math>\pm 2.8\%</math>) answering this way compared to 14.6% (<math>\pm 4.7\%</math>) of carer respondents.</p>
	<p>The proportions responding, 'spend about the same' and 'spend more' for economically active and economically inactive respondents show significant differences. 22.6% (<math>\pm 3.1\%</math>) of economically active respondents said 'spend more' compared to 14.4% (<math>\pm 3.8\%</math>) of economically inactive respondents.</p>

## Investment Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to place a list of investment programme priorities into their preferred order of importance. A total of 1,016 respondents ranked the investment priorities.

To assess this data, a weighted average has been used. The programmes placed first received 5 points and the programmes ranked last were given 1 point. These were then added together and divided by the number of respondents to give a weighted average.

Please note that not every respondent ranked each item.



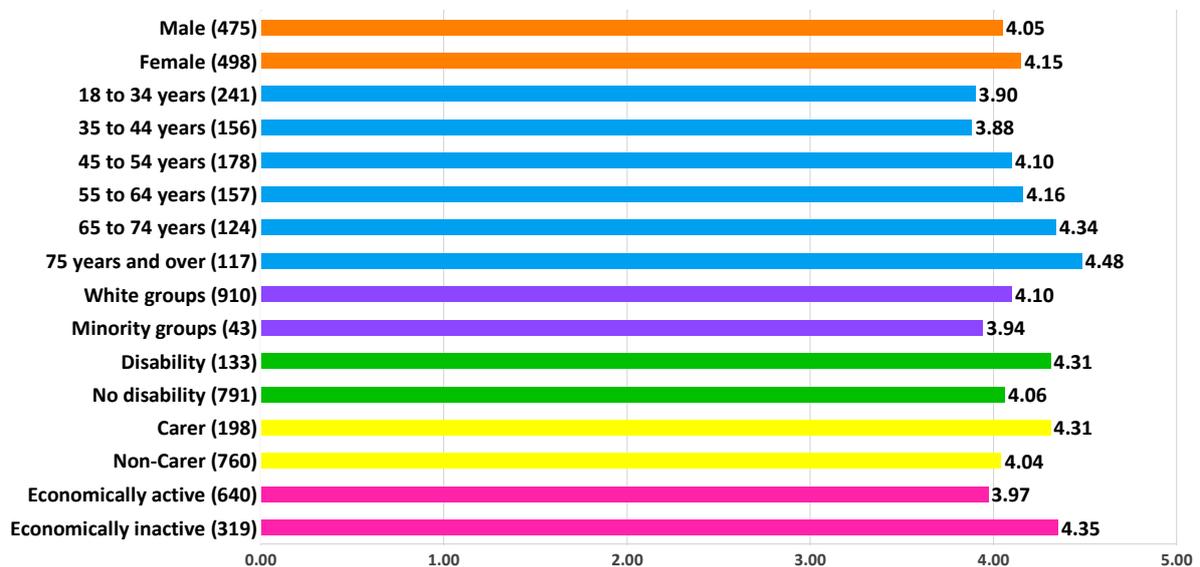
This question was asked in the 2021/22 Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020. The order of the top three programmes is unchanged. New Homes was ranked as fifth in 2021/22 but this year it has moved up a place to fourth and Office and industrial units for local businesses has dropped from fourth to fifth.

### Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene

Overall, 510 (52.4%) respondents placed 'Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene' as their top investment priority

In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, 467 (53.2%) respondents placed 'Infrastructure including flood preventions and street scene' as their top investment priority and in the 2020/21 Budget survey 52.2% placed this priority as first.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority 'Infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene'.





Analysis suggests a relationship between age and ranking of this priority with the proportion placing this priority first and second increasing with age. The scores for the 18 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years groups are significantly different than the scores for the 65 to 74 years and the 75 years and over group.

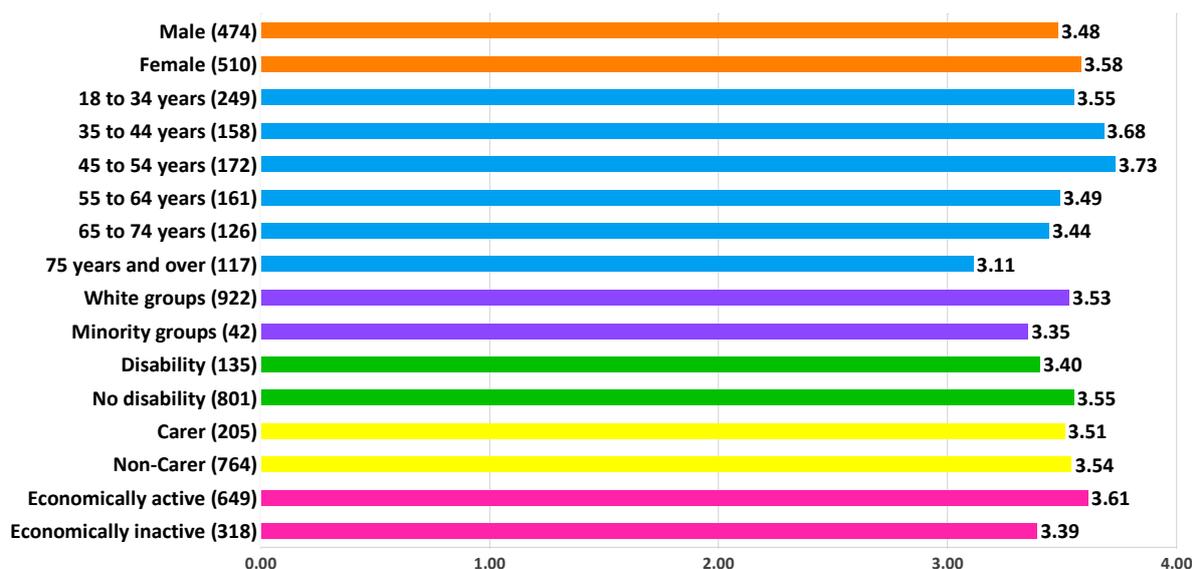
	<p>The difference in score between carer and non-carer respondents is significant. 61.0% (<math>\pm 6.8\%</math>) of carers placed this priority as first compared to 50.7% (<math>\pm 3.6\%</math>) of non-carers.</p>
	<p>The difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents is significant. 61.9% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>) of economically inactive respondents placed this priority first compared to 47.6% (<math>\pm 3.9\%</math>) of economically active respondents. 13.6% (<math>\pm 2.7\%</math>) of economically active respondents placed this priority as fourth or fifth, significantly greater than the proportion responding the same from the economically inactive group (6.0% (<math>\pm 2.6\%</math>)).</p>

## Improvements to parks & open spaces

Overall, 212 (21.6%) respondents placed ‘improvements to parks and open spaces’ as their top investment priority

In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, 203 (22.9%) respondents placed ‘Improvements to parks and open spaces’ as their top investment priority.

The following chart shows the mean score across the demographic groups for the priority ‘improvements to parks and open spaces’.



	<p>The score for respondents aged 75 years and over is significantly lower than the scores for the age groups up to 64 years. 33.9% (<math>\pm 8.5\%</math>) of the 75 years and over age group placed this priority as fourth or fifth. The 35 to 44 age group had the greatest proportion placing this priority as first at 29.9% (<math>\pm 7.1\%</math>) while the 45 to 54 age group had the lowest proportion placing this in fourth or fifth at 12.2% (<math>\pm 4.9\%</math>).</p>
	<p>The difference in score between economically active and economically inactive respondents is significant. 24.8% (<math>\pm 3.3\%</math>) of the economically active placed this priority first compared to 15.1% (<math>\pm 3.9\%</math>) of economically inactive respondents.</p>

## Council Tax Changes

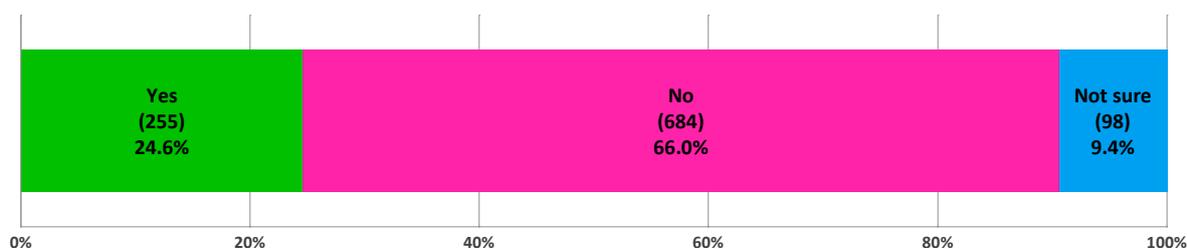
### Appetite for increase

The survey explained that the council funds a significant proportion of its spending through council tax, and that Maidstone's share of Council Tax for a Band D taxpayer is £270.90 out of a total of £1,988.63, the rest being made up of charges from Kent County Council, the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service.

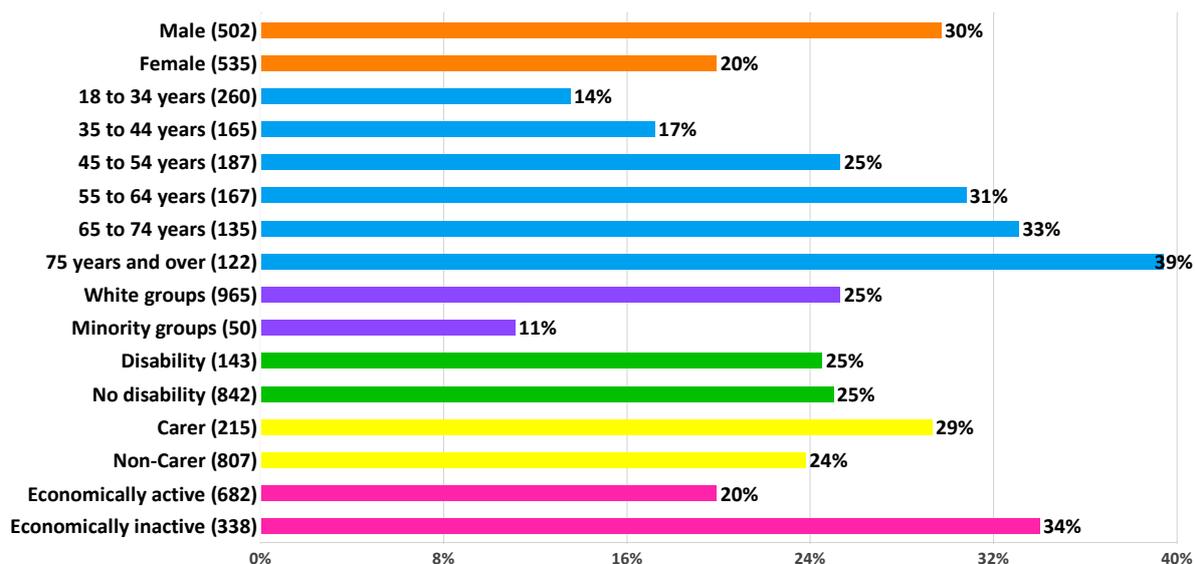
The survey asked respondents if they thought that Council Tax for 2022/23 should be increased. There were 1,037 responses to this question.

The most common response was 'no' with 684 responding this way. 24.6% ( $\pm 2.6\%$ ) of respondents said that Council Tax should increase. This question was asked in the 2021/22 Budget Consultation where 28.4% ( $\pm 2.8\%$ ) responded 'Yes'.

The proportion responding 'No' has increased from 60.8% in the 2021/22 Survey to 66.0% ( $\pm 2.9\%$ ) for this year.



The chart below shows the proportion of respondents across the different demographic groups responding 'yes'. Differences in response between demographic groups are explored in the table below.



	<p>Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering 'yes' at 29.7% (<math>\pm 4.0\%</math>) compared to female respondents where 19.9% (<math>\pm 3.4\%</math>) answered this way). Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 'not sure' compared to male respondents. The same differences were observed in the 2021/22 Budget Survey.</p>
	<p>Analysis shows that there is a linear relationship between this question and age. The proportions responding 'no' decreases with age and the proportion responding 'yes' increases with age. The same pattern was observed in the 2021/22 Budget Survey.</p>
	<p>Respondents from white groups had a significantly greater proportion answering 'yes' at 25.3% (<math>\pm 2.7\%</math>) compared to respondents from minority groups where 11.1% (<math>\pm 8.7\%</math>) answered this way. No other significant differences between these groups were observed and the previous Budget Survey (2021/22) did not show any significant difference between these groups.</p>
	<p>Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion answering 'No' with 68.0% (<math>\pm 3.2\%</math>) responding this way compared to 56.1% (<math>\pm 6.6\%</math>) of carer respondents. Carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 'not sure' compared to non-carers at 14.6% (<math>\pm 4.7\%</math>) compared to 8.1% (<math>\pm 1.8\%</math>).</p>
	<p>There were significant differences between the proportions of Economically active and Economically inactive respondents answering both positively and negatively. 73.4% (<math>\pm 3.3\%</math>) of Economically active respondents answered 'No' compared to 50.6% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>) of Economically inactive respondents.</p>

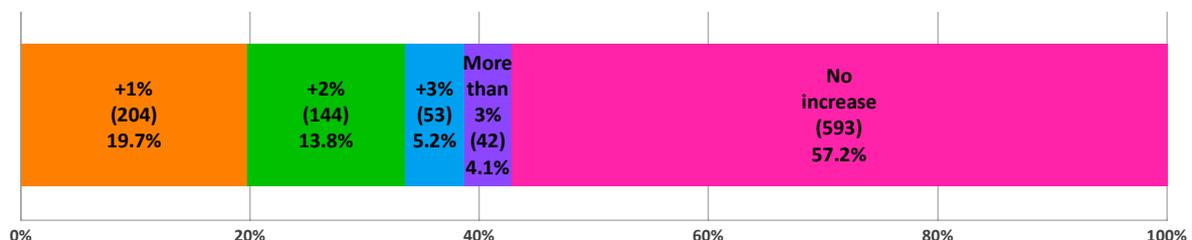
### Acceptable levels for increase

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how much more, if any, Council Tax they would be willing to pay. There were 1,037 responses to this question.

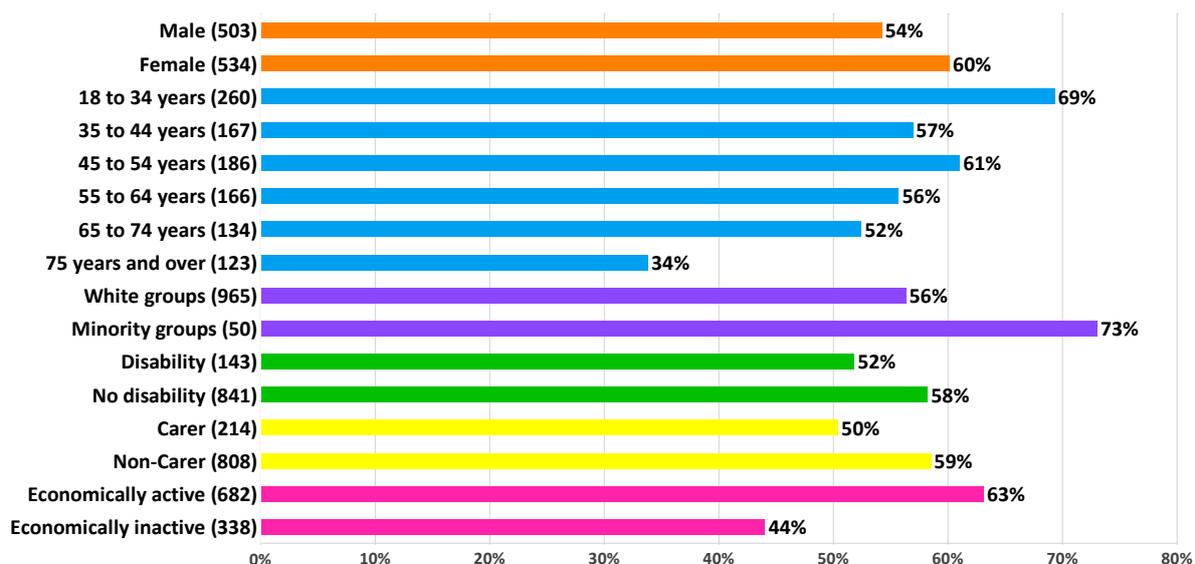
The most common response was 'no increase' with 57.2% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) answering this way. Overall, 42.8% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) indicated that Council Tax should be raised by selecting a percentage increase.

This is significantly greater than the proportion responding 'yes' to the previous, more general question.

The proportion responding 'no increase' has increased by 9.7 percentage points since 2019 when this question was asked as part of the 2019/20 Budget Survey and again in the 2020/21 Budget Survey, increasing from 47.5% to 57.2%.



The chart below shows the proportion responding 'no increase' across the different demographic groups. Differences in response between demographic groups are explored in the table below.



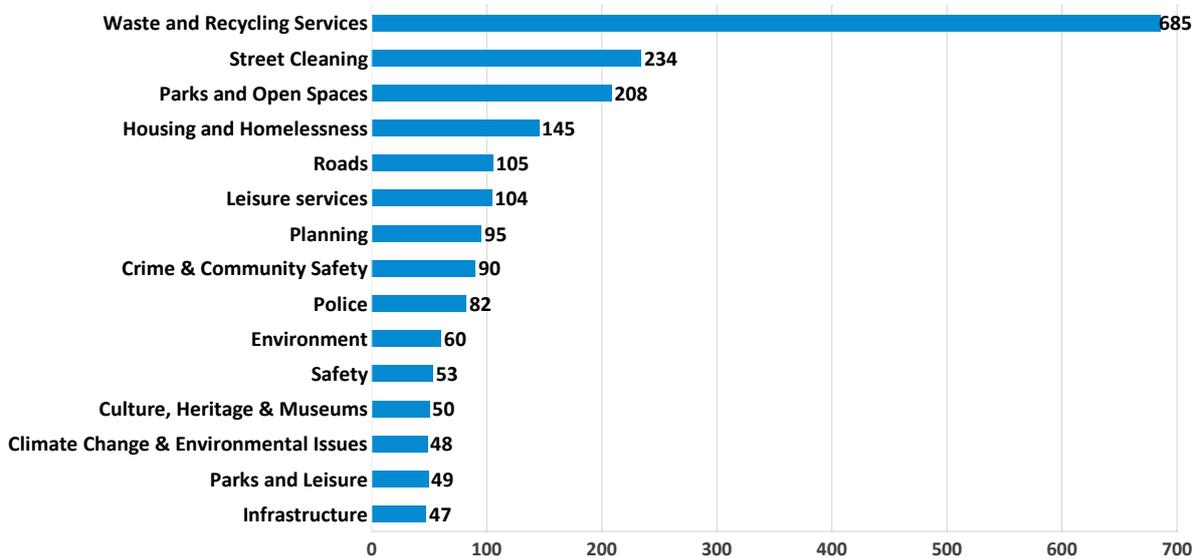
	<p>Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding 1% increase with 25.0% (<math>\pm 3.7\%</math>) selecting this response compared to male respondents with 14.1% (<math>\pm 3.0\%</math>) answered this way. Male respondents had greater proportions selecting an increase over 1% compared to female respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents aged 75 years and over had a significantly lower proportion responding 'no increase' compared to the other age groups. This group also had a significantly greater proportion in favour of an increase of up to 2%, at 49.3% (<math>\pm 8.8\%</math>) compared to the other age groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents from minority groups had a significantly greater proportion responding 'no increase' compared to those from white groups. 43.7% (<math>\pm 3.1\%</math>) of white group respondents selected an increase amount compared to 27.0% (<math>\pm 12.4\%</math>) of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>Carers had a greater proportion selecting a 1% increase and a lower proportion selecting 'no increase' compared to non-carer respondents. 24.9% (<math>\pm 5.8\%</math>) of carers selected a 1% increase in Council Tax compared to 18.5% (<math>\pm 2.7\%</math>) of non-Carers.</p>
	<p>Economically inactive respondents had the lowest proportion responding 'no increase' with 44.0% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>) answering this way compared to 63.1% (<math>\pm 3.6\%</math>) economically active respondents. The economically inactive group had greater proportions for all the incremental council tax increase options listed.</p>

## Important Services

Survey respondents were asked what three services were most important to them and provided with three open text boxes to provide a response. The answers have been cleansed so that counts can be obtained (e.g., 'street cleansing', 'clean streets', 'cleanliness' and 'clean and tidy' and such terms were all amended to 'street cleaning'. However, 'Street maintenance' would not be included in the street cleaning category as it is unclear if the respondent is referring to the fabric of streets such as condition of the pavement or the cleanliness of the street).

A total of 935 respondents answered this question. Please note that not all respondents that answered this question gave three services. The word cloud below shows the top 50 responses where three or more respondents have said the same thing.

The top 15 services are shown below.



In the 2021/22 Budget Survey, the top three most important services were: Waste Collection, Parks & Open Spaces and Roads & Highways.

## Comments

Respondents to the survey were given the opportunity to make additional comments about the Council's budget and the funding of services. A total of 385 comments were received. These comments have been grouped into themes, with some comments containing multiple themes. The table below shows a summary of the comments for each of the top ten themes identified.

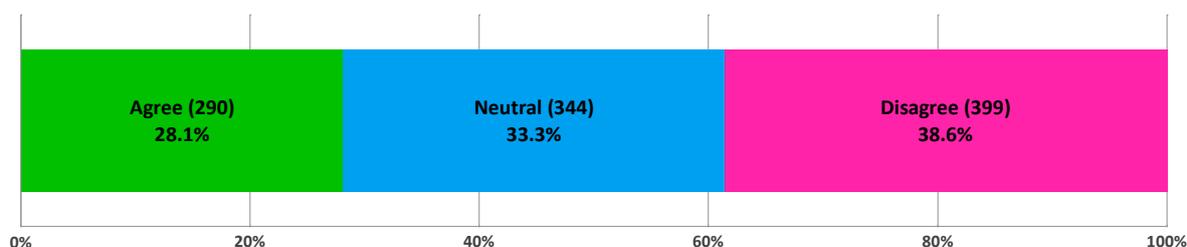
Theme	No. Comments	Summary
Finance Concerns/CT increase too high	82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for no more increases.</li> <li>• Wages not increasing at same rate.</li> <li>• People on fixed incomes.</li> <li>• Would not be able to afford an increase.</li> <li>• Council tax is too expensive.</li> </ul>
Council/Budget Management	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend money more wisely.</li> <li>• Don't spend money on 'vanity' projects.</li> <li>• Better contracts for services.</li> <li>• Do more for less.</li> </ul>
No improvements/ Not VFM	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of services not up to standard (empty shops, street cleaning).</li> <li>• Do not feel there is value for money from the amount of Council Tax paid (rural locations and suspension of services mentioned)</li> </ul>
New Homes/ Growth/ Infrastructure	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queried why CT needs to increase since there should be more revenue received from new housing.</li> <li>• Stop building new homes.</li> <li>• No infrastructure improvements to support growth.</li> </ul>
Council Salaries	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut staff salaries.</li> <li>• Cut Members Allowances.</li> <li>• Reduce management.</li> </ul>
Priorities	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change &amp; environmental issues should feature.</li> <li>• Improve town centre.</li> <li>• Localise improvements.</li> </ul>
Accepting of CT increases	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good services cost money.</li> <li>• Increase in line with inflation.</li> <li>• All living costs going up.</li> </ul>
KCC Services	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charges for tip use.</li> <li>• Condition of roads.</li> <li>• Support Social Services.</li> </ul>
Income Comment /Suggestion	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try crowd funding.</li> <li>• Increase charges for planning and licensing.</li> <li>• Increase revenue streams from enforcement activity and business development.</li> <li>• Partnership run services.</li> </ul>
Provide essential/statutory services only	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get essentials right first.</li> <li>• Find savings from non-essential services.</li> <li>• Stop all non-essential spending.</li> </ul>

## Resident feelings

### Value for Money

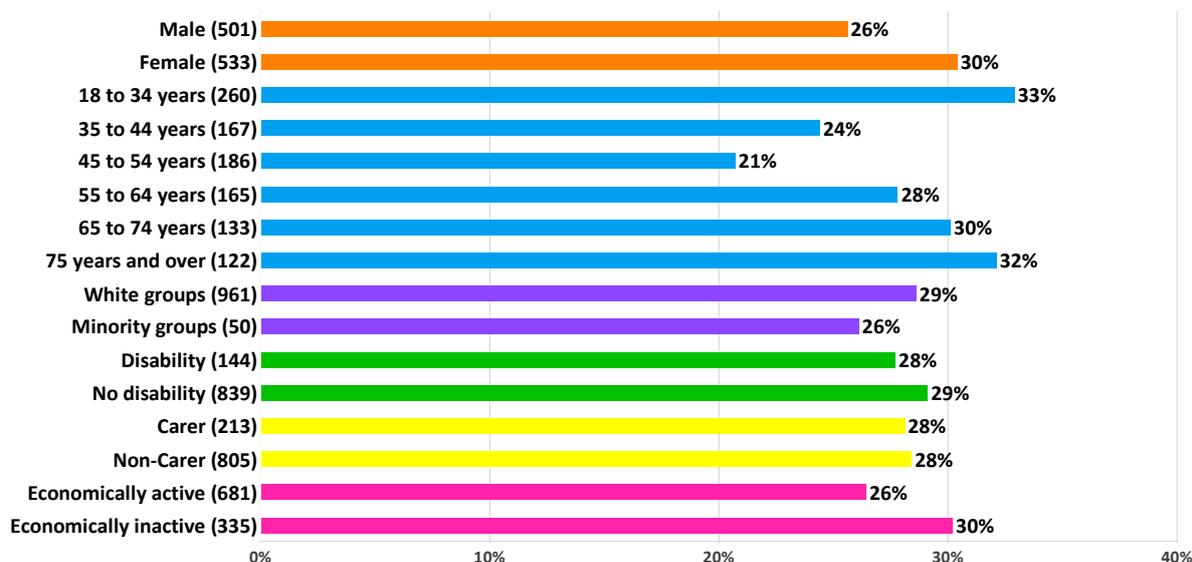
Survey respondents were asked to ‘what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone Borough Council provides value for money’. There was a total of 1033 responses.

The most common response was ‘neither agree nor disagree’ with 344 responding this way. Overall, 28.1% ( $\pm 2.7\%$ ).



This question has been asked in previous Budget surveys. In the 2021/22 survey 29.3% ( $\pm 2.8\%$ ) of respondents agreed that Maidstone Borough Council provided value for money. In the 2020/21 survey 33.2% of residents agreed with this question and in the 2019/20 Budget Survey 33.4% agreed.

The chart below shows the proportions responding positively (strongly agree and agree combined).



	<p>The overall proportions answering positively are not significantly different between gender. However, female respondents had a significantly greater proportion that responded, ‘strongly agree’. Male respondents had a greater proportion responding neutrally at 36.8% (<math>\pm 4.2\%</math>) compared to 30.0% (<math>3.9\pm\%</math>) of females.</p>
	<p>The 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportions responding both positively and negatively. The data suggests that there is a liner relation between a negative response to this question, as age increases, the proportions responding negatively decreases.</p>

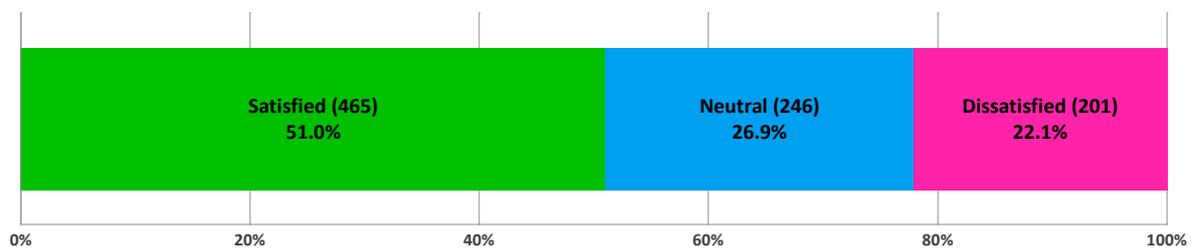


The overall proportions answering positively are not significantly different between economically active and economically inactive respondents. However, a significantly greater proportion of economically active respondents answered negatively with 43.8% ( $\pm 3.7\%$ ) answering this way compared to 28.6% ( $\pm 4.8\%$ ) of economically inactive respondents.

### Local area Satisfaction

Survey respondents were asked: ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?’ and given a five-point scale from ‘very satisfied’ to ‘very dissatisfied’. There was a total of 912 respondents.

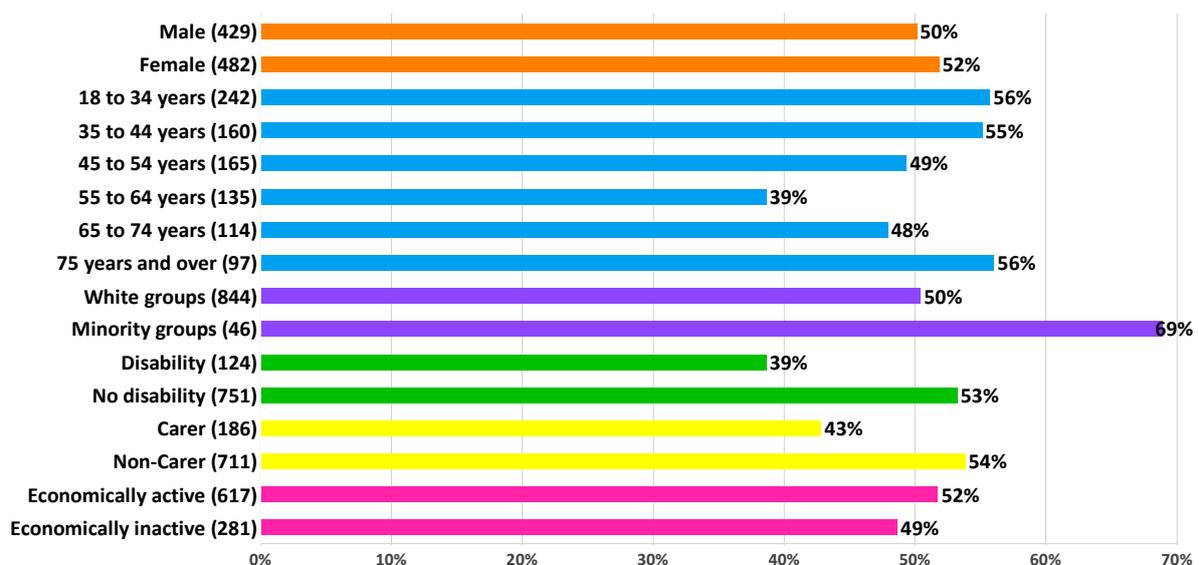
The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 394 answering this way. Overall, just over half of respondents said they were ‘satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live (51.0% ( $\pm 3.2\%$ )).



This question was last asked in the 2021/22 Budget Survey. At this time 52.2% said they were ‘satisfied’ and in the 2020/21 survey 53.1% were ‘satisfied’.

Last year there had been a reduction in the proportion responding negatively from 28.9% in 2020/21 to 19.9% for 2021/22. This year there was a 2.2 percentage point increase in the proportion answering this way (22.1% ( $\pm 2.7\%$ )).

The chart below shows the proportion responding ‘satisfied’ across the demographic groups.

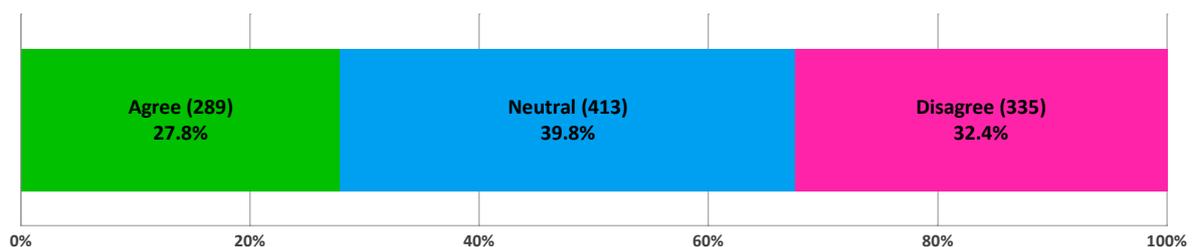


	<p>Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 25.0% (<math>\pm 4.1\%</math>) answering this way compared to 19.5% (<math>\pm 3.5\%</math>) of female respondents.</p>
	<p>The proportions responding positively from the 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 age groups were significantly greater than the proportion answering the same from the 55 to 64 age group. The 55 to 64 age group had the greatest proportion responding negatively at 27.3% (<math>\pm 7.5\%</math>). In the 2021/22 Budget Survey the 55 to 64 age group also had the lowest proportion answering negatively.</p>
	<p>Minority group respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding positively with 68.9% (<math>\pm 13.4\%</math>) answering this way compared to 50.4% (<math>\pm 3.4\%</math>) of respondents from white groups</p>
	<p>Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 29.7% (<math>\pm 8.0\%</math>) answering this way compared to 20.9% (<math>\pm 2.9\%</math>) of non-disabled respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Non-carer respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding to this question positively and significantly less responding negatively when compared to carer respondents. 27.6% (<math>\pm 6.4\%</math>) of carer respondents answered negatively compared to 19.4% (<math>\pm 2.9\%</math>) of non-carer respondents.</p>

## Realising Potential

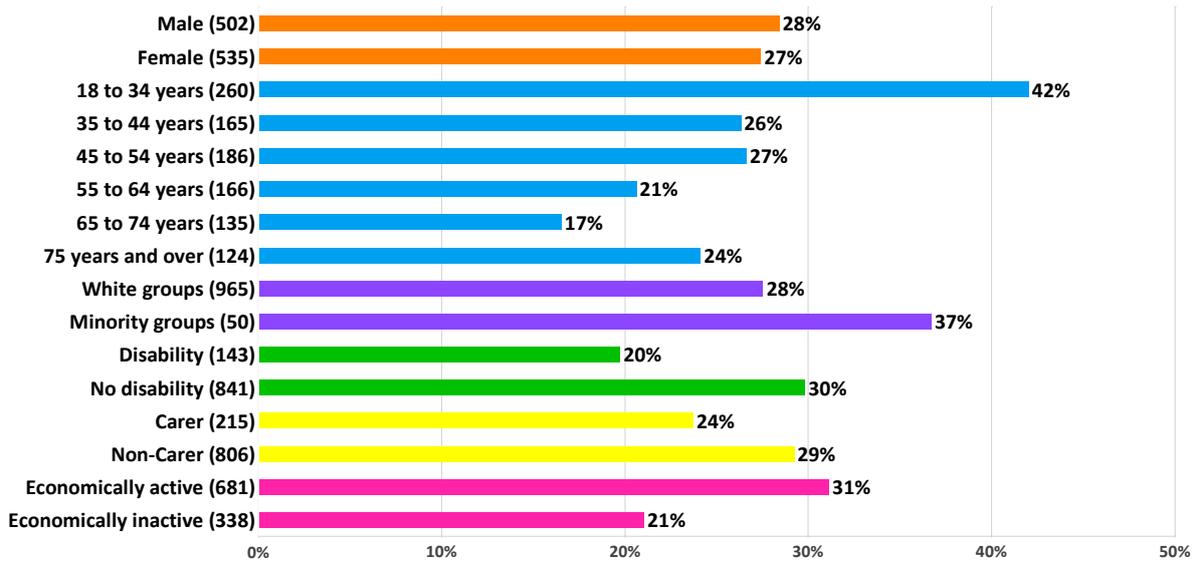
The survey asked respondents: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that Maidstone is a place where everyone can realise their potential?'. A total of 1,037 people responded to this question.

Overall, 27.8% ( $\pm 2.7\%$ ) of respondents said that they agreed that Maidstone was a place where everyone can realise their potential. The most common response was 'neither agree nor disagree' with 39.8% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) responding this way.



Since the 2021/22 Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020, the proportion of those responding negatively has increased by two percentage points (2021/22 Survey, 30.4%). The proportion responding positively has increased marginally by 0.7 percentage points (2021/22 Survey, 27.1%).

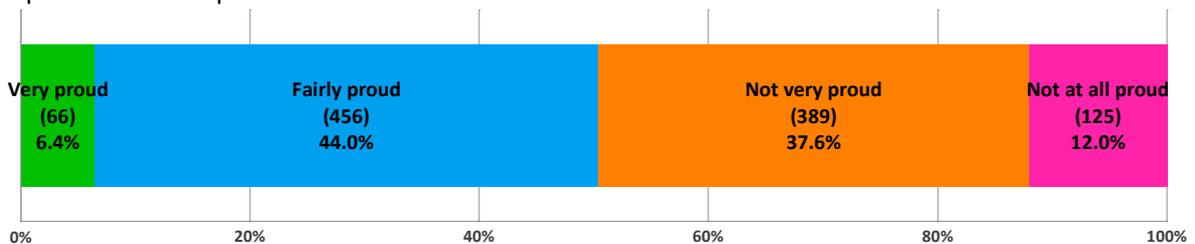
The following chart shows the proportion of those responding 'agree' across the different demographic groups.



	<p>The 45 to 54 and the 55 to 64 age groups had the greatest proportions responding negatively at 37.3% (<math>\pm 6.9\%</math>) and 40.6% (<math>\pm 7.5\%</math>) respectively and the lowest proportions responding neutrally. The 75 years and over had the lowest proportion responding negatively at 25.5% (<math>\pm 7.7\%</math>). The 65 to 74 age group had the greatest proportion responding neutrally at 56.9% (<math>\pm 8.4\%</math>).</p>
	<p>Although there were no significant differences in the proportion responding positively and neutrally between respondents from minority groups and respondents from white groups, white groups had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 32.9% (<math>\pm 3.0\%</math>) answering this way compared to 17.7% (<math>\pm 10.6\%</math>) of respondents from minority groups.</p>
	<p>Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 40.2% (<math>\pm 8.0\%</math>) answering this way compared to 30.7% (<math>\pm 3.1\%</math>) of non-disabled respondents.</p>
	<p>Half of economically inactive respondents responded neutrally, significantly greater than the proportion responding the same who were economically active. Economically active respondents had significantly greater proportions answering both positively and negatively.</p>

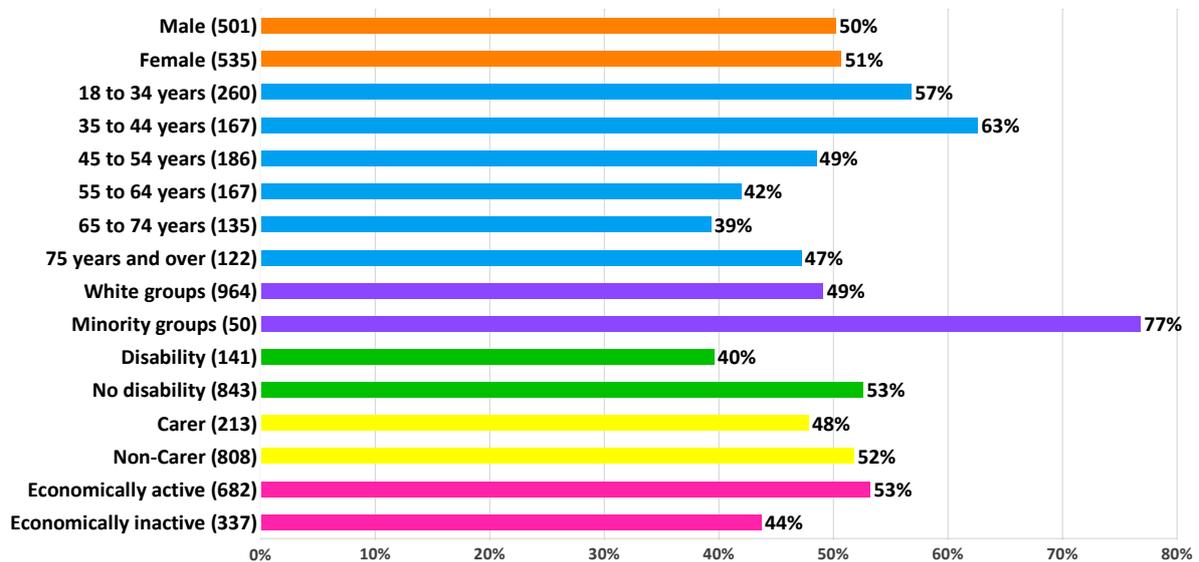
## Pride in Maidstone Borough

The survey asked respondents: 'How proud are you of Maidstone Borough?', a total of 1036 responded to this question.



Overall, 50.4% ( $\pm 3.0\%$ ) said they were either 'very proud' or 'fairly proud' of Maidstone Borough, a marginal decline from the 2021/22 Budget survey, undertaken Autumn 2020, where 51.1% ( $\pm 3.1\%$ ) answered this way. The most common response was 'fairly proud' with 456 answering this way.

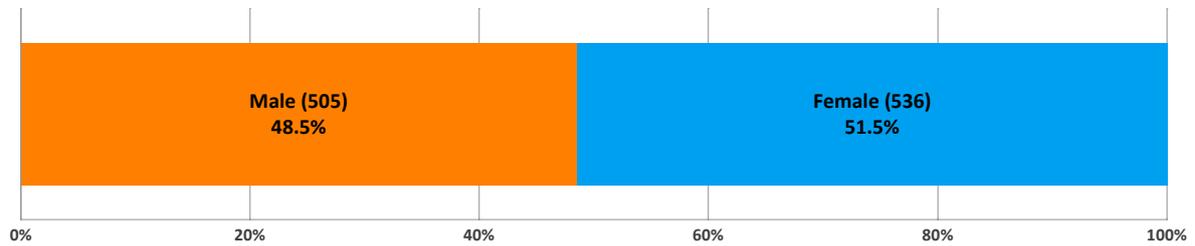
The chart below shows the proportion responding positively across the different demographic groups.



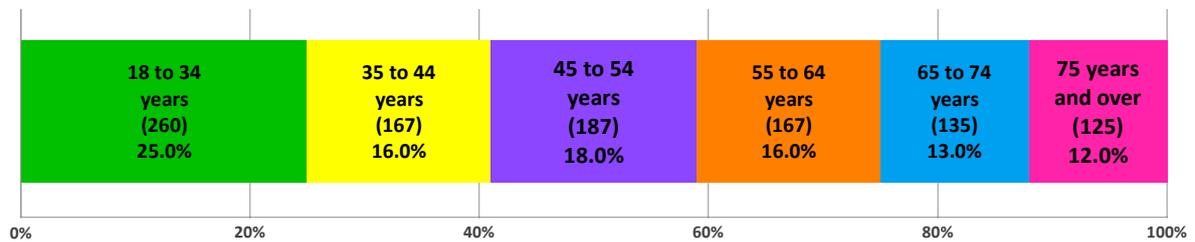
	<p>Respondents in the 35 to 44 age group had the lowest proportion responding negatively. This result is significant when compared to the proportions responding the same from the ages groups over 45 years.</p>
	<p>The difference in the proportion of respondents answering positively between minority groups and white groups is significant. 50.9% (<math>\pm 3.9\%</math>) of white group respondents answered negatively compared to 23.2% (<math>\pm 11.8\%</math>) of minority group respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Disabled respondents had a significantly greater proportion responding negatively with 60.4% (<math>\pm 8.1\%</math>) answering this way compared to 47.4% (<math>\pm 3.4\%</math>) of non-disabled respondents.</p>
	<p>A significantly greater proportion of economically inactive respondents answered negatively with 56.3% (<math>\pm 5.3\%</math>) answering this way compared to 46.8% (<math>\pm 3.7\%</math>) of economically active respondents.</p>

# Survey Demographics

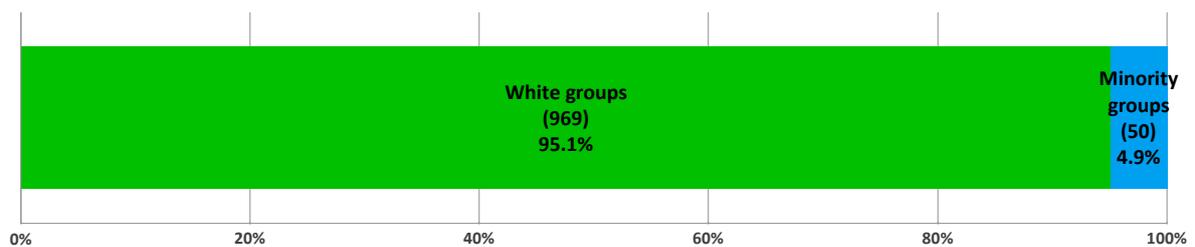
## Gender



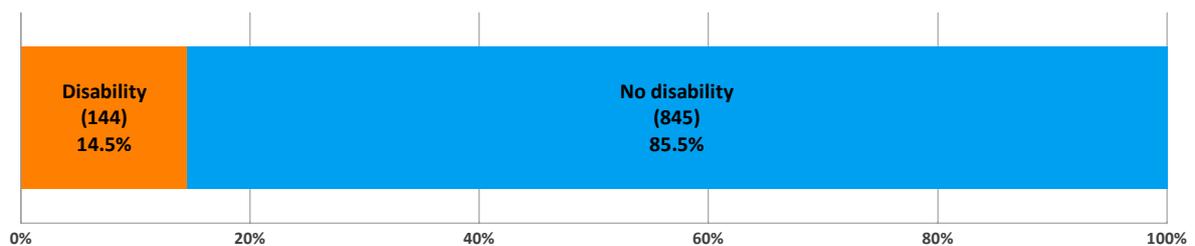
## Age



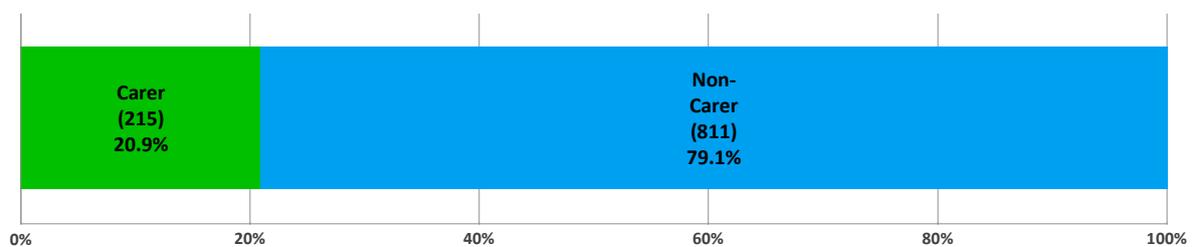
## Ethnicity



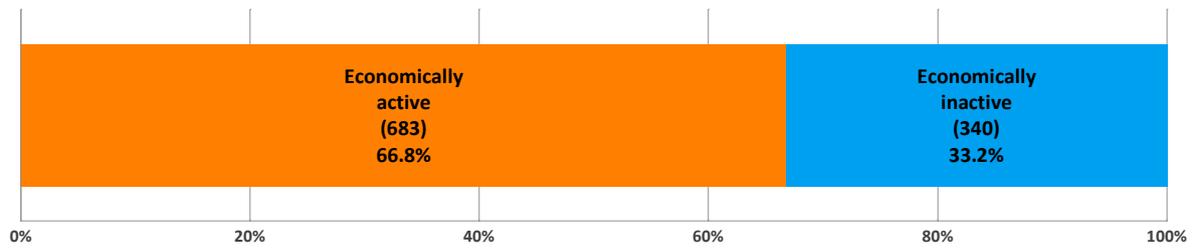
## Disability



## Carers



## Economic Activity



## Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

**30 November 2021**

### Fees and Charges 2022-23

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Ellie Dunnet, Head of Finance
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 for the services within the remit of this committee. Fees and charges determined by the council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2022 unless otherwise stated in the report.

#### **Purpose of Report**

Decision

#### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the proposed discretionary fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report are agreed.
2. That the expected statutory fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 to this report are noted.

#### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	30 November 2021
Policy and Resources Committee	15 December 2021

# Fees and Charges 2022-23

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, the Council’s policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report recommendations support the achievement of the cross cutting objectives by ensuring that costs of service delivery are recovered where possible, which enables services which support these objectives to be sustained.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is covered within section 5 of the report.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial implications are set out in the body of the report. If agreed, this income will be incorporated into the Council’s medium term financial strategy for 2021-22 onwards.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not have any staffing implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting on the recommendations is within the Council’s powers as set out within the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011.</li> </ul> <p>Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms. The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does</p>	Interim Team Leader Contentious and Corporate Governance

	<p>not exceed the costs of providing the service. A number of fees and charges for Council services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the cost of service is clearly related to the charge made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council's legal obligations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defensible, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges.</li> </ul>	
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations do not have any privacy or data protection implications.</li> </ul>	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Public Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations do not have any public health implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations do not have any public health implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations do not have any procurement implications.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.</li> </ul>	Head of Finance

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set.
- 2.2 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.
- 2.3 A charging policy (attached at Appendix 2 for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:
- a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
  - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
  - c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
  - d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.
- 2.4 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy. However, consideration of any known changes to such fees and charges and any consequence to the medium term financial strategy are included in this report for information.
- 2.5 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:
- a) The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;
  - b) The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;
  - c) The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;

- d) Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;
- e) Customer survey results;
- f) Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;
- g) Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;
- h) The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;
- i) The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;
- j) Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;
- k) Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

### **Discretionary Charges for 2022-23**

- 2.6 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.
- 2.7 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the medium term financial strategy for 2022/23 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix 1 and the approval of the committee is sought to the amended fees and charges for 2022/23 as set out in that appendix.
- 2.8 Table 1 below summarises the 2020/21 outturn and 2021/22 estimate for income from the discretionary fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee. Please note that the table only reflects changes relating to fees and charges and does not include other budget proposals which may impact these service areas.
- 2.9 The overall increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £27,660 which amounts to a 0.84% increase in the overall budgeted income figure for this committee for the current financial year. This information excludes fees for licensing, which will be reported to the Licensing Committee for approval.

Service Area	2020-21 Actual £	2021-22 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2022-23 Estimate £
Parks and Open Spaces	2,600	17,510	0	17,510
Parks and Open Spaces-Leisure	3,586	20,530	0	20,530
Cemetery and Crematorium	1,853,825	1,470,740	25,000	1,495,740
Environmental Health	7,786	10,020	0	10,020
Waste Crime & Community Protection	2,754	3,900	0	3,900
Recycling & Refuse Collection	1,306,541	1,410,530	0	1,410,530
HMO Licensing	11,516	20,380	0	20,380
Gypsy & Traveller Sites	75,757	70,340	2,660	73,000
<b>Total income from fees set by the Council</b>	<b>3,264,366</b>	<b>3,023,950</b>	<b>27,660</b>	<b>3,051,610</b>

Table 1: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary (CHE)

2.10 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix 1 to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.

Parks and Open Spaces – Charges for sporting activities were restructured during 2020 in order to facilitate fair access for participants of all ages and frozen during the pandemic in recognition of the importance of these facilities for health and wellbeing. The increases proposed for 2022/23 reflect the increased cost of providing this service due to rising materials and delivery charges, and increased labour market costs.

It is proposed that no charge is made for use of tennis courts, bowls facilities or rounders. These charges have not been collected for a number of years as the costs have made this uneconomical.

Income levels suffered during 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic which resulted in the cancellation of several large-scale events. The position has improved during 2021/22, however no increase in the budget for the forthcoming financial year is proposed at this stage while income levels continue to recover.

Cemetery and Crematorium – A number of changes are proposed to the charges in this area. These proposals have been made with reference to increasing supply costs and are considered to be in line with charges made by local competitors. Charges for graves to non-residents have been increased to in order to limit demand from outside the area and conserve availability for local residents. Other price increases at the cemetery are considered to bring charges to an approximate mid-point when compared to similar charges elsewhere. It is estimated that the increased charges will generate additional income of £25,000 which will be used to fund the increased costs of providing this service.

Environmental Health – Charges have been reviewed and increased where appropriate to offset the costs of service provision. Based on current

demand for these services, no increase to the income budget for 2022/23 is proposed.

Waste Crime and Community Protection –Increases are proposed for pest control charges which reflect the rising costs associated with provision of these services. However, it is not anticipated that this will give rise to an overall increase in income levels.

Recycling and Refuse Collection –

*Bulky collection* – No increases are proposed for 2022/23 as charges were increased by over 3% last year.

*Garden waste service* – No increases are proposed for 2022/23 as charges were increased by 12.5% last year.

*Trade waste* – Increases are proposed for the collection of trade waste due to the increased costs of delivering this service. Rising costs for fuel, labour, disposal and fleet servicing mean that it has been necessary to increase the charges in this area in order to maintain the viability of the service. It should be noted that these charges have not been increased for a number of years and take up for this service has been steadily growing. The proposed charges have been set with reference to competitors and it is not anticipated that the changes will result in the current level of business being adversely impacted.

HMO Licensing – Minor inflationary increases are proposed for 2022/23. Income levels are expected to remain stable.

Gypsy and Traveller Sites – Increases to the weekly plot fees for Gypsy and traveller sites at Marden and Ulcombe have been proposed with reference to RPI inflation of 3.8% (12 months to July 2021). The proposed increases are in line with the Mobile Homes Act 1983 formula and are expected to generate additional income of £2,660 if agreed.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Option 1**

The committee could approve the recommendations as set out in the report, adopting the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix 1. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

#### **3.2 Option 2**

The committee could propose alternative charges to those set out within Appendix 1. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2022-23. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

### 3.3 Option 3

The committee could choose to do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2022-23.

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## **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 Option 1 as set out above is recommended as the proposed fees and charges shown within Appendix 1 have been developed by budget managers in line with the Council's Charging Policy. The proposed charges are considered appropriate and are expected to create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising cost recovery. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2021 unless otherwise stated.

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## **5. RISK**

5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

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## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

6.1 No consultation has been undertaken specifically relating to the proposals set out in the report. However, the Council has undertaken a survey of residents which will be used to inform wider decisions related to budget setting and spending priorities. The results of this survey were presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 24 November 2021.

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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 Policy and Resources Committee will receive an overarching report of all fees and charges proposals on 15 December 2021.

7.2 If agreed, the proposed changes to fees and charges, as set out within Appendix 1 will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Current and Proposed Fees & Charges – CHE Committee
  - Appendix 2: Charging Policy
- 

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23  
Fees and Charges  
Communities, Housing Environment Committee**

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21	Current Estimate 2021-22	Current Charges 2021-2022	Proposed Charges 2022-2023	Change	+ / - Income 2021-22	Estimate 2022-2023	Comments
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Parks and Open Spaces</b>											
<b>Football</b>											
Seniors - single let (hirer to erect nets)	*	x		2,600	15,900	48.00	50.40	5.00%		15,900	
Seniors - 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets)	exempt	x				40.00	42.00	5.00%			
Juniors - 11 v 11 pitch single let (hirer to erect nets) for U13 and U14 with junior goals	*					26.00	27.30	5.00%			Owing to materials and delivery increase charges and labour costs (annual pay rise) it has been necessary to increase all costs by 5%. Please note, during the pandemic we kept all costs the same to encourage the use of Sports pitches for peoples health & wellbeing.
Juniors - 11 v 11 pitch 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets) for U13 and U14 with junior goals	exempt					21.66	22.74	4.99%			Income is under target, so no increase to budget is proposed.
Juniors - 11 v 11 pitch single let (hirer to erect nets) for U15, U16 and U18 with adult goals	*					32.00	33.60	5.00%			
Juniors - 11 v 11 pitch 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets) for U15, U16 and U18 with adult goals	exempt					26.66	27.99	4.99%			
Juniors - 9 v 9 pitch single let (hirer to erect nets)	*					20.00	21.00	5.00%			
Juniors - 9 v 9 pitch 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets)	exempt					16.66	17.49	4.98%			
Juniors - 7 v 7 pitch single let (hirer to erect nets)	*					14.00	14.70	5.00%			
Juniors - 7 v 7 pitch 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets)	exempt					11.66	12.24	4.97%			
Juniors - 5 v 5 pitch single let (hirer to erect nets)	*					14.00	14.70	5.00%			
Juniors - 5 v 5 pitch 10 or more lets (hirer to erect nets)	exempt					11.66	12.24	4.97%			
Use of five-a-side football nets - per set	*					21.00	22.05	5.00%			
Juniors - hire of an adult pitch (hirer to erect nets)	*					38.40	40.32	5.00%			
Juniors - 10 or more hires of an adult pitch (hirer to erect nets)	exempt					32.00	33.60	5.00%			
<b>Rugby</b>											
Seniors - single let	*	x		0	1,610	63.50	66.67	4.99%		1,610	
Seniors - 10 or more lets	exempt	x				53.00	55.65	5.00%			
Juniors - single let	*	x				32.00	33.60	5.00%			
Juniors - 10 or more lets	exempt	x				26.50	27.82	4.98%			
				<b>2,600</b>	<b>17,510</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>17,510</b>	

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Parks and Open Spaces-Leisure Activities</b>											
<b><u>Tennis - per court per hour</u></b>											
Adult - single hire	*	x		0	0	8.40	n/a	-100.00%		0	Tennis fees are not collected as the cost to collect them exceeds the income recovered.
Adult -10 or more hires	exempt	x				7.00	n/a	-100.00%			
OAP/Junior - single hire	*	x				4.60	n/a	-100.00%			
OAP/Junior - 10 or more hires	exempt	x				3.80	n/a	-100.00%			
<b><u>Bowls - Season - Adult</u></b>											
- OAP/Junior	*	x		0	0	80.00	n/a	-100.00%		0	Bowls fees are not collected as the cost to collect them exceeds the income recovered.
- per Green - Adult	*	x				40.00	n/a	-100.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				6.00	n/a	-100.00%			
-Match fees	*	x				3.00	n/a	-100.00%			
-Match fees	*	x				4.80	n/a	-100.00%			
Use of Woods - per hour/match - Adult	*	x				3.50	n/a	-100.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				2.30	n/a	-100.00%			
- per match - Adult	*	x				3.50	n/a	-100.00%			
- OAP/Junior	*	x				2.30	n/a	-100.00%			
<b><u>Rounders - Weekends</u></b>	*	x				53.50	n/a	-100.00%			
- Evenings 5 - 9.30pm	*	x				41.50	n/a	-100.00%			
<b><u>Use of Changing Rooms and Showers</u></b>	*	x				20.00	n/a	-100.00%			
<b><u>Events</u></b>											
Fairs and circuses - per day (min. charge)	exempt	x		0	550	620.00	n/a	-100.00%		0	No longer a viable income stream . Any funfairs will have income in commercial opportunities using rates dependent on size and scale
Big top show - per evening (min. charge)	exempt	x				430.00	n/a	-100.00%			No longer a viable income stream

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Parks and Open Spaces (contd.)</b>											
<b>Hire of Parks</b>											
Fitness Classes (10-70 participants) - per session (min charge)		x		0	5,200	18.50	19.00	2.70%		5,200	
<b>All Events (Commercial Opportunities)</b>											
<b>Event day fee (min charge) per day G715 ( instead of fees per head below)</b>				3,586	14,780					15,330	Not predicting increase as many events have not survived or down
- up to 100 participants	exempt	x				50.00	52.00	4.00%			
100 to 499 participants	exempt	x				95.00	100.00	5.26%			
500 - 899 participants	exempt	x				420.00	435.00	3.57%			
901+ by negotiation	exempt	x									
<b>Booking and hire fee (min charge) per day</b>										0	
Commercial and charity ticketed events - Mote Park		x				300.00	310.00	3.33%			
Free events - Mote Park		x				65.00	67.00	3.08%			
Additional hire fee for event parking per day (Mote Park only)		x				300.00	310.00	3.33%			
Commercial and charity ticketed events - All other Parks		x				150.00	155.00	3.33%			
Free events - All other Parks		x				60.00	62.00	3.33%			
<b>Fees per head all events (min charge) if not using event fee by participant eg. up 10 100 participants</b>											
Commercial (ticketed) Concerts		x				0.45	0.47	4.44%			
Commercial (ticketed) Walks/runs/sporting		x				0.45	0.47	4.44%			
Commercial (ticketed) Other		x				0.35	0.37	5.71%			
Charity Fundraising (ticketed) Concerts		x				0.30	0.30	0.00%			
Charity Fundraising (ticketed) Walks/runs/sporting		x				0.17	0.18	5.88%			
Charity Fundraising (ticketed) Other		x				0.17	0.18	5.88%			
Commercial (free event) Concerts		x				0.10	0.10	0.00%			Rarely used, no need to increase charge
Commercial (free event) walks/Runs/Sporting		x				No Charge	No Charge				
Commercial (free event) Other		x				No Charge	No Charge				
Charity Fundraising (free event) Concerts		x				0.10	0.10	0.00%			Rarely used, no need to increase charge
Charity Fundraising (free event) Walks/Runs/Sporting		x				No Charge	No Charge				
Charity Fundraising (free event) Other		x				No Charge	No Charge				
Not-for-profit (free event) Concerts		x				0.10	0.10	0.00%			Rarely used, no need to increase charge
Not-for-profit (free event) Walks/Runs/Sporting		x				No Charge	No Charge				
Not-for-profit (free event) Other		x				No Charge	No Charge				
<b>Filming companies -(min charge) per day</b>											
- Mote Park	exempt	x				320.00	325.00	1.56%			
- Brenchley Gardens	exempt	x				210.00	215.00	2.38%			
- others by negotiation											
<b>Commercial medical units - per day</b>		x				145.00	145.00	0.00%			Rarely used, no need to increase charge
<b>Hot air ballooning (per flight/landing) - Private</b>	exempt	x				115.00	115.00	0.00%			Rarely used, no need to increase charge

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Parks and Open Spaces (contd.)</b>											
<b>Mooring Fee</b>											
PER VESSEL (20 feet length)											
per Night	*	X				8.00	8.00	0.00%			Not currently collected but there may be opportunities to do so in the future.
per Week	*	X				40.00	40.00	0.00%			
per Month	*	X				140.00	140.00	0.00%			
per Quarter	*	X				350.00	350.00	0.00%			
				<b>3,586</b>	<b>20,530</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>20,530</b>	

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				20-21	Estimate	Charges	Charges		Income	2022-2023	
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Cemetery</b>											
<b>Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial</b>				90,955	62,070				0	62,070	
<b>Resident Fees</b>											
General Section - 30 years Exclusive Rights		x				845.00	870.00	2.96%			Would like to put the increase towards grounds maintenance fund for pathway resurfacing etc.
Class: Lawn - 30 years Exclusive Rights		x				845.00	870.00	2.96%			"
General Section - 60 years Exclusive Rights		x				1,690.00	1,740.00	2.96%			"
Class: Lawn - 60 years Exclusive Rights		x				1,690.00	1,790.00	5.92%			"
Class: Vault						POA	POA				"
Class: Cremated remains burial plot - 30 years Exclusive Rights		x				470.00	495.00	5.32%			Would like to put the increase towards grounds maintenance fund for pathway resurfacing etc.
Class: Cremated remains burial plot - 60 years Exclusive Rights		x				940.00	990.00	5.32%			"
Transfer of Exclusive Rights		x				90.00	92.50	2.78%			Admin fee
To add an existing name to Exclusive Rights		x				50.00	51.50	3.00%			Admin fee
<b>Non Resident Fees</b>											
General Section - 30 years Exclusive Rights		x				2,685.00	2,800.00	4.28%			Higher charge as trying to discourage out of area purchasing graves
Class: Lawn - 30 years Exclusive Rights		x				2,685.00	2,800.00	4.28%			Higher charge as trying to discourage out of area purchasing graves
General Section - 60 years Exclusive Rights		x				5,370.00	5,600.00	4.28%			Higher charge as trying to discourage out of area purchasing graves
Class: Lawn - 60 years Exclusive Rights		x				5,370.00	5,600.00	4.28%			Higher charge as trying to discourage out of area purchasing graves
Class: Cremated remains burial plot - 30 years Exclusive Rights						1,880.00	1,950.00	3.72%			new
Class: Cremated remains burial plot - 60 years Exclusive Rights						3,760.00	3,900.00	3.72%			new
Transfer of Exclusive Rights		x				90.00	92.50	2.78%			Admin fee
To add an existing name to Exclusive Rights		x				50.00	51.50	3.00%			
Grave Selection Fee		x				50.00	50.00	0.00%			Charge made for personal selection of plot - where staff time is involved



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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Cemetery (contd.)</b>											
<b>Monuments</b>				12,514	13,040					13,040	
Headstone		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Kerbstone		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Indicator stone		x				45.00	45.00	0.00%			
Cremated remains memorial		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Tablet 12" x 12"		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Vase		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Initial inscription		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Additional inscription		x				110.00	110.00	0.00%			
Any other monument		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Memorial inspection re-instatement (standard)		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			
Lawn Grave foundation - by MBS		x				160.00	165.00	3.13%			To reflect current labour costs.
<b>Search fees</b>											
1-5 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			General searches to be priced at £10, however, should the request be particularly involved or urgent then it is suggested that the £40.00 charge be made.
6-10 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Over 10 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Personal search (by appointment)		x				40.00	40.00	0.00%			
<b>Maintenance</b>											
Earthing		x				90.00	95.00	5.56%			Dependant on charges from ground maintenance team
Turfing		x				90.00	95.00	5.56%			
<b>Memorials</b>				2,955	3,950					3,950	
Mushrooms		x				85.00	95.00	11.76%			
Mushrooms dedication		x				125.00	125.00	0.00%			
Benches (new location)		x				450.00	380.00	-15.56%			This reduction is to match the price at Vinters Park Crematorium.
Existing bench		x				280.00	280.00	0.00%			
Benches dedication annual		x				74.00	75.00	1.35%			
Majestic Mausolia		x									
Majestic Mausolia dedication 30 year (new) with 4 caskets		x				2,500.00	2,500.00	0.00%			
Inscription on Mausolia plaque front (price per line)		x				36.00	36.00	0.00%			
Additional removal of plaque for additional inscription		x				52.00	52.00	0.00%			
Posy Holder for Mausolea		x									
Circular Bench		x				164.00	164.00	0.00%			
Circular Bench dedication		x				66.00	66.00	0.00%			
<b>Cemetery Total</b>				<b>180,374</b>	<b>139,380</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>139,380</b>	

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				20-21	Estimate	Charges	Charges		Income	2022-2023	
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium</b>											
<b>Cremations</b>				1,463,301	1,114,850				15,000	1,129,850	
Service charges		x									
Medical Referee's Fee		x				28.00	28.50	1.79%			£23.50 fee set by relevant professional body. £5.50 per visit to cover mileage
Non viable foetus and stillborn		x				no charge	no charge				
Less than 5 years		x				95.00	95.00	0.00%			charges recovered from Children's Funeral Fund (CFF)
5 to 18 years		x				109.00	109.00	0.00%			charges recovered from Children's Funeral Fund (CFF)
Adult (18 + 1 day)		x				598.00	615.00	2.84%			
08.15 cremation only - no service and no attendees						365.00	365.00	0.00%			No change proposed in order to remain in line with local competitors.
08.30 cremation only - no service and no attendees		x				365.00	365.00	0.00%			No change proposed in order to remain in line with local competitors.
08.45 cremation only - no service and no attendees		x				365.00	365.00	0.00%			No change proposed in order to remain in line with local competitors.
Adult - committal slot 9.00 A.M. (includes Environmental surcharge, Medical Referee fee & Cremation Carton)		x				495.00	495.00	0.00%			No change proposed in order to remain in line with local competitors.
Adult reduced cremation slot 9.30 A.M. (includes Environmental surcharge, Medical Referee fee & Cremation Carton)		x				565.00	565.00	0.00%			No change proposed in order to remain in line with local competitors.
Environmental Surcharge		x				69.00	70.00	1.45%			
Cremation of body parts		x				105.00	105.00	0.00%			
Use of chapel (additional item)		x				280.00	290.00	3.57%			Double ceremony slots - this is an additional 1/2 hour in the Chapel, so effectively eliminates potential fee generation from the days capacity - this increase reflects the income lost by offering a double ceremony.
Use of chapel organ		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Visual Tributes for services up to 30 slides- *Remove fee, no longer available		x				60.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
Visual Tributes for services 31-99 slides- *		x				105.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
Visual Tributes for services 100-150 slides *		x				165.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
Visual Tributes for services 151-200 slides *		x				235.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
Visual Tributes for services over 30 slides *		x				105.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
DVD of Visual Tribute *		x				55.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium (contd.)</b>											
Webcasting *		x				65.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
DVD of Webcasting *		x				55.00	0.00				Changed supplier to Obitus in Feb 2021 so these options now obsolete
Visual Tributes for services up to 25 slides		x				40.00	40.00	0.00%			
Pro Visual Tributes for services up to 25 slides		x				60.00	65.00	8.33%			
Additional 25 slides for visual tribute		x				25.00	25.00	0.00%			
Family made video shown as tribute		x				30.00	30.00	0.00%			
Downloadable copy of visual tribute		x				40.00	40.00	0.00%			
Keepsake copy of Visual Tribute or Webcast on DVD/Blu-Ray/USB		x				55.00	55.00	0.00%			
Webcasting - live only		x				45.00	50.00	11.11%			This increase is due to some new technology we have ordered to allow for a visual tribute to be shown on full screen during a webcast rather than watchers being unable to see it on the screens in the chapel
Webcast + 28 day viewing		x				50.00	55.00	10.00%			This increase is due to some new technology we have ordered to allow for a visual tribute to be shown on full screen during a webcast rather than watchers being unable to see it on the screens in the chapel
Witness fee		x				42.00	42.00	0.00%			
Saturday morning supplement fee		x				790.00	790.00	0.00%			Charge reflects cost for staff premium rates + high utility costs
Service over-run fee		x				from 100.00	From 100.00				Services that over-run can severely affect the days schedule - charges to be levied on Funeral Directors who fail to control length of services
<u>Containers for cremated remains</u>											
Polytainer / Cremation carton / strewing tube	*	x				18.00	18.50	2.78%			
Urn	*	x				41.00	60.00	46.34%			Increase due to supplier issues with current metal urn. Cannot source so need to change option which is more expensive
Casket	*	x				59.00	65.00	10.17%			Increase due to supplier issues
Baby urn	*	x				12.75	12.75	0.00%			
<u>Other related services</u>											
Exhumation of cremated remains		x				270.00	280.00	3.70%			
Disposal from other crematoriums		x				60.00	60.00	0.00%			To satisfy VAT regulations the elements of the memorial charge are identified separately as distinct elements. Customers may provide such elements of the memorial as appropriate providing that such elements satisfy the specification set by the Bereavement Services Officer from time to time to ensure the
Burial in individual plot		x				52.50	52.50	0.00%			

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium (contd.)</b>											
<b>Memorials</b>				155,108	163,080				10,000	173,080	
<u>Book of Remembrance</u>											
line entry (min 2 lines) *	*	x				108.00	110.00	1.85%			
Flower/Crest/or Badge *	*	x				270.00	275.00	1.85%			
Folded Remembrance Card		x									
Card purchase *	*	x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
per line entry (minimum 2 lines) *	*	x				54.00	55.00	1.85%			
Flower/Crest/or Badge *	*	x				280.00	285.00	1.79%			
<u>Cloister Hall of Remembrance</u>											
Wall vases		x									
Vase	*	x				34.00	38.00	11.76%			Price increase is due to rental and initial purchase price being the wrong way round, we are reducing the vase price and increasing the rental price.
Plot Rental - per annum		x				51.00	50.00	-1.96%			
Stone Block vase	*	x				68.00	70.00	2.94%			
Plot Rental - per annum		x				51.00	50.00	-1.96%			
Cloister Hall of Remembrance		x									
Cloister wall tablets		x									
Single	*	x				185.00	183.00	-1.08%			
Plot Rental - 10 year dedication		x				180.00	210.00	16.67%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
Double (2 inscriptions)	*	x				370.00	366.00	-1.08%			
Plot Rental - 10 year		x				250.00	260.00	4.00%			
Refurbishment per letter - re-gild	*	x				4.00	4.00	0.00%			
Refurbishment per letter - repaint	*	x				4.00	4.00	0.00%			
Second inscription	*	x				185.00	183.00	-1.08%			
<u>Memorial Hall</u>											
Leather plaques	*	x				62.00	70.00	12.90%			
Plot Rental -5 year		x				90.00	95.00	5.56%			
Added inscription	*	x				62.00	70.00	12.90%			

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium (contd.)</b>											
<u>Gardens of Remembrance</u>											
Stone effect plaque	*	x				108.00	108.00	0.00%			Phasing out, found better supplier, more value for money
Stone effect plaque for bench	*	x				108.00	108.00	0.00%			Phasing out, found better supplier, more value for money
Stone effect plaque on spike	*	x				108.00	108.00	0.00%			Phasing out, found better supplier, more value for money
Plot Rental 10 year		x				230.00	230.00	0.00%			Phasing out, found better supplier, more value for money
Added inscription	*	x				108.00	108.00	0.00%			Phasing out, found better supplier, more value for money
Refurbishment	*	x				25.00	28.00	12.00%			
Plaque						98.00	98.00	0.00%			
Plaque rental						23.00	24.00	4.35%			
Heart shaped plaque						146.00	148.00	1.37%			
Heart shaped plaque renewal						23.00	24.00	4.35%			
<u>Sanctum Vault</u>											
5 year lease		x				1,035.00	1,075.00	3.86%			shorter lease period to make more affordable
10 year lease		x				1,400.00	1,630.00	16.43%			
20 year lease		x				2,100.00	2,600.00	23.81%			
30 year lease		x				3,145.00	3,300.00	4.93%			
<u>Family Sanctum Vault (From Jan 15)</u>											
5 Year lease		x				0.00	1,145.00				shorter lease period to make more affordable
10 year lease		x				1,700.00	1,700.00	0.00%			
20 year lease		x				2,540.00	2,670.00	5.12%			
30 year lease		x				3,800.00	3,370.00	-11.32%			incentivising purchase of longer time as cheaper

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium (contd.)</b>											
<u>Gardens of Remembrance</u>											
Bench & Plaque	*	x				280.00	280.00	0.00%			
Plot Rental - 5 years		x				370.00	375.00	1.35%			
Plot Rental - bench and SE Plaque - Annual		x				74.00	75.00	1.35%			
Added inscription	*	x				74.00	70.00	-5.41%			
Sanctum Panorama Vault 5 years						0.00	875.00				shorter lease period to make more affordable
Sanctum Panorama Vault 10 years		x				1,140.00	1,270.00	11.40%			incentivising purchase of longer time as cheaper
Sanctum Panorama Vault 20 years		x				1,700.00	1,960.00	15.29%			incentivising purchase of longer time as cheaper
Sanctum Panorama Vault 30 years						2,555.00	2,460.00	-3.72%			
Barbican		x				210.00	210.00	0.00%			
Barbican - annual renewal		x				25.00	26.00	4.00%			
Woodside Sundial		x				210.00	210.00	0.00%			
Woodside Sundial annual renewal		x				25.00	26.00	4.00%			
Granite bench x 2 plaques		x				160.00	160.00	0.00%			
Granite bench		x				20.00	20.00	0.00%			
Illustration, photo plaques etc.		x				P.O.A.	P.O.A.				
Chapel Lawn Planter		x									
Plaque with inscription	*	x				118.00	120.00	1.69%			
Plus 10 year dedication		x				220.00	220.00	0.00%			
Birdbath Memorial	*	x									
6" x 3" plaque with inscription	*	x				118.00	120.00	1.69%			
Annual dedication		x				17.00	19.00	11.76%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
7 1/4" x 3" plaque with inscription	*	x				128.00	130.00	1.56%			
Annual dedication		x				18.00	20.00	11.11%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
8 1/2 " x 3" plaque with inscription	*	x				138.00	140.00	1.45%			
Annual dedication		x				19.00	21.00	10.53%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
9 3/4 " x 3" plaque with inscription	*	x				148.00	150.00	1.35%			
Annual dedication		x				20.00	22.00	10.00%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
11 " x 3" plaque with inscription	*	x				158.00	160.00	1.27%			
Annual dedication		x				21.00	23.00	9.52%			Increase to bring in line with other granite plaques
<u>Woodside Walk Book</u>		x									
Plaque with inscription	*	x				65.00	68.00	4.62%			
Plus 10 year dedication		x				150.00	160.00	6.67%			
<u>Woodside Walk Mushrooms</u>		x									
Tablet with inscription	*	x				85.00	95.00	11.76%			increase from supplier
Plus 10 year dedication		x				250.00	250.00	0.00%			
3 tablet Family Mushrooms (New Memorial)	*	x				255.00	285.00	11.76%			increase from supplier
3 tablet Family Mushrooms (New Memorial) dedication						75.00	75.00	0.00%			
5 tablet Family Mushrooms (new memorial)	*	x				340.00	380.00	11.76%			increase from supplier
5 tablet Family Mushrooms (new memorial) dedication						100.00	100.00	0.00%			
Blossom Valley Barbican (new memorial)	*	x				210.00	210.00	0.00%			
Blossom Valley Barbican (new memorial) dedication	*	x				25.00	26.00	4.00%			
Standing Stone (new memorial)	*	x				310.00	310.00	0.00%			
Standing Stone (new memorial) dedication	*	x				30.00	30.00	0.00%			

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Crematorium (contd.)</b>											
Gardens of Remembrance		x		55,042	53,430					53,430	
Memorial shrubs in beds		x									
Shrubs with Stone Effect Plaque on Spike Annual	*	x				98.00	98.00	0.00%			Merged roses together - price reduced to encourage sales.
Adoption renewal (Shrub only)	*	x				120.00	120.00	0.00%			
Adoption renewal (Shrub & Plq) only						235.00	240.00	2.13%			
Added inscription	*	x				98.00	98.00	0.00%			
Adoption renewal annual (standard Rose no plq)	*	x				25.00	25.00	0.00%			
Adoption renewal annual - Individual rose no plaque	*	x				25.00	25.00	0.00%			
Rose and plaque	*	x				197.00	197.00	0.00%			
						48.00	49.00	2.08%			
Tree and SE Plaque - Annual	*	x				132.00	135.00	2.27%			
Plot rental - annual Tree		x				45.00	48.00	6.67%			
Acer & Plaque on stake	*	x				180.00	183.00	1.67%			
Adoption renewal		x				70.00	70.00	0.00%			
		x									
<b>Search fees</b>		x									
1-5 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
6-10 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Over 10 years		x				10.00	10.00	0.00%			
Personal search (by appointment)		x				35.00	35.00	0.00%			
<b>Crematorium Total</b>				<b>1,673,452</b>	<b>1,331,360</b>				<b>25,000</b>	<b>1,356,360</b>	



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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Environmental Health (contd.)</b>											
<b><u>Tattooing, Electrolysis, Acupuncture &amp; Ear-piercing - C205</u></b>											
Skin Piercing/Tattooing Registration		x		5,697	6,450	320.00	328.00	2.50%	0	6,450	Based on estimated registration of tattooists.
Additional registration of tattoo/piercing or other beauty treatment		x				54.50	56.00	2.75%			Fee charged for amendment or increase in treatments provided by previously registered practitioner.
Tattoo & other beauty treatments Events		x				200.00	205.00	2.50%			One off event held pre-pandemic
Per New Artist & Practitioner at Events		x				25.00	25.00	0.00%			Individual artists fee attending above event
<b><u>Pollution Control</u></b>											
Statutory Fees for 48 Pollution Prevention Control Processes - C061			x	9,185	8,000	*	*		0	8,000	The fee levels for this are set by DEFRA under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. If better pollution controls are implemented by the business their fees reduce and Maidstone income reduces.
<b>Environmental Health Total</b>				<b>16,971</b>	<b>18,020</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>18,020</b>	

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Waste Crime/Community Protection</b>											
<b>Fixed Penalty Fines</b>			x	32,977	43,700	120.00	120.00	0.00%		43,700	Charge reduces to £90 if paid within 14 days.
Failure to produce waste documents			x			300.00	300.00	0.00%			
Failure to produce authority to transport waste			x			300.00	300.00	0.00%			
Unauthorised distribution of free printed matter			x			75.00	75.00	0.00%			
Fly Posting			x			80.00	80.00	0.00%			
Abandonment of a vehicle			x			200.00	200.00	0.00%			
Repairing vehicles on a road			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			
Graffiti			x			75.00	75.00	0.00%			
Failure to comply with a waste receptacles notice			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			
Smoking in a smoke free place			x			50.00	50.00	0.00%			Discounted to £30 for early payment - set by central government
Failure to display no smoking signs			x			200.00	200.00	0.00%			Discounted to £150 for early payment - set by central government
Community Protection Notice Fixed Penalty Notice			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			Amount shown is the maximum penalty
Public Space Protection Order Fixed Penalty Notice			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			Amount shown is the maximum penalty
Duty of Care (Household Waste)			x			300.00	300.00	0.00%			
Fly tipping			x			400.00	400.00	0.00%			Amount shown is the maximum penalty
Duty of Care (Household Waste)			x			300.00	300.00	0.00%			
Fly tipping			x			400.00	400.00	0.00%			Amount shown is the maximum penalty
<b>Waste Crime Total</b>				<b>32,977</b>	<b>43,700</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>43,700</b>	
<b>Stray dog charges</b>											
Collection charge (office hours)			x	2,529	3,900					3,900	
Collection charge (out of office hours)			x			85.00	85.00	0.00%			Reduced to £65 if paid within two weeks of the invoice date.
Collection charge (out of office hours (after midnight))			x			85.00	85.00	0.00%			Includes statutory fee of £25

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Waste Crime/Community Protection (contd.)</b>											
<b>Pest Control charges</b>											Fees adjusted to bring them into line with Swale BC and in discussion with shared contractor.
Hourly charge for treatments carried out on industrial and commercial properties							"Call for quote"				Flexible to allow competition in bidding for contracts
For treatments outside of normal office hours		x				98.00	Call for quote"				
Charge per visit for the treatment of wasps nests carried out on domestic properties		x				60.00	62.60	4.33%			Per visit charge (Wasp nest requiring treatment using a ladder/tower scaffold, this will require a survey as a surcharge may be applied)
Additional nests treatment		x				8.00	11.30	41.25%			Additional nests treated on same visit
Charge per visit for the treatment of rat and mouse nests carried out on domestic premises for initial two visits.		x				59.00	61.00	3.39%			For mandatory two visits at £30.70 each.
Additional rat and mouse treatment visits £29 per visit		x				30.00	30.70	2.33%			
Minimum charge for treatment of ants on domestic premises		x				31.00	31.80	2.58%			Per visit charge
Squirrels: for a 2 x Fenn Trapping Programme		x				98.00	Call for quote"				
Culls		x				71.00	72.70	2.39%			
For the treatment of fleas and other household pests (Flies, Lice, Silverfish etc.) carried out on a domestic premises up to 6 x rooms. Additional rooms over the original 6 are £10 each		x				71.00	72.70	2.39%			Subsequent minimum charge will apply for further treatments after a period of 14 days has elapsed
Minimum charge (including up to four rooms) for the treatment of bedbugs carried out on a domestic premises		x				286.00	537.50	87.94%			Higher cost in relation to other services reflects the nature of the treatment and number of visits required by the current contractor
For each additional room (up to four rooms additional)		x				10.00	Call for quote"				Anything larger than 4 rooms will require a survey
Documentation charge added to charges above where it is necessary to send an invoice for payment.		x				30.00	30.00	0.00%			
<b>Community Safety Charges</b>											
Road closure application		x		225	0	75.00	75.00	0.00%			Standard fee to cover the cost of trained operatives displaying signage and an administration fee
CCTV Footage request (insurance companies etc.)		x				0.00	0.00				These are considered to be subject access requests and we cannot charge for them.
<b>Fixed Penalty Fines</b>				1,450	0						
Public Space Protection Order (Dog Control) Fixed Penalty Notice			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			Set by Order
Public Space Protection Order (Town Centre) Fixed Penalty Notice			x			100.00	100.00	0.00%			Set by Order
<b>Community Protection Total</b>				<b>4,204</b>	<b>3,900</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>3,900</b>	

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Recycling &amp; Refuse Collection</b>											
<b>Bulky Collection</b>				160,224	147,020				0	147,020	
1-4 items		x				26.00	26.00	0.00%			Please leave all as is, all were increased last year by above 3%
5-8 items		x				36.00	36.00	0.00%			
Fridge/Freezers		x				21.00	21.00	0.00%			
<b>Garden Waste Service</b>											
140 litre bin hire		x		1,016,378	1,087,340	40.50	40.50	0.00%	0	1,087,340	Please leave as is - was increased by 12.5% last year.
240 litre bin hire		x				45.00	45.00	0.00%			Please leave as is - was increased by 12.5% last year.
<b>Trade Waste</b>				129,939	176,170				0	176,170	
Sack collection - refuse only		x				2.00	2.40	20.00%			Owing to a number of factors which include fuel cost, labour cost, disposal costs, fleet servicing costs. We did not receive income from Smurfit Kappa where we tip Recycling due factors beyond our control. Our charges have not increased for a number of years and we did not want to put an extra burden on our
240 litre bin - refuse only		x				9.00	9.90	10.00%			
500 litre bin - refuse only		x				20.00	22.00	10.00%			
1100 litre bin - refuse only		x				25.00	27.50	10.00%			
Sack collection - with recycling		x				2.00	2.20	10.00%			
240 litre bin - with recycling		x				8.00	8.80	10.00%			
500litre bin - with recycling		x				16.50	18.15	10.00%			
1100 litre bin - with recycling		x				20.00	22.00	10.00%			
£1 charge per 240 litre bin or weekly sacks collection - for paper/cardboard		x				1.00	1.10	10.00%			
<b>Recycling &amp; Refuse Collection Total</b>				<b>1,306,541</b>	<b>1,410,530</b>					<b>1,410,530</b>	

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	

**HMO Licensing**

Mandatory HMO Licensing				11,516	20,380					20,380	Original estimate of £20380 to be increased to reflect expected HMO renewals in year and new applications already processed.(Based on 44 renewals/4New cases)
Initial Licence Fees											
Landlord Accreditation Status											
Accredited landlord on application		x				665	680	2.26%			(These fees are applicable on first application for a licence, or where a licence has been revoked or has lapsed for whatever reason.)
Non-accredited landlord		x				685	700	2.19%			
Renewal Licence Fees											
Landlord Accreditation Status											
Accredited landlord on application		x				620	635	2.42%			(These fees are applicable on application for a licence renewal, where a licence remains in force at the time of the application.)
Non-accredited landlord		x				640	655	2.34%			Estimate based on 20 HMO's renewals in 22/23 year. Note that new applications cannot be predicted and renewal licensing for HMO's only occurs every 5 years. Values are based upon average renewal charge.
Variation application licence fees applicable											Fees for variation of licencing are not chargeable
Proposed Licence Variation											
Change of address details of any existing licence holder, manager, owner, mortgagor, freeholder, leaseholder etc.						0	0				
Change of mortgagor, owner, freeholder, and leaseholder (unless they are also the licence holder or manager)						0	0				
Reduction in the number of maximum occupiers for licensing purposes						0	0				
Variation of licence instigated by the council						0	0				
Increase in the number of habitable rooms						0	0				
Increase in the number of maximum occupiers for licensing purposes						0	0				
Change of use of HMO, e.g. from bedsits to shared house						0	0				
Change in room sizes of HMO						0	0				
Change in amenity provision						0	0				

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				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>HMO Licensing (contd.)</b>											
Other licence fees applicable											(These fees are applicable as appropriate in relation to HMO licensing applications, or where HMOs are licensed.)
Revocation of licence						0	0				No refund on relevant licence application
Application refused by the council						0	0				Initial application fee with no refund
Application withdrawn by the applicant						0	0				Initial application fee with no refund
Application made in error						0	0				Refund of application fee will be made
Properties that cease to be licensable during the licensing process						0	0				Initial application fee with no refund
Charge for enforcement under S49 of the Housing Act 2004											(These fees are applicable as appropriate in relation to the service of enforcement notices, and taking enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004.)
Enforcement Action											
Service of Improvement Notice under s11 and/or s12		x				530	545	2.83%			This type of charge is rarely made.
Service of Prohibition Order under s20 and/or s21		x				530	545	2.83%			This type of charge is rarely made.
Service of Hazard Awareness Notice under s28 and/or s29		x				530	545	2.83%			This type of charge is rarely made.
Taking Emergency Remedial Action under s40		x				530	545	2.83%			Charge In addition to cost of works plus administration fee of 30%
Making of Emergency Prohibition Order under s43		x				530	545	2.83%			This type of charge is rarely made.
Works in Default of Enforcement Notice		x				COST +	COST +	N/A			Cost of works + 30% (minimum of £100)
Immigration - housing inspection and accommodation certificates											
Fee for inspection	*	x				230	235	2.17%			These applications are rarely made
Housing Register Application Medical Fee						75	75	0.00%			
<b>HMO Licensing Total</b>				<b>11,516</b>	<b>20,380</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>20,380</b>	

**Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23  
Fees and Charges  
Communities, Housing Environment Committee**

Fees and Charges	* Includes VAT	Discretionary	Statutory Fee	Actuals 20-21	Current Estimate 2021-22	Current Charges 2021-2022	Proposed Charges 2022-2023	Change	+ / - Income 2021-22	Estimate 2022-2023	Comments
				£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
<b>Gypsy and Travellers Sites</b>											
<b><u>Gypsy &amp; Traveller Site Plot fee</u></b>											
Stilebridge Lane		x		34,513	30,340	55.98	58.1	3.79%	1,150	31,490	Weekly Increase in line with RPI 3.8 % increase 12 months to July 2021. Increase in line with Mobile Homes Act 1983 formula. 17 Plots available at present pending completion of capital works by others. Estimate based upon 3.79% increase on current year estimate
Water Lane		x		41,244	40,000	65.12	67.59	3.79%	1,510	41,510	Weekly increase in line with RPI 3.8 % increase 12 months to July 2021. Increase in line with Mobile Homes Act 1983 formula. 12 plots available only at present pending completion of capital works by others. Estimate based upon 3.79% increase on current year estimate
<b>Gypsy &amp; Traveller Site Total</b>				<b>75,757</b>	<b>70,340</b>				<b>2,660</b>	<b>73,000</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>3,307,978</b>	<b>3,075,650</b>				<b>27,660</b>	<b>3,103,310</b>	

# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

### November 2017

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# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

### 1 Introduction and Context

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- 1.1 At Maidstone Borough Council, fees and charges represent an important source of income which is used to support the delivery of the Council's objectives. Currently income from fees and charges constitutes just under a third of the council's funding.
- 1.2 The Council needs to ensure that its charges are reviewed regularly, and that they contribute towards the achievement of its priorities. It is also important to ensure that fees and charges do not discriminate against individuals or groups by excluding them from accessing council services.
- 1.3 Pressure on the Council's budgets has increased the incentive to make best use of charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using this as a means of recovering the costs of delivering services.
- 1.4 Under the Council's constitution, responsibility for setting discretionary fees and charges is delegated to service committees and directors. Each committee will review the fees and charges for the services within its remit at least annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate.
- 1.5 Where the Council has the discretion to set the charge for a service, it is important that the implications of this decision are fully understood, and that decision makers are equipped with sufficient information to enable rational decisions to be made.

### 2 Policy Aims and Objectives

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- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to establish a framework within which fees and charges levied by the Council are agreed and reviewed.
- 2.2 The Council must ensure that charges are set at an appropriate level which maximises cost recovery. Unless it would conflict with the Council's strategic priorities, other policies, contracts or the law then the Council should aim to maximise net income from fees and charges.
- 2.3 The policy aims to ensure that:-
  - a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well as services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
  - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.

# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

- c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
- d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

### 3 Scope

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- 3.1 This policy relates to fees and charges currently being levied by the Council and those which are permissible under the wider general powers to provide and charge for “Discretionary Services” included within the Local Government Act 2003 and Localism Act 2011. It does not cover services for which the council is prohibited from charging.
- 3.2 Fees for statutory services delivered by the council, but for which charges are set by central government, rents, leases, council tax, and business rates are outside the scope of this policy.
- 3.3 In general, charges should ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the cost of providing a service. However, there may be certain circumstances where this would not be appropriate. For example:
  - Where the council is prohibited from charging for the service (e.g. collection of household waste)
  - Where the introduction of a charge would impede delivery of corporate priorities;
  - Where administrative costs of charging outweigh the potential income;
  - Where the service is seen to be funded from Council Tax (i.e. services which are provided and delivered equally to all residents)
  - Where the government sets the fee structure (e.g. pollution permits and private water fees)

### 4 Principles

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- 4.1 The following overarching principles apply for the consideration and review of all current and future fees and charges levied by the council:
  - Fees and charges should maximise cost recovery and where appropriate, income generation, to the extent that the Council’s legal powers permit, providing that this would not present any conflict with the Council’s strategic objectives;
  - Fees and charges should support the improvement of services, and the delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities, as set out in the strategic plan;

# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

- Where a subsidy or concession is provided for a service, this must be targeted towards the delivery of strategic priorities, for example, by facilitating access to services;
- The process for setting and updating fees and charges should be administratively simple, transparent and fair, and for budgeting purposes, income projections must be robust and rational.

### 5 Process and Frequency for Reviewing Charges

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- 5.1 The following arrangements for reviewing charges will be applied throughout the Council, for existing charges as well as those which in principle could be introduced.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, *'Discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed and fixed each year by the Committee responsible for the function or the Service Director as appropriate having considered a report from the Director or duly authorised Officer in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer, as part of the estimate cycle.'*
- 5.3 This annual review will ensure consistency with the Council's priorities, policy framework, service aims, market sensitivity, customer preferences, income generation needs and that any subsidy made by the Council is justifiable.
- 5.4 Heads of Service and budget managers will be asked to complete a schedule setting out all proposed fees and charges for the services in their area (including those which are not set by the council). This will usually take place in autumn for the following financial year and review the current year. By this means, any growth or savings resulting from fees and charges can be built into the budget strategy. The schedule will indicate:
- The service or supply to which the charge relates;
  - Who determines the charges;
  - The basis for the charge (e.g. units or hourly rates);
  - The existing charge;
  - The total income budget for the current year;
  - The proposed charge;
  - Percentage increase/decrease;
  - Effective date for increase/decrease; and
  - Estimated income for the next financial year after introducing the change.

An example schedule is provided at Appendix B.

- 5.5 Following this, the proposals will be collated by the Finance section into a report for each committee to consider the appropriateness of proposed fees and charges for the services within their remit. The report will clearly identify the charges for which the committee can apply

# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

discretion, and distinguish these from the charges which are set externally and included for information only. Policy and Resources Committee will then receive a final report which brings together the proposals from each of the three service committees, in order to assess the overall impact of the proposed changes, and consider the potential impact on customers and service users.

- 5.6 The timing of the annual review will ensure that changes can be incorporated into the council's budget for the forthcoming financial year, although changes to fees and charges may be made outside of this process if required through a report to the relevant director or service committee.
- 5.7 It is possible that the review may lead to a conclusion that charges should remain at the existing level. If this is the case, then the outcomes of the review, including the justification for not increasing the charge need to be documented and reported to the relevant service committee.
- 5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, periodic reviews of the rents and leases are not covered by the above. Individual reviews will be implemented by the relevant officer as long as market levels at least are achieved.

## 6 Guidance

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- 6.1 A checklist of issues for budget managers and Heads of Service to consider when determining the level at which to set fees and charges is provided at Appendix A to this policy.
- 6.2 Below is a list of guiding principles intended to assist decision makers in determining the appropriate level at which to set fees and charges:
- a) Any subsidy from the Council tax payer to service users should be transparent and justifiable.
  - b) Fees and charges may be used to manage demand for a service, and price elasticity of demand should be considered when determining the level at which charges should be set.
  - c) Fees and charges should not be used to provide subsidies to commercial operators.
  - d) Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern and a fair and consistent approach should be taken to ensuring the ensure recovery of all fees and charges.
  - e) Fees and charges should reflect key commitments and corporate priorities.

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## Charging Policy

- f) Prices could be based on added and perceived value, which takes account of wider economic and social considerations, as well as cost.
  - g) There should be some rational scale in the charge for different levels of the same service and there should be consistency between charges for similar services.
  - h) Policies for fees and charges should fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, should be used to generate income to help develop capacity, to deliver efficiency and sustain continuous improvement.
  - i) In certain areas, charging may be used to generate surpluses which can be used to finance other services.
- 6.3 Wherever possible, charges should be recovered in advance or at the point of service delivery. If this is not possible, then invoices should be issued promptly and appropriate recovery procedures will be followed as required. Use of direct debit should be encouraged for periodic payments where this would improve cost effectiveness and enable efficient and timely collection of income.

## 7 Cost Recovery Limitation

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- 7.1 Generally speaking, charges should be set at a level which enables all the costs of delivering a service to be recovered, although there are some exceptions to this identified earlier in this document. This includes direct costs such as the purchase of goods for resale, as well as indirect costs such as management and accommodation costs.
- 7.2 For certain services, legislation prohibits the Council from generating surpluses through charging. The general principle is that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges must not exceed the costs of provision. Examples where this applies include building control and local land charges.
- 7.3 Any over or under recovery that resulted in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed when setting its charges for future periods so that, over time, income equates to costs.
- 7.4 Councils are free to decide what methodology to adopt to assess costs. Maidstone Borough Council follows the Service Reporting Code of Practice definition of total cost, including an allocation of all related support costs, plus an appropriate share of corporate and democratic

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## Charging Policy

core and non-distributed costs. Further guidance and support on calculating the full cost of service provision can be obtained from the Finance section.

### 8 Concessions & Subsidies

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- 8.1 The normal level of fees and charges may be amended to allow for concessions targeted at certain user groups to encourage or facilitate access to the service.
- 8.2 Where concessions are proposed or already in place they must be justified in terms of overall business reasons, or implementation of key strategic considerations e.g. community safety, healthy living.
- 8.3 Examples of concessions and the reasons why they are awarded are:-
- Reductions for older people or children to encourage different age groups to participate in the sport which is linked to the promotion of public health;
  - Free spaces for disabled drivers in Council car parks to support social inclusion;
  - Concessions for new casual traders at the market to stimulate new usage;
- 8.4 In some cases, it may also be justifiable to subsidise a service for all users, where it would support delivery of strategic priorities.
- 8.5 In some circumstances, it may also be suitable to implement a system of means testing for managing access to concessions and subsidies, in order to ensure that subsidy can be targeted appropriately.
- 8.6 A fair and consistent approach should be taken to the application of concessionary schemes, and decisions should recognise the Council's broader agenda on promoting equality, as set out in the Equality Policy. When considering new charges, or significant changes to an existing charge, the budget manager should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).
- 8.7 All decisions regarding concessions and subsidies should include consideration of the impact the Council's ability to generate income and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### 9 Introducing a new charge

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# Maidstone Borough Council

## Charging Policy

- 9.1 Proposals to introduce new charges should be considered as part of the service planning process and income projections should be factored into the Council's medium term financial plan.
- 9.2 Reasonable notice should be given to customers and service users prior to the introduction of a new charge, along with advice on concessions and discounts available.
- 9.3 Proposals should be based on robust evidence, and will incorporate the anticipated financial impact of introducing the charge, as well as the potential impact on demand for the service.
- 9.4 Performance should be monitored closely following implementation to enable amendments to the charge to be made if required, and the charge will subsequently be picked up as part of the annual review process.

## 10 Monitoring

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- 10.1 Income levels will be monitored throughout the year and reported to committees through the quarterly reporting process. Significant variances may be addressed through an amended to charges, which will require approval from the appropriate Director or Service Committee.
- 10.2 The impact of changes in demand for services will be monitored through quarterly performance monitoring reports, where this is identified as a key performance indicator.

# Appendices

# Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

The below checklist may be used as a guide for managers when reviewing existing charges or implementing a new fee structure.

Have you considered the following?	Y/N/NA	Comments
1. How does the charge link to the Council's corporate priorities?		
2. Does the charge enable the council to recover all costs of providing the service?		
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'No', have you considered increasing the charge to enable full cost recovery?		
4. Has the impact of inflation on the cost of service delivery been reflected in the proposed charge?		
5. Do the administrative costs of charging or increasing the charge outweigh the potential income to be generated?		
6. <del>Is</del> Is the charge being used to deter or incentivise certain behaviours?		
7. Has there been any investment in the service to effect an increase in charges?		
8. If there is a market for the service or supply, has the impact of market conditions and competition be considered in setting the charge?		
9. How sensitive is the price to demand for the service? Is there a risk that an increase in charge could deter potential customers?		
10. If applicable, have consultation results been taken into account?		

## Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

11. Could the charges or income budget be increased to support the delivery of a savings target?		
12. What would the impact of the change be on customers, and how does this affect the delivery of corporate priorities?		
13. Have any alternative charging structures been considered?		
14. How will the service be promoted? How successful have previous promotions been in generating demand?		
15. New charges only - are there any legal factors which impact on the scope for charging (e.g. an obligation to limit charges to cost recovery only)?		
16. New charges only - has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed?		
17. If applicable, have concessionary charges been considered on a fair and consistent basis?		

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chargeable Service/Supply:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B – Example Schedule of Fees & Charges

Fees and Charges April 2017 - March 2018		Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	2016-2017 Actuals	2017 -2018 Current Estimate	Current Charges 2017-2018	Proposed Charges 2018-2019	% Change	2017-2018 + / - Income	2018 -2019 Estimate	Comments
EA31	<b>Street Naming &amp; Numbering</b>				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	
	Name change						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Addition of Name to numbered Property						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Amendment to Postal Address						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Build - Individual Property						75.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Official Registration of Postal Address previously not Registered						50.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Development - Fee per unit/flat						40.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Creation of New Street						100.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Renumbering of Development or Block of Flats - Fee per unit/flat						20.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	<b>Street Naming &amp; Numbering Total</b>				<b>66,995</b>	<b>49,000</b>				<b>0</b>	<b>49,000</b>	

**COMMUNITIES, HOUSING &  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**30 November 2021**

**The Future Use of Community Grant**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	COMMUNITIES, HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	John Littlemore Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

To consider whether the Council will continue to provide a Community Grant and if so, to consider how that grant should be utilised.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Committee agrees the Community Grant budget from the options set out in Paragraph 3.1.
2. That the Committee adopts the approach outlined in Paragraph 3.2 of the report.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
CHE Committee	30-11-2021

# The Future Use of Community Grant

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul>	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul>	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks posed are within the Council's risk-assessment appetite.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing establishment.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Legal</b>	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers.	Legal Team
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention	Policy and Information Team

	<p>schedules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recognise the recommendations will impact what personal information the Council processes and so have completed a separate data privacy impact assessment.</li> </ul>	
<b>Equalities</b>	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore, a separate equalities impact assessment will be completed depending on the decision of the Committee.	Policy & Information Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder, particularly regarding the mediation service. The Community Protection Team have been consulted and mitigation has been proposed	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Procurement</b>	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will complete the sourcing of those services in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.</li> </ul>	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The CHE Committee has previously considered the Council's position in relation to the grant funding that is provided to community groups. The amount of grant and the number of organisations that benefit from the funds has greatly reduced over the years. The matter was last considered by the CHE Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017, which led to the current arrangement being implemented from April 2017

2.2 The CHE Committee agreed a five-year service level agreement to the benefit of the Maidstone Citizens Advice Bureau, Involve, and Maidstone Mediation. The overall budget has reduced by 5% per annum over the five-year period. A service level agreement was entered into with each organisation, setting out the expectation from both parties and outlining the outcomes anticipated from the grant.

2.3 The outgoing grant settlements were utilised to provide services that are not currently provided by the Council itself, or to supplement services by providing a more in-depth or greater level of expertise than is presently available within our own resources. These are summarised in the table below:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Service provided</b>	<b>Provider</b>
Mediation	Mediation in neighbour disputes; negotiating between family members in homeless cases; mediation services into schools; anger management courses.	Maidstone Mediation
Advice	Debt advice & assistance. Employment advice. Benefit advice incl. universal credit. Assistance with preventing homelessness – mortgage/rent arrears, illegal eviction. Consumer advice.	Citizens Advice Bureau
Community links	Act as a conduit between the Council & voluntary sector; maintain a directory of voluntary groups; lead and develop a range of forums (e.g. older persons; BME)	Involve

2.4 The total budget in the final year of the current arrangement was £163,000 and the settlement to each organisation is as follows:

Maidstone CAB	£133,100
Involve	£21,700
Maidstone Mediation	£8,200

This arrangement comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and the CHE Committee is asked to consider how it will utilise this budget going forward.

2.5 The services provided by the voluntary sector reflect areas of activity that are not currently provided in-house by the Council's own officers. The provision of these services by an external organisation has a number of benefits. These include:

- Those organisations having an expertise and knowledge that would otherwise need to be developed in-house.
- Voluntary sector groups are often seen as 'trusted bodies' and independent of statutory agencies.
- This can be particularly helpful if the advice is related to action being taken by the Council e.g. Council Tax recovery.
- Voluntary organisations can draw upon knowledge developed in delivering other services e.g. pension advice; social prescribing.

- 2.6 Attached as Appendix 1. are the activities tables for both the Maidstone Mediation service and the Maidstone Citizens Advice Bureau. All three organisations funded through the Community Grant were affected by the restrictions imposed by the Covid19 pandemic to a greater or lesser degree. As a result, the Council evolved some aspects of services previously delivered by the voluntary sector. An example of this would be the merger of our respective lists of voluntary and community groups. The Policies, Communities and Engagement Team have agreed a biannual update meeting with Involve, as well as sending a quarterly update so they can maintain a smaller inhouse list of key community groups.
- 2.7 Maidstone Mediation remained open throughout the pandemic, they refocused and like many organisations worked virtually and safely. This enabled their clients to maintain full access to their services, particularly those needed to be able to cope during a time of stress, anxiety, frustration and feelings of loss of hope for many.
- 2.8 The Maidstone CAB also provided a range of services virtually. The focus of their work changed, with different issues becoming more in demand in response to what was happening within society more generally. For example, as the moratorium on property possession orders went into effect the need for housing advice reduced. However, this was offset by an increase in employment and debt advice as people tried to understand the impact of furlough and the associated concerns about income levels.
- 2.9 The move to online services amongst all three funded organisations mirrors the feedback from the wider sector, recorded as part of the community groups' Impact & Recovery Survey earlier this year. Although, it is noted that 26% of respondents said they had to temporarily suspend activities during the lockdown periods. Social isolation and mental health support featured highly in this survey as being areas of activity that were most called upon.
- 2.10 Advice was provided by the Council's shared procurement team to the effect that this budget was no longer being utilised in the traditional grant role. In practice, the Council was seeking a supply of a service as it was entering into an agreement for specific work; and this was to be carried out over a sustained period. This means that if the Council wants to continue to provide this grant in this way, we will need to follow the Council's financial rules.
- 2.11 Sums paid over a fixed term period are combined for the purpose of the financial rules. This means that if the Committee were to follow a similar breakdown of the grant in the future, a three-year grant settlement would mean that the awards for both the mediation service and community partnership service will require three written quotes. The larger debt and other advice grant will require a formal tendering process.
-

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

3.1 The Committee could choose to:

- 3.1.1 Remove the grant budget completely to be taken as a saving for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This would provide a significant contribution of £174,000 towards the saving's target.
- 3.1.2 Provide a three-year grant, reducing by a further 5% each year creating a saving of £8,700 per annum or £26,100 by the end of the three year period. This sum would contribute towards the MTFS saving target and the impact would be a tapered reduction spread over the period of the new settlement.
- 3.1.3 Provide a three-year grant without reducing the overall budget. This will provide the same level of funding for the supplier but would not contribute to the MTFS and would mean that savings would need to be found from other areas of activity.

3.2 The Committee could agree to continue to fund the voluntary sector in the provision of services for:

- A mediation service that MBC officers can make referrals to (7% of the overall budget).
- Debt advice & assistance. Employment advice. Benefit advice incl. universal credit. Assistance with preventing homelessness – mortgage/rent arrears, illegal eviction. Consumer advice (80% of the overall budget).
- Provide a lead role between the Council & voluntary sector; maintain a directory of voluntary groups; lead and develop a range of forums (e.g. older persons; BME) (13% of the overall budget).

This approach will require the Council to tender for those services, depending on the size of the relevant allotted budget.

3.3 The Committee could decide to utilise the whole grant for alternative proposals to be invited from the voluntary sector. In doing so the Committee will need to decide what objectives should be met by the grant settlement. The Impact & Recovery Survey provides a source of information that may assist Members if they choose to investigate this further. The relevant information is attached as Appendix 2.

### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The voluntary sector continues to provide a range of services that the Council would have to provide directly or decide that it no longer requires these to be delivered. The benefits from the links with the voluntary sector was brought into focus during the Covid19 pandemic. The Council remains under financial pressures over the period of the MTFS and there is a need to develop options for savings to mitigate this. For these reasons the preferred options are those contained in Paragraphs 3.1.2 and 3.2.

## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The recommendations are within the Council's risk appetite. Voluntary groups expressed future funding as their highest concern within the Impact & Recovery Survey. Locally, we have seen the impact on organisations when local authority commissioned services result in the loss of finances. Whilst most organisations are resilient and are able to adjust over time, the loss of funding can in the short-term lead to disruption and fragility to those voluntary groups.
- 

## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 If the recommendations are approved, officers will commence the process of identifying local voluntary groups to obtain three written quotations for the mediation service and community sector lead role. The advice service will be tendered in accordance with the Council's financial procedure rules.
- 

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Example of Activities

Appendix 2 - Impact & Recovery Survey – issues identified for Maidstone.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- CHE Committee report 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017
- Impact & Recovery Survey

## Appendix 1. Examples of Community Grant funded activity

### Maidstone Mediation activity

Type of intervention	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21*
Homelessness prevention	2	1	-
Neighbour dispute mediation	33	15	25
Anger management course	71	57	23
parent and teenager/ family referrals	16	21	19
School mediation sessions	43	33	4
School pupil peer mediation sessions	27 schools 300 pupils	25 300	2

\* - the activity during 2020/21 was impacted by the restrictions imposed to tackle the Covid19 pandemic.

### Maidstone CAB activity

Benefits	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Q1	743	768	562
Q2	932	819	489
Q3	870	565	
Q4	985	586	

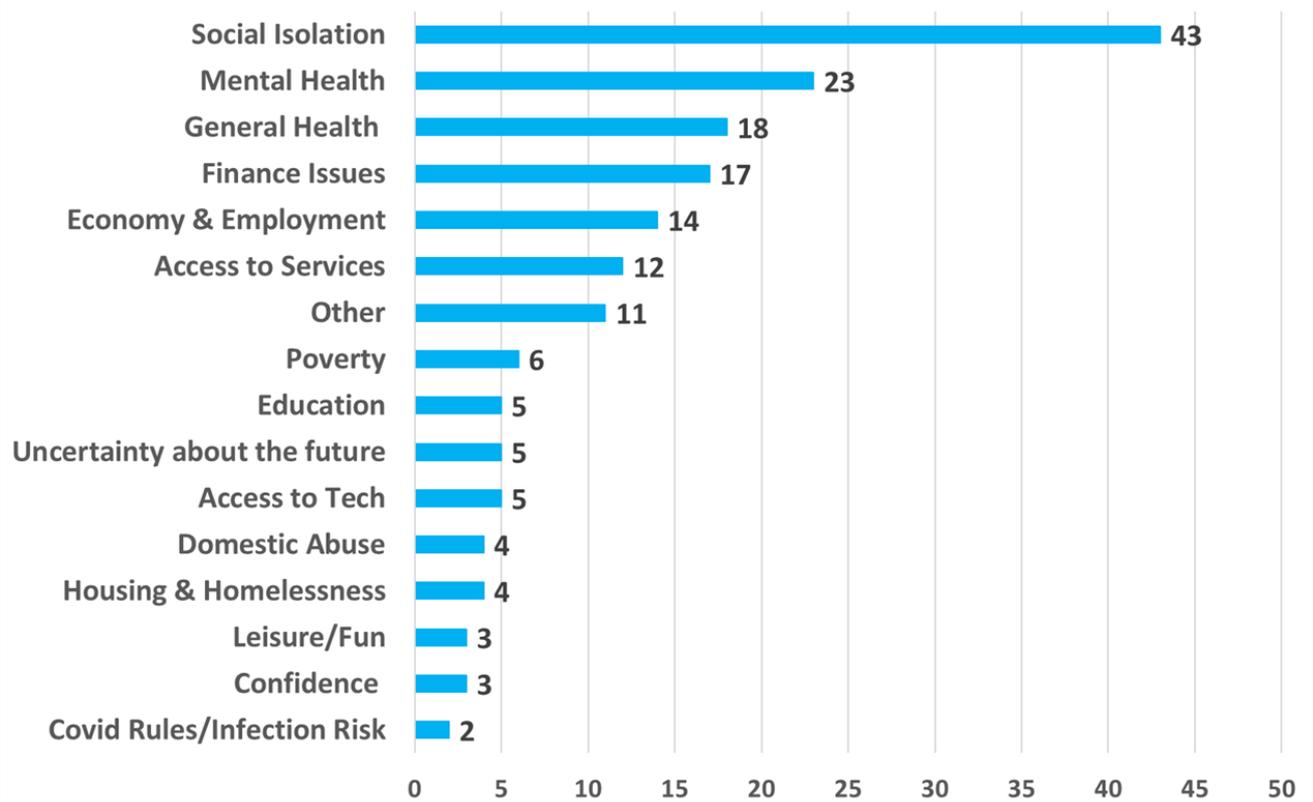
Debt	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Q1	227	56	89
Q2	220	113	144
Q3	244	99	
Q4	248	105	

Employment	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Q1	191	181	90
Q2	196	197	109
Q3	193	164	
Q4	231	167	

Housing	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Q1	250	143	132
Q2	284	206	169
Q3	287	180	
Q4	258	206	

## Appendix 2. Impact & Recovery Survey –

### Issues facing Maidstone residents identified by community groups



# Agenda Item 18

**Communities, Housing and Environment Committee**

**30 November 2021**

## **Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Alison Broom – Chief Executive
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Phil Coyne – Interim Director, Local Plan Review
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### **Executive Summary**

Maidstone Town Centre is the social and economic heart of the Borough, providing employment, leisure, retail and business/professional service facilities throughout the Borough and beyond, as part of its role as the County Town of Kent. The Town Centre and the wider urban area are also home to a very significant residential population. However, in recent years the town centre, like many others around the country, has experienced some challenges as a result of changes in retailing patterns, a shift in the nature of demand for offices, viability challenges in the delivery of new housing and difficulty in ensuring that important infrastructure keeps pace with the needs of resident communities, businesses and visitors. Again, in common with many other areas, these issues have been exacerbated over the last 18 months by the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic. This report is for the purpose of discussion around the preparation of a Town Centre Strategy which will be focused upon a 30 year vision to embed new investment in jobs, infrastructure, housing, leisure and culture within a framework which will seek to establish Maidstone as an exemplar of urban sustainability.

### **Purpose of Report**

Discussion

### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the feedback arising from this Committee be used to inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee with a more specific proposal on the scope and timing of the Town Centre Strategy.

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	9 November 2021

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	16 November 2021
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	30 November 2021

# Development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p><b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b></p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>The Town Centre Strategy will contribute to all of these objectives by promoting good growth in the town centre which will impact positively on both the local and regional economies, whilst providing new homes and jobs within a greener, more legible environment supported by improvements to infrastructure - including sustainable transport and community services.</p>	<p>Interim Local Plan Review Director</p>
<p><b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b></p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation is reduced and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>We envisage that a specific focus for the Town Centre Strategy will be around protecting and celebrating Maidstone's heritage and protecting and enhancing biodiversity, for example through the establishment of green networks throughout the town.</p> <p>Initial thinking includes creating a Strategy which will also seek to take a new approach to the connectivity between inward investment and employment/training opportunities for local people which, coupled with integrating health and wellbeing objectives and infrastructure into our whole</p>	<p>Interim Local Plan Review Director</p>

	approach will help to tackle health inequalities.	
<b>Risk Management</b>	Already covered in the risk section.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
<b>Financial</b>	Provision has been made for stage one of the costs of preparing the Town Centre Strategy within the Council's agreed allocation of the Recovery and Renewal Funding (£176k); the medium term financial plan will identify further funding for future stages of work. These costs will need to be reviewed regularly as work progresses.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	The scale and breadth of this work will require contributions and support from service experts across the Council, including at leadership and management level. It is also proposed that a project manager be appointed and that the Interim Director for the Local Plan Review will provide expert consultancy support and play a co-ordinating role.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
<b>Legal</b>	The Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2025) vision of "a vibrant, development prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential" is underpinned by 4 priorities including the borough being a "Thriving Place", "Embracing Growth & Enabling Infrastructure" and "Safe, Clean and Green". Best value is a statutory framework that ensures that councils are required to plan, deliver and continuously improve local authority services. Each local authority has a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Council's Strategic Plan demonstrates compliance with the statutory duty and this report goes towards achieving	Planning Team Leader, Mid Kent Services

	<p>that objective.</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011 enable the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.</p> <p>There are no consequences arising from the recommendation that adversely affect or interfere with individuals' rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998. In the formulation of the strategy and in the exercise of its functions in delivering the strategy, the Council will have to have due regard to its public sector equality duty in s.149 of the Equality Act 2010.</p>	
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No impact identified at this stage.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. An Eq.IA will be completed alongside the strategy.	Senior Policy and Engagement Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	An integral aspect of the Town Centre Strategy will be the creation of a physical and social environment which helps to discourage crime and antisocial behaviour.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
<b>Procurement</b>	No impact currently identified but as the Strategy is developed and projects are taken forward the appropriate procurement process will be undertaken as necessary.	Interim Local Plan Review Director
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An integral aspect of the preparation of a Town Centre Strategy will be to include climate adaption measures in order to increase green space, reduce pollution, enable active travel, increase pedestrian permeability, and to provide for the planting of trees and the encouragement of green walls to improve biodiversity and aesthetic enhancement.</li> </ul>	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support green jobs, businesses and residents to prepare for the impacts of climate change, encouragement of circular economy business practices, and the enablement of electric vehicle infrastructure and sustainable travel.</li> </ul>	
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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In common with town centres across the country, Maidstone Town Centre has experienced change over the last decade as a result of changing consumer trends within the retail sector together with structural changes within many aspects of the office and employment sectors. Over the last 18 months, these challenges have been accentuated and exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic and there are further risks arising from the potential impacts of post-Brexit economic rebalancing. Whilst, as members will be aware, the Council and other agencies have worked hard to provide support to both the businesses and residential communities during the pandemic, it is also now necessary to look at the recovery and 'reimagining' of the town in the short, medium and long term. For this reason, this report proposes a comprehensive Town Centre Strategy which would be capable of quickly building upon recent interventions and reinforcing these with a series of complementary strategies and actions designed to transform Maidstone Town Centre between now and 2050 in line with a new Town Centre Vision.
- 2.2 The Town Centre Strategy will be designed to establish, and provide clarity around, the Council's long-term vision for the Town Centre and to develop a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy and delivery plan to achieve this. The work will be underpinned by core principles which reflect the vision for both the County Town at the heart of Kent and a borough with vibrant and prosperous urban and rural communities where everyone can realise their potential and fulfil their aspirations.
- 2.3 The Strategy will help to create an ambitious overarching vision which in turn will guide investment by ourselves and others in regeneration, development, provision of infrastructure and the use of our town centre spaces. In the short/medium term the strategy will guide the provision of support to town centre communities in responding to the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic and a post Brexit economy. In addition, it will seek to address the management of potential change resulting from the relaxation of planning rules around the transition of business premises between uses.
- 2.4 It is proposed that central to the approach will be the reinvention and renaissance of Maidstone Town Centre as an exemplar of sustainability with a strong focus around arts, culture, leisure and the visitor economy. This will assist in creating a place where people want to live, feel safe, and which places an equal emphasis upon a town centre which is relevant to, and to which all of the borough's residents can relate. Development of the strategy will be led by MBC and include engagement with the public, businesses and

wider stakeholders including our public and community sector partners, landowners and investors.

- 2.5 Also central to the approach will be the prioritisation of the natural environment to create a healthier and a more sustainable town centre for the benefit of residents, visitors, businesses, urban wildlife and the ecology of the borough. An increased focus on urban planting and green spaces will help to reduce the impact of vehicle emissions, improve air quality and dampen traffic noise, as well as helping to address increasing urban temperatures as a result of the changing climate.

### **Scope of Strategy**

- 2.6 The Policy and Resources Committee have given initial consideration to the scope of the strategy as set out below and feedback is now invited from this Committee. The scope currently envisaged includes:

- The reaffirmation of Maidstone as the county town of Kent through physical regeneration, cultural renaissance and the further development of diverse and high-quality employment, retail and leisure opportunities.
- Consideration of future land/building uses and the achievement of high-quality and sustainable design that respects and celebrates Maidstone's heritage, whilst improving the quality and character of the town, its environment and its functionality.
- Cross-cutting principles to ensure that the town centre is resilient to the effects of climate change and is a flagship of the Council's aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- A phased approach which continues to build upon current post pandemic recovery work, but also identifies short, medium and long term projects and interventions, including those around key factors such as environment and community safety.
- Integration of the Council's commitments to a Maidstone Borough that works for everyone, incorporates reductions in deprivation and health inequalities and brings improvement in social mobility.
- Ensuring the town centre and the wider urban area can continue to play a significant role in meeting the borough's housing need through the enablement of development, investment and support for the delivery of quality homes across the housing market to develop sustainable communities.
- Tackling education and skills differentials across all sectors of the community, in order to ensure that local residents are equipped to compete for employment and training opportunities resulting from investment and reinvestment.
- Promoting Maidstone as a 'smart town' by bringing together the use of new and emergent technologies and data capture techniques in tackling a range of issues from traffic and air quality, to the efficient use of buildings and spaces and the ability of all stakeholders to reach target audiences more easily.

## **What will the strategy include?**

- 2.7 Our Town Centre Strategy needs to comprise of a number of interrelated, interdependent and complementary workstreams; initial thinking is set out below and again feedback from this Committee is invited:
- A clear and ambitious vision
  - A transport movement and infrastructure plan designed to facilitate the well-managed movement of traffic with minimum impact on pedestrian safety and air quality, together with safe and legible pedestrian routes throughout the town centre, attractive low carbon public transport options and cycle routes based on logical desire lines.
  - A site assembly and implementation framework designed to assist strategic acquisitions by the Council and other partners, together with relocation strategies to ensure that investment and job are protected and opportunities for growth are fully exploited.
  - An inward investment strategy based around a proactive approach to identifying investors, developers and end-users in order to ensure the realisation of the overall strategy.
  - An economic development and visitor economy plan based around the current economic development strategy, and seeking to secure reinvestment from existing stakeholders in the town, along with the provision of opportunities for new investment in diversifying Maidstone's visitor offer through development in arts, culture, events and leisure opportunities.
  - A sustainable town plan designed to ensure that all aspects of the town's transport system, built and natural/semi-natural environments make a positive contribution to the achievement of the boroughs 2030 carbon neutrality target.
  - A housing and community plan to ensure that the town's housing stock is of a good standard and of a sufficiently broad nature in terms of both type and tenure to provide for existing and future residents.
  - A skills and inclusive growth plan to ensure that residents from throughout the borough are equipped with the skills to compete for employment and training opportunities arising from the strategy, and that the skill base and training infrastructure across the borough becomes and integral part of Maidstone's inward investment offer.
  - A smart town plan to ensure that technology and data capture is harnessed in the context of the easy movement of vehicles and public transport, improvements in air quality, and the ability of the business community and other stakeholders to maximise dwell time and spend capture in the town centre.
  - A marketing and communications strategy designed to manage community business and stakeholder engagement in the process, whilst simultaneously marketing the town to investors, developers, occupiers and visitors.
  - A plan for the Council's role in investment and direct delivery.
- 2.8 At the appropriate point, consideration will be given to the preparation of a new Development Plan Document (DPD) if it is felt that this is necessary to enable the more effective and efficient delivery of key projects or other elements of the Strategy. Equally, and dependent upon the timing and content of new guidance anticipated around the national planning system, it

may be more appropriate for the Town Centre to provide a key focus for the Borough's first Local Plan prepared under the new system.

### **3. GOVERNANCE**

#### **Political Leadership**

- 3.1 At the outset, political leadership of the strategy will be via the Policy and Resources Committee. As the strategy develops and projects are identified, it is anticipated that these will be managed via the appropriate service committees and reported back to Policy and Resource Committee as appropriate. This approach will need to be adapted in the context of the already agreed principle of changing the Council's governance system to a Cabinet structure from May 2022. The details of the new Constitution are currently being drafted and yet to be agreed.
- 3.2 Whilst many of the activities which will be pursued as part of the Town Centre Strategy will be cross cutting between service committees, some examples of the types of projects and roles which are likely to emerge under the remit of this committee would be;
- The identification of new community infrastructure such as health and education.
  - The use of green and blue infrastructure to promote healthy lifestyles and more sustainable choices.
  - Evolution of the council's strategic and operational approach to managing the impacts of permitted development and the unintended consequences of the creation of a large amount of relatively inexpensive and often poor quality rented accommodation. This includes factors such as multiple placements of homeless and vulnerable people and families by other housing authorities and probation services.
  - A review of the evening and night time economy including licencing policy and practice.
  - The identification and assembly of sites, either directly or with partners, of sufficient scale to overcome viability issues and maximise the achievement of affordable housing.
  - The diversification of housing opportunities in terms of typologies, size, tenure, and the maintenance of quality standards.
  - A cross cutting role in ensuring that new developments contribute positively to the promotion of the Town Centre as an exemplar of design and sustainability– this could include, for example, consideration of how to improve existing housing stock so that it is more energy efficient, warmer and less costly to run for residents.
  - Options around the introduction and role of 'Smart' technologies.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement and Management**

- 3.3 It is proposed that as an early action, work begins with elected members in the design of a governance framework to enable structured work with members on both strategic and town centre community matters and with our partners. This could include formation of a multi-agency Town Centre Partnership Board to work alongside the Council in developing and

coordinating the strategy. Members views on this are invited.

- 3.4 It is also proposed that at both development and implementation stages, the strategy will include a comprehensive programme of community and stakeholder engagement in order to ensure the broadest possible input and influence from across the borough.

#### **4. RESOURCES**

- 4.1 The initial resources for this strategy were discussed and agreed at Policy and Resources Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021; £176k has been allocated from the Recovery and Renewal Fund and consideration will be given to subsequent stages of the strategy work through the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Resources will be monitored and reported in further detail as the project progresses.

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#### **5. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Not applicable as this report is for discussion purposes only.

#### **6. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Not applicable as this report is for discussion purposes only.

#### **7. RISK**

- 7.1 The development of a Town Centre Strategy contributes to the mitigation of a strategic risk around achieving MBC's Strategic Plan. This risk arises due to economic restructuring, the accentuation of adverse trends by the pandemic and the pressures for services arising as a consequence of a growing residential population in the borough as a whole and specifically in and around the town centre.
- 7.2 As part of the governance framework for the strategy, risk registers will be compiled, monitored and managed for both the overall Town Centre Strategy and its component workstreams. These risks will be contained within the established risk appetite for council activities.

#### **8. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 8.1 The discussion at this committee is part of similar discussions with other service committees which will inform a further report to the Policy and Resources Committee.

**9. REPORT APPENDICES**

None.

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**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**Communities, Housing and Environment Committee**

**30 November 2021**

**Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Jennifer Stevens, Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Andrew Williams, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

Following the adoption of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy, this delivery plan sets out the actions for enhancing biodiversity with the Council’s Parks and Open Spaces over the next 5 years. The plan sets out the aims and benefits of increasing and diversifying habitats whilst also recognising the constraints faced and how these may be overcome.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Committee adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity 2021-26, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	30 November 2021

# Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>The actions set out in this delivery plan are designed to enhance and promote biodiversity and therefore supports the Council's objective of a safe, clean, and green borough.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The report recommendation(s) supports the achievement(s) of the biodiversity cross cutting objectives by identifying specific actions the Council will carry out in its parks and open spaces to enhance and promote biodiversity.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks associated with this decision are outlined in Section 5	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Financial</b>	Whilst the delivery plan sets out a number of actions that can be delivered within the existing Parks and Open Spaces budget, to achieve the Council's ambitions additional funding will be required. Therefore, this plan sets out a range of initiatives which will be delivered as and when resources are available including external funding.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	As with the financial implications, there are many actions which can be delivered with the	Head of Environment

	existing resource, however additional support, potentially through partner agencies will be required to achieve the ambitious targets set out in the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy.	and Public Realm
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications of this delivery plan.	Team Leader, Contentious and Corporate Governance
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No implications identified.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommended actions within the delivery plan will not have any impact on crime and disorder.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no specific procurement requirements identified by this report, however procurement rules will be followed when required.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The implications of this report have been considered and align with the Corporate Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In April 2019, Maidstone Borough Council declared a biodiversity and climate change emergency recognising the impact climate change is having on our environment. As a result of this it adopted a Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy in 2020 which set out an ambitious programme of actions and targets, not limited to those within our control, to halt and reverse this impact.
- 2.2 Biodiversity originally became part of the global agenda back in 1992 when 150 countries signed the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This filtered down to the local level in the form of

Local Biodiversity Action Plans, or LBAPs, which were designed to enhance priority habitats, were exceptionally detailed but largely incomprehensible and certainly not deliverable.

- 2.3 LBAPs are no longer considered part of the national approach to managing biodiversity, with conservation management largely being subsumed into local plans or other statutory documents.
- 2.4 Whilst the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy considers the whole Borough and the actions needed across all sectors including transportation, energy, waste, and housing, it also recognises the specific need for a Parks and Open Spaces biodiversity action plan which is regularly reviewed with best practice to ensure every opportunity is taken to enhance biodiversity in our own estate.
- 2.5 This Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity has been prepared to support the ambitions of the wider Strategy and action plan and provide specific actions which will be delivered over the next 5 years and when resources allow. It also looks to set out the ethos by which all future management of our Parks and Open Spaces will adhere to, ensuring that biodiversity remains a focus whilst continuing to deliver green spaces that satisfy the needs of our residents and visitors.
- 2.6 The five-year action plan included in this document contains a mix of objectives which combine wide ranging 'blanket' objectives such as increasing community involvement, to targeted interventions focused on specific habitats or species such as wetlands.
- 2.7 The Plan acknowledges that not all the actions can be delivered within the service's current budget or resources. However, recognises sources of funding which will be sought to support delivery including developers' contributions.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee could decide to adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity, enabling the five-year action plan to be implemented and for funding to be sought to support the range of projects. This supports action 6.2 of the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy which was adopted in 2020.
- 3.2 Alternatively, the Committee could decide to make amendments to the delivery plan and attached action plan.
- 3.3 The Committee could decide not to adopt a delivery plan for biodiversity in its parks and open spaces.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity is adopted, setting out the council's commitment to enhancing biodiversity in its own estate. This will ensure that the Parks Team have a clear focus on delivering diverse habitats that support wildlife whilst continuing to meet the wide range of needs of park users and residents.
  - 4.2 Without this delivery plan there is a risk of a disjointed approach to enhancing biodiversity in our parks and the potential of conflicting priorities failing to maximise ecological benefits.
  - 4.3 Development of this plan has considered a wide range of information available and discussions with stakeholders and industry experts. It is important to recognise that the actions set out in the plan seek to enhance biodiversity through a range of habitats, not just increasing tree cover which has historically been the focus. Whilst important, this plan looks to ensure this is not carried out to the detriment of the wide variety of habitats identified across Maidstone's Parks and Open Spaces.
  - 4.4 However, if the Committee identifies specific actions that are missing from the plan, the plan can be amended prior to it being agreed.
  - 4.5 The Plan remains a live document and additional actions where identified and appropriate will be incorporated into the plan.
- 

## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 Failing to take positive actions to address and, where possible, reverse habitat loss and biodiversity decline, will contribute to the biodiversity and climate emergency, which in time will affect us all. There is a significant risk that if we do not collectively act now, we will not be able to stop the decline and will permanently lose habitats and species.
  - 5.2 There is also a reputational risk to the Council if it fails to take action to enhance biodiversity in its own estate whilst seeking other parties to act. This is likely to affect the deliverability of the wider Strategy and strategic objectives.
  - 5.3 The risk of adopting this plan is that the Council does not have the resources or funding to deliver it. However, this is acknowledged in the plan and funding opportunities identified. The plan includes actions that can be delivered within existing resources whilst also setting out more ambitious objectives when funding allows.
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## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 There has been significant Member consultation on biodiversity over the past few years including previous reports to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, a members' briefing session and consultation with

the Climate Change Working Group. Feedback from all these sessions have supported the development of this delivery plan.

- 6.2 A key outcome of the feedback was to focus this plan on what the Council can deliver within its own estate rather than the wider remit which has been captured in the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy.
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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 If the Committee decides to adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity, the team will ensure that it is publicised as well as promoted across the Council and park stakeholders.
- 7.2 Activities carried out as part of the plan will be promoted using social media and opportunities will be sought to increase awareness and engagement with residents and park users.
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix 1: Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity 2021-26

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy 2020



# Parks & Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity 2022 – 2026



# Parks & Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity 2022 – 2026

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Green Resource
- 3 Current initiatives to support biodiversity and increase sustainability
- 4 Aims and benefits of increasing and diversifying habitat
- 5 Constraints and considerations of increasing and enhancing habitat
- 6 Conclusions

Five-Year Action Plan: Top 8 priority projects

# 1. Introduction

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) declared a biodiversity and climate emergency in April 2019 recognising the impact climate change is having on our environment and the loss and threats to our species and habitats. Whilst there has been a history of supporting and recognising the broad benefits of parks and open spaces, there is now a greater corporate impetus to derive the greatest benefit possible for biodiversity and eco-system services in our estate.

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This Parks and Open Spaces Delivery Plan for Biodiversity sets out the initiatives that will be put in place to further protect and increase biodiversity in MBC managed green spaces and will help identify what additional steps can be taken to ensure these vital places are achieving their full potential. In combination, opportunities are identified to introduce more sustainable grounds maintenance practices and to further encourage public awareness and involvement with wildlife.

This delivery plan does not seek to repeat the detail of the borough Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy adopted in October 2020, though it should be read in

conjunction with that document to fully understand the context of the action presented here.

Enhancing biodiversity meets several the Council's core aims, including those identified in the Strategic Plan 2019-2045 for themes relating to Safe Clean & Green and the cross-cutting objective that Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected. These priorities are also quickly gaining traction in the population as global, regional, and local impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change are felt and understood.

Along with supporting physical and mental health and wellbeing, ensuring provision of high-quality green spaces and increased tree cover also greatly benefits the borough's residents and visitors by improving air quality, potentially reducing urban summer temperatures, and capturing carbon. Furthermore, investing in green space is proven to improve a region's image and environmental credibility; helping to attract and retain high value industries, new business start-ups, entrepreneurs, and workers.

Although some of the projects and initiatives identified can be achieved through increased volunteering and changes to grounds maintenance practices, it is

important to recognise that others will only be possible as and when funding becomes available. There is also a finite limit on resources to manage specialised habitats which may impact the delivery of new schemes.

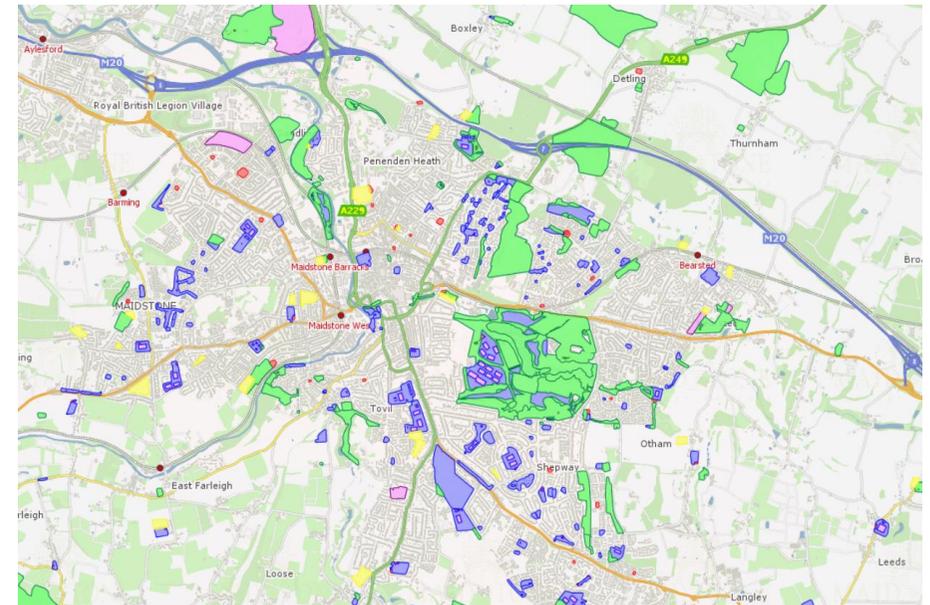
However, there is significant potential to obtain additional funding through various sources, including from the planning process identified within the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy. This plan therefore sets out a range of projects and initiatives which can be delivered to maximise the potential of MBC parks and open spaces to achieve high quality, diverse habitats, when resources allow.

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## 2. The Green Resource in Parks

The Council owns and manages just over 425 hectares of publicly accessible green space in the Borough. This includes 30 large parks and 80 neighbourhood green spaces; amongst these areas we have 68 play areas and an array of sports pitches and courts. Additionally, we provide 700 allotment plots across 12 sites.

Four of our parks have been audited and awarded Green Flag status, partly in relation to their management for biodiversity.



The map shows the blanket of MBC green spaces ranging from amenity (blue) and play (red) to natural (green) areas across Maidstone's primary urban area.

### 3. Current initiatives to support biodiversity

Below is a list of projects and initiatives undertaken to support biodiversity and improve sustainability in the last three years to 2021:

The planting of 2500 new trees at various sites across the Borough, including whips and standards. Mixes of native oak, maple, rowan, birch, lime and cherry all help create biodiverse habitats, this is often enhanced by planting shrub layer and woodland edge species such as hazel, dog rose, crab apple and hawthorn.



Pollinator Friendly Meadow, Gatland Lane

The creation of over 10000m<sup>2</sup> of bee friendly pollinator meadows – accredited by DEFRA & Bumble Bee Conservation with a Bees’ Needs Award.

Collaborative funding and support of Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to actively manage conservation projects, links to County and regional projects, provision of volunteering opportunities and expert advice to landowners.

Friends of groups and volunteers supported with advice, guidance, and practical assistance as well as £25,000 ‘Go Green Go Wild’ direct funding of biodiversity community projects. Examples include pond creation projects, new wildflower meadows, over 500 trees planted and specialist ‘elver’ monitoring on the River Medway.

Review of potential sites for Local Nature reserves and developing detailed management plans and surveys to declare 6 new Local Nature reserves during 2021-22.

Maidstone Borough in Bloom was launched promoting gardening and rewarding environmentally sustainable competition entries.

Relaxing mowing regimes in areas within parks to support invertebrates and reptiles including supporting ‘No Mow May’ at 5 sites. Reducing strimming around tree roots and mowing under tree canopies where practicable.

Developing skills and understanding of biodiversity issues and opportunities within Parks and Grounds Maintenance staff through training and closer working relationships with park officers.

Clear hierarchy of control for tree works with the presumption of retaining trees and controlling risk wherever possible rather than removal.



No Mow May – Lime Trees, Staplehurst

Specialist approach to identifying and managing veteran and ancient trees under our care with careful consideration of pruning techniques, tree health & vitality, risk management and soil health that are particularly relevant to A&V trees.

## 4. Aims and benefits of increasing and diversifying habitat

In addition to supporting food chains and increasing diversity of species through the creation of additional and more varied habitat in parks, changes to planting and maintenance practices increases long term environmental resilience and sustainability. Examples include expanding areas of longer grass and shrubs, increasing sources of nectar rich flowers, and planting more trees. This is achieved by:

- Enhancing green corridors and wildlife connectivity between sites by increasing wider availability and range of habitat to address fragmentation.
- Reducing fuel use and carbon emissions by reducing areas maintained as short grass.

- Reducing moisture loss from the ground during increasingly hot, dry summers resulting from climate change, by maintaining more areas of longer grass and other vegetational cover.
- Increasing the number and range of plants for pollinating insects
- Improving air quality by increasing vegetation and tree cover.

There is the additional benefit of increasing visual interest in parks by creating more variety of vegetation and planting. However, some education and awareness may be required to explain changes to planting and rewilding as this can be seen as a reduction in standards or lack of maintenance.

## 5. Constraints and considerations of increasing and enhancing habitat

The potential to increase and improve wildlife habitat in parks must be balanced against the desire to maintain recreational opportunities for all, particularly at a time when there is a pressing need to encourage active and healthier lifestyles.

Other constraints include the need to manage vegetation to maintain sightlines to provide natural supervision in parks where there is a risk of antisocial behaviour, and the desire to avoid creating litter traps in areas of intense usage.



Staff & volunteers working together in parks

There is also a need to ensure any changes to green spaces are future proofed in the light of proposed housing and population growth, and particular consideration is required for those areas of the borough where expansion and access to certain open space typologies may be required. For example, additional sports pitches may be required to meet future population growth, so areas in parks where there is potential to create additional pitches may, in the short term, be given over to create longer grass or shrub habitat, but not tree planting or pond creation.

Although it is desirable to develop 'high status' or rare habitats, there is a need to address the assumption that areas of short grass in themselves have little or no value to biodiversity. Short grass is not a modern phenomenon created by mowers, but has traditionally been provided by

grazing animals, and is particularly important for the many birds and small mammals that feed on soil invertebrates. As a result of current trends, the availability of this habitat and food source is now also under threat, both within larger green spaces and through the increasing loss of residential front lawns or their replacement with artificial turf. Many urban parks and nature areas provide a haven for wildlife specifically because they provide a mosaic of habitats, including areas of short grass.

It is important to recognise the specific impact of habitat change on the local community as well as the environment. For example, long grass verges will act as a dog mess and litter trap in some areas and make the clearance of litter more difficult and time consuming. This could also have safety implications in hotspots where anti-social behaviour and associated drugs paraphernalia regularly occurs. Therefore, it is important that the location of habitat creation or adaptation is considered so it can achieve a maximum benefit without leading to other unintended consequences that may have an overall net negative impact.

The maintenance of grassed areas in the Borough is a large scale, ongoing operation, requiring considerable staffing and machinery resources. Any changes to the management of these areas must be practical and financially sustainable, considering what investment in equipment or training is required to achieve the desired result. It is important to recognise that changes to maintenance regimes do not

necessarily translate into lower costs or less staff as they may require greater training or more expensive equipment.

This delivery plan sets out proposals that, subject to available funding, seek to enhance biodiversity whilst considering the wider impacts to the community, financial constraints and availability of expertise. It is important that the Borough's Parks and Open Spaces continue to provide a wide range of benefits to wildlife, residents and visitors, remain accessible and promote wellbeing.

## 6. Conclusions

As outlined in Section 3, significant work is already being undertaken to support biodiversity and introduce more sustainable grounds maintenance practices in the Council's parks and nature areas, but it is vital this process continues with increased vigour and is supported and understood by all our stakeholders including residents, Councillors, contractors and partner organisations.

There is potential to further enhance or create new habitats in the Borough's parks and open spaces whilst meeting the other growing needs of providing high quality amenity, play, recreation, food growing places in the borough. Additionally, the park's estate will be able to assist in our drive to achieve Carbon Net Zero through increased carbon sequestration in the landscape – this will be developed as corporate audits and opportunities arise.

The Borough's resource in parks and open spaces cannot provide for, nor meet all the ambitious targets set out in the boroughwide Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy.



Volunteers working on Fant Local Nature Reserve

Therefore, the expectations for what can be delivered in our own green spaces needs to be understood in the context of the wider objectives.

The biggest challenge to enhancing, creating and maintaining habitats is ensuring they are well managed for the long term, requiring effective resourcing by a range of

partners and increased involvement from residents. Whilst grant funding often helps with initial costs and capital investment for a positive outcome it inevitably increases the longer-term management needs and revenue costs. There is a common misconception that, overall, managing land for increased biodiversity saves money; however very often important habitats that are now threatened or rare require many years of work to put right decades of neglect. On land that is publicly accessible we also must manage visitors and their needs, protect their safety and protect important habitats and species too.

Therefore, if genuine sustainability and a more biodiverse parks landscape is to be achieved, we must adopt a more nuanced approach to just planting trees and leaving longer grass there is a risk this merely substitutes one form of generic habitat with another, furthermore we must be wise to understanding the value of what we already have through survey and sharing data to avoid overplanting of existing and valued natural habitats.

The council's green spaces can be maintained with the aim of providing a broader range of habitats and food sources for wildlife that creates a more naturalistic balance to parks and open spaces that have for generations , that in the main , have been provided and managed as a habitat for human activity of recreation, amenity, pleasure and sport – change of emphasis is needed and it is coming as we adapt to provide our parks and open spaces as havens of wildlife that are shared with people too.

## 7. Five Year Action Plan

No.	Objective	Action	Resources & links to	Timescales
1	Biodiversity – Nature Pledge	<p>1.1 All staff and contractors active in managing, influencing and using our parks &amp; open spaces are required to understand and actively commit to protecting and enhancing biodiversity on MBC land by means of signing the MBC Biodiversity Nature Pledge. This will be included in procurement specifications and thus contracts. See Appendix 1</p> <p>1.2 Develop biodiversity and environmental skills, knowledge and understanding in MBC workforce – securing increase in training budget and apprentice opportunities.</p>	BDCC 6.11	Implement 2022 for duration of plan
2	Biodiverse Working Practices: leading by example	<p>2.1 Procurement UK Native tree species – including sourcing only UK grown trees from vetted suppliers wherever possible to reduce the risk of disease and transport/carbon costs.</p> <p>2.2 Selection of planting stock with a presumption of highest biodiversity value, nectar sources, habitat potential</p> <p>2.3 Retain standing deadwood &amp; cordwood at felling site where practicable</p> <p>2.4 Increase visibility of biodiversity enhancements and develop demonstration projects in parks with strong message of borough commitment and educational content. 2022 – Brenchley Gardens – introduce deadwood habitat, increase areas of minimal management, introduce nest box programme (birds, bats, hedgehogs), create wetland habitat.</p> <p>2.5 Annual focus for biodiversity for duration of five-year plan – 2022 Brenchley Gardens, 2023 Whatman Park, 2024 – South Park 2025 – Mote Park 2026 River Len corridor</p>	BDCC 6.2, 6.11	Annual & ongoing

No.	Objective	Action	Resources & links to	Timescales
3	Local Nature Reserves	<p>3.1 Declare 6 new Local Nature Reserves in the borough; 3 of which are MBC parks and open spaces.</p> <p>3.2 Continue the supporting sustainable management at existing LNR sites, nature areas with collaborative working, funding advice and volunteer support</p>	BDCC 6.11	2022
4	Species of Note & Ecological Monitoring	<p>4.1 Bats, Reptiles, Invertebrates, Fauna &amp; flora – promote and encourage ecological monitoring through citizen science, training &amp; engagement, developing connections with existing enthusiasts</p> <p>4.2 Sharing data with K&amp;MBRC – quality data shared ensures valuable records are available for scrutiny, historically accurate as possible and referenced for future development impacts</p>	BDCCS 6.11, 6.10	Annual & ongoing
5	Trees & Woodlands	<p>5.1 Creation &amp; Planting – Review evidence from Tiny Forest /Miyawaki methods. Utilise knowledge in creating new parkland copses.</p> <p>5.2 Management - well managed woodlands with diverse age structure and future trees/forest of scale. Management brief for all wooded areas.</p> <p>5.3 Veteran trees – industry and research best practise applied through strong partnership with Ancient Tree Forum especially regarding Mote Park; develop a 'centre of excellence' with staff, volunteer and industry training</p> <p>5.4 Tree Works &amp; Replacement – Right tree right place - Publish our working standards &amp; practices for tree related matters for residents &amp; Councillors to understand our aims. Presumption of tree retention through effective management and risk reduction. New tree replacements to be chosen for biodiverse benefits, scale, and longevity in the landscape.</p>	BDCCs 6.12, 6.11	<p>5.1 – 2022</p> <p>5.2 – 2024</p> <p>5.3 – 2023</p> <p>5.4 - 2022</p>

No.	Objective	Action	Resources & links to	Timescales
6	Grasslands & Heath	<p>6.1 Expand 'No mow May' where identified as safe and practicable Continue to provide 10000m2 of Pollinator meadows and identify funding to increase to 15000m2 over 5 years</p> <p>6.2 Weavering Heath management plan to develop habitat value and opportunities to favour acid grassland/heath flora within mosaic of neutral grassland, scrub and emerging woodland.</p>	BDCCS 6.11	6.1 -Annual & ongoing 6.2 2022/3
7	Wetlands	<p>Opportunity areas for protecting &amp; increasing biodiversity:</p> <p>7.1 Mallards – manage impacts from user groups – dogs, angling etc – aquatic &amp; marginal biomass increased</p> <p>7.2 Spot Lane – LNR declaration – assessment through ecological survey &amp; management plan</p> <p>7.3 Mote Park - manage impacts from user groups – angling, powered model boats etc – aquatic &amp; marginal biomass increased</p> <p>7.4 Whatman – R. Medway marginal vegetation, slacks &amp; islets - preserve and ensure not lost to silting</p> <p>7.5 River Len corridor – ecological review, improved access &amp; interpretation</p>	BDCCS 6.6, 6.11	7.1- Aspiration for 2022/3 7.2 – 2022 7.3- 2023 7.4 2025 7.5 2024-6
8	Community involvement & Partnerships	<p>8.1 Continue to develop the Maidstone Borough In Bloom competition as platform to engage with residents and businesses to promote positive environmental messages, pollinator friendly gardening</p> <p>8.2 Allotments – support the Maidstone Allotment Management Committee and work with them to develop Environmentally beneficial policies, affect change and a supportive culture for biodiversity to thrive</p> <p>8.3 Friends groups &amp; Volunteering – develop Go Green Go Wild initiative in conjunction with Biodiversity &amp; Climate Change Manager and Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust to actively promote &amp; enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Better communication about B&amp;CC initiatives</li> <li>• Monitoring – citizen science, develop skills &amp; network of parks volunteers to monitor &amp; survey fauna, flora &amp; environmental metrics</li> </ul>	BDCCS 6.3, 6.10, 6.5	8.1 Annual & ongoing 8.2 2023 8.3 2022 & ongoing

## Monitoring and Review

The Parks and Open Spaces team are responsible for the delivery of this management plan. Lead responsibility lies with the Parks and Open Spaces Manager, overseen by the Head of Environment & Public Realm.

The plan is reviewed annually in March and the delivery of actions is assessed. The reasons for sub-optimal delivery are determined. The action table is reviewed to ensure that actions continue to be relevant and to identify additional actions.

Comments from Green Flag judges are reviewed annually and incorporated into the plan as necessary.

Sections of the plan and action table can be updated as necessary to reflect capacity, opportunities and MBC corporate priorities. An entire revision of the plan takes place every five years.

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View Across Mote Park lake

## Appendix 1 Nature Pledge

Sign up to the nature pledge;

***'I support the protection and improvements to biodiversity in Maidstone's Parks and Open Spaces and will do all that I can in my choices and actions to help create a safe place for nature to thrive'.***

Saving nature requires everyone to take responsibility for their impacts on the environment and take positive action.

We encourage people to 1) consider biodiversity in decision-making process through management, procurement and plans, and 2) take positive action in our parks through grounds maintenance tasks, contract works, taking care to protect habitats and give wildlife a home.

This pledge should be taken as an opportunity to examine your opportunities to help nature and make a real commitment.

## COMMUNITY HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT

**30 November 2021**

### Brenchley Gardens- Follow up report

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Community Housing and Environment
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	John Littlemore Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Martyn Jeynes Community Protection Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Brenchley Gardens is located in High Street Ward

#### **Executive Summary**

Brenchley Gardens is a beautifully maintained public park located next to the Maidstone Museum in the Town Centre and is much valued by the local community. Following concerns raised about the misuse of the park by some sections of the community, partners have met to plan how best to address the community safety issues of concern and encourage a more positive use of the park for the better enjoyment of everyone. Following the report of the 31 August 2021 this report provides options for Committee to consider in relation to safeguarding users of the park and to foster pride in the park.

#### **Purpose of Report**

Decision

#### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Committee endorses the approach set out in Section 4 of the report to address community safety concerns.

#### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
CHE Committee	30-11-2021

# Brenchley Gardens- Follow up report

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the aims of a safe, clean and green place together with a thriving place.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The report recommendations support the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives.</p>	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Risk Management</b>	Already covered in the risk section.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Financial</b>	The actions described in this report would be funded from a range of sources as detailed in the report. General officer support for all initiatives would be funded from within existing budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing as detailed in the report	Head of Housing & Community Services

<b>Legal</b>	<p>Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council’s duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.</p> <p>The Council has a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the crime and disorder implications of their decisions and the responsibility to co-operate in the reduction of crime and disorder in the Borough.</p> <p>Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988 states:  "Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those function on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can prevent, crime and disorder in its area”.</p>	Team Leader (Contentious)
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	Accepting the recommendations will have no impact on the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not currently propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment. An EqIA may need to be considered as the proposals are developed further.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will have a positive impact on Crime and Disorder. The Community Protection Team have been consulted and mitigation has been proposed.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Procurement</b>	Not applicable.	Head of Housing & Community Services
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications identified.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report from the 31st August laid out the background and the steps taken to date by the Community Protection Team and partners in order to both reduce the incidence and harm caused by anti-social and criminal behaviour in the park and to change the narrative around the reputation of Brenchley Gardens.
- 2.2 Members endorsed the efforts made to date and asked that Officers pursue further and bring forward firm proposals and costings as to:
- Securing and locking the grounds at night
  - Additional CCTV coverage
  - Additional lighting at night and
  - Securing the bandstand
- 
- 2.3 Set out in section 4 are the findings of those efforts and officers' recommendations as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard users and challenge those responsible for the unwanted behaviour.
- 2.4 As detailed in the previous report, Maidstone Police secured their PCSO Task Force who have been operating in Brenchley Gardens and the surrounding area since August 2021. Provided in appendix 1 is a brief update summary of OP PAPA, the operation name for this investment of resources into the park.
- 2.5 Other initiatives, including summer music events and deck chairs for general public use have been warmly received, contributing to a reduction in unwanted behaviour and helping to improve the reputation of the park. However, a recent incident involving 3 young women and an alleged assault demonstrates how fragile the reputation of the park is.
- 2.6 As was detailed in the press articles published locally, in the comments from the Maidstone Borough Police Commander, incidents involving unacceptable behaviour in young people are not uncommon across the country, particularly post lockdown. Articles highlighting violence, criminal damage, as well as headlines about lack of respect and feral behaviour are unfortunately a growing phenomenon across the UK. Steps need to be taken to challenge those responsible. In Kent a Contextual Safeguarding approach is taken to address the behaviour of what remains a small minority of young people. This aligns with the strategy and policy adopted by the Kent Children's Safeguarding Board. How we work as a partnership to challenge this behaviour and support some of those young people, themselves often victims of crimes, will be demonstrated in greater detail at a Member's briefing session on the 6<sup>th</sup> December, with inputs from relevant partner agencies.
- 2.7 An introduction to Contextual Safeguarding is provided in this video <https://vimeo.com/269625673> for committee members to consider its importance in deciding what steps need to be taken going forward.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach set out in section 4 of the report as specifically laid out in 4.2.
  - 3.2 Members could choose not to endorse the approach suggested but to do so would not address the concerns expressed by Members and staff about how the park is misused by a minority of the community.
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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The preferred option contained in this section will enable the Council to address the concerns that have been raised about the use of Brenchley Gardens, taking an evidence-based approach to ensure the preventative measures are appropriate, realistic and cost-effective.
- 4.2 The recommended actions, explained in detail in appendix 2, are summarised as follows:
  1. That the decision on the full closure of the park is postponed until after members receive their briefing on Contextual Safeguarding and to allow other steps outlined in points 2 to 5 to be fully explored and implemented and their impact measured.
  2. That works to reinstate a decorative frill on the bandstand is undertaken as part of planned works on the asset over the next 6 to 12 months
  3. That, subject to the identification of an appropriate budget, works are undertaken to increase
  4. The works are undertaken to increase the existing CCTV coverage in the park as detailed below.
  5. That officers work to identify an appropriate budget to fund two additional One Maidstone Ambassadors to provide a focused presence in North Week Street and Brenchley Gardens at core times.

**Night Closure of the park and lighting.**

4.3 Brenchley Gardens is publicly accessible from four entrance points, three pedestrian only and one shared vehicular/pedestrian access. Consideration has been given to how the park might be secured, however there are considerable barriers to securing the park fully. These are both logistical and financial. The considerations listed below are described in greater detail in section 1 of Appendix 2:

- Restricting access at the three pedestrian access points could reduce ASB, but put the public at risk if they unwittingly access the park from the South entrance.
- Restricting access would not have prevented the most serious of incidents nor will it prevent ASB and criminality alleged to happen throughout the day.
- Restricting access will directly impact the residents of 88 apartments and undermine the original planning permission for the development in regards to access.
- Replacing the vehicular access control point with a pedestrian gate is likely to be extremely costly, particularly if utilised to allow access to residents of McKenzie Court.
- Securing the park from pedestrians provides a logistical challenge if there are users refusing to leave. Parks like Mote Park and Cobtree Manor are only closed to vehicles not pedestrians. Those closed to pedestrians have significantly less access points to manage. Locking the park, without a human security presence will present a challenge if there are already users in the park and may not ultimately prevent access from those who climb the fences.

4.4 Alongside the practical/logistical challenges highlighted in 4.3, appendix 2 outlines some of the financial costs associated with closing the park which are estimated to be in excess of £54,000. This does not include the cost of increasing the height of any existing fencing nor the ongoing cost of maintaining the access point from St Faiths street.

4.5 Our assessment, given the logistical/practical and financial information provided in appendix 2, is that closing the park would not prevent the levels of ASB and criminality sufficiently. Therefore a decision to close the park at this time would **not be appropriate, realistic or cost effective.**

4.6 Improvements to lighting as outlined in appendix 2 (1.6) could increase the safety in the park, but may also attract users after dark. The costs of increasing the lighting (c £35-37k) would need to be sourced and would also be subject to planning conditions where ecological challenges could be presented.

4.7 The recommendation is that a final decision on closing the park and improving the lighting, at a cost of approximately £90,000 plus officers time,

is postponed to allow the other measures contained within this report to be implemented. Officers will also brief members on the national “Contextual Safeguarding” model and provide an update on how, as a partnership, we will continue to challenge unwanted behaviour. The Member’s briefing session will be hosted on 6<sup>th</sup> December, with inputs from relevant partner agencies.

### **Reinstating the Bandstand Frill**

- 4.8 Brenchley Gardens benefits from still having the original bandstand in place. The Bandstand, which is constructed largely of wood and is tiled/clad in Kent ragstone has been a feature of the park since its construction in Victorian times. Appendix 3 provides pictures of the bandstand as it was originally constructed.
- 4.9 Although often used over the years for musical performances, it has, for many generations, become a focal point for young people to gather as it offers a place to sit and to be sheltered. As a result, anti-social behaviour and other risk-taking behaviours associated with young people are common and renowned within the community.
- 4.10 Section 2 of appendix 2 describes the recommendation to reinstate a frill, similar to that depicted in figure 2 of appendix 3, to act as a visual and physical barrier to some young people as part of ongoing structural work.

### **Upgrade to existing CCTV in the Park**

- 4.11 CCTV in Brenchley Gardens already provides both static and active guardianship depending on whether the CCTV controllers are actively monitoring the park. This is achieved through a static Pan, Tilt, Zoom (PTZ) camera situated on a central column within the park. Brenchley Gardens is the only park with permanent CCTV in the borough.
- 4.12 The existing field of vision for this camera is limited to the direction the camera is facing. The camera, which can be moved remotely by a controller, rotates through 360° but has a field of vision of around 90°, therefore is only looking at approximately 25% of the park at any one time.
- 4.13 Section 3 of appendix 2 describes the recommendation to upgrade the existing CCTV to provide greater coverage as well as some passive and active features to help monitor the park in a more proactive way.
- 4.14 The cost of the proposed upgrade, which could be undertaken by the end of the year, is c£19,000. This covers all the equipment described in appendix 2, system improvements to allow the network to support the new cameras and labour costs. It has been identified that funding is available from the existing CCTV budget.
- 4.15 Members are asked to note that on 22nd November, as part of the monitoring agreement with One Maidstone, the CCTV control room was upgraded to improve monitoring capability across the whole of the static camera network. The upgrades were funded by One Maidstone and

represent a significant step in providing a cost-effective monitored CCTV system.

### **Increased "human" presence at key times in partnership with One Maidstone**

- 4.16 The final recommendation is for officers to work to identify a budget to fund up to two additional One Maidstone Ambassadors (£30-60k). Section 4 of Appendix 2 sets out how, following very recent conversations, additional Ambassadors could be utilised to provide a cost-effective alternative to other measures because it will provide a human presence in the area. Building on the success of Op Papa as outlined in Appendix 1, additional ambassador(s) would help combat ASB and criminality and provide reassurance to an area that where residents and businesses often highlight their concerns. By engaging with young people within the park but also in North Week Street, where most issues in Brenchley Gardens often originate, there is an opportunity to proactively prevent issues from escalating. A human guardian will act as a deterrent, actively calm situations down and will also act as an extension of the local policing family. Funding for this would need to be identified but could be trialled for a shorter period or be focussed over the warmer months to maximise effectiveness.
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## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The objective of this report is to reduce the risk of and extent of harm arising from ASB/criminality within Brenchely Gardens. The steps outlined in this report and appendix 2 highlight the theoretical benefits associated with the proposed interventions and where risks will need to be mitigated.
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## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 A communication strategy was implemented to support the ongoing work within the park in order to change the narrative. This will be utilised to promote new initiatives as they are implemented.
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## **7. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Summary update report in relation to Op Papa
- Appendix 2: Options in relation to Brenchley Gardens
- Appendix 3: Photos of Brenchley Gardens Bandstand

## **OP PAPA- Interim report on behalf of Inspector Steve Kent, Kent Police**

The Kent PCSO Problem Solving Task Force have been directed to support Maidstone CSU with addressing issues that have been identified in Brenchley Gardens in Maidstone Town Centre and have been active in the area since September 2021. The PCSO Problem Solving Task Force consists of three teams of 7 PCSOs and a team leader and have been operating in this area almost exclusively in this period and have the following findings to report.

The target area incorporates Brenchley Gardens, Maidstone East train station, parts of Week Street, St Faith's Street, Waterside and Station Road. Additionally included, are Maidstone Museum, Brenchley House, KFC, McDonalds, Tesco Express and the entrance to Fremlin Walk off St Faith's Street. With these patrols, we have been targeting and identify local youths who are caught up in County Lines, drug dealing, ASB, CSE and any other type of criminality.

Throughout the tasking we have collated our results and we have attended 44+ CAD's, gathered over 37 intelligence reports, enforced the PSPO +250 times with alcohol seizures and moving beggars on, completed 4 safeguarding referrals, issued 20 S34 dispersal notices. With the details and information that we have gained we have been able to work with the CSU to issue x7 formal warnings (CPW's) which include exclusion zones and have also provided statements to support matters being progressed to Community Protection Notice as necessary. A S59 has been issued for .

Weapon sweeps have been completed in Brenchley Gardens and 3 weapons have been located and seized for disposal. The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), fearless and the youth hub have been out educating young people and providing crime prevention advice while utilising an AddVan.

It was arranged for gates to be shut at Trinity Park and the access gate to the train station in Brenchley Gardens at dusk which helped reduce the increase in calls to Trinity Park following the displacements of youths from Brenchley.

Licensing checks have been completed to off licences, ensuring that both parts of the licence were correct, and check carried out on the refusals book. Stickers were also issued to be placed on the alcohol containers to enable officers to learn where drinks are being purchased.

Surveys have been carried out with residents, shop keepers and park users. The concerns raised by the public are as follows. Littering, drinking, loud music, smoking drugs, ASB, not feeling safe, groups hanging around and criminal damage. Revisiting these with follow up surveys has shown that almost half those completed in Brenchley Gardens so far state that problems have improved since PSTF have been in the area. Many members of public have been grateful for the additional police presence in the area over the last 3 months and noticed a decrease in groups hanging around in the location.

## Appendix 2 - Options in relation to Brenchley Gardens

### 1.0 Securing the park at night and/or improving the lighting

- 1.1 Restricting access at the three pedestrian access points could reduce ASB but put public at risk.



### Detail

Parks officers have obtained quotes for the installation of gates on Station Road after it was indicated by the police it could help them on occasions to corral groups if a policing operation was underway. This would not secure the park from visitors accessing nor exiting the park via the open aspect towards St Faith Street nor perhaps through the residential area of McKenzie Court. The police Designing Out Crime officer has reported that closing these gates would likely divert people away from the park when arriving from the North (Maidstone East etc.) and East (Week Street). This could reduce ease of access to the park, but not restrict access. There are risks of disadvantaging and potentially putting members of the public at increased risk who inadvertently find their route blocked when trying to cross or leave the park. This would potentially increase risks relating to stalking and rape should someone be unwittingly brought into the park.

### Estimated Cost

£4500

180

- 1.2 Restricting access would not have prevented the most serious of incidents, nor will it prevent ASB and criminality alleged to happen throughout the day.

There have been a number of high-profile incidents in Brenchley Gardens that have received media attention over the last 12 months. There have been other incidents that have received less media attention but are no less serious. CCTV has captured images that have been used to support police investigations in the vast majority of incidents. Whilst some incidents, including the attempted murder in August, occurred in the early evening, many incidents, such as this one occurred in daylight. More recent incidents happened mid-afternoon. In the case of the attempted murder, it is not possible to surmise whether the incident would have been prevented had the park been closed, although it would be reasonable to assume the attack could have been less sustained. But the incident itself started in Week Street and escalated as those involved moved into the park. Incidents of alleged drug dealing, including examples raised at committee, are described as occurring around lunchtime. The proposed upgrade to the CCTV will provide better coverage and enable triggers to be set that warn Control Room staff of unusual activity at night.

N/A

Consideration also needs to be given to our responsibility to safeguard young people. Introducing restrictions on the park is likely to divert young people into other locations where there is less natural surveillance and no CCTV. Our work to address Violence Against Women and Girls, particularly in the wake of the murders of Sarah Everard and PCSO Julia James has reinforced the SMP's need to look at the behaviour of our young people, particularly boys and young men and to ensure we provide safe places for them. This is addressed in part in 4.0, but in this context, we need to ensure we don't create a more serious problem by diverting young people into more dangerous environments/locations where there is no surveillance, such as Trinity Gardens, Brewer Street cemetery etc.

- 1.3 Restricting access will directly impact the residents of 88 apartments and undermine the original planning permission for the development and place residents at risk.



There are three points of access/egress directly between the park and McKenzie Court; residents of 88 apartments have utilised this feature since 2007/8 as was approved by planning. The relevant planning permission ([05/0212](#)) has been checked where the accessibility statement references the design and build work to create access points into McKenzie Court from Brenchley Gardens to provide unimpeded level access for residents. This is key for residents with mobility issues or prams. Such points of access/egress are also essential for the evacuation of the building in an emergency such as a fire. Officers are investigating the possibility that residents have a right to cross at these points although there is likely to be an established use from the 14 years of use without challenge. Securing the park may unwittingly expose residents to increased risk from park users who gain access or are locked in the park after it is closed.

- 1.4 Enhancing the vehicular access point to also prevent pedestrian access is likely to be extremely costly, particularly if utilised to allow access to residents of McKenzie Court with long term administrative costs.



- 1.5 Securing the park provides a logistical challenge if there are already users in the park and may not ultimately prevent access from those who climb the existing fences.

Officers have researched the cost for replacing the current control measures that restrict vehicular access from St Faith's Street, adjacent to the Museum. Vehicular access is required to allow vehicles to access the car park for museum staff and other businesses to park and is controlled by a vehicular barrier. This however would need to be replaced by a sizeable gate to prevent pedestrian access through the same point. As well as the expense of this significantly larger gate, consideration will also be needed to allow residents of McKenzie Court access and the potential risk to them and staff leaving the museum after dark who could potentially find themselves within a locked park and have personal safety concerns as they leave and find themselves responsible for securing the gate or not. As the closest access to the apartments, this gate would need to offer keycode or electronic access to those who are afforded it. This will generate an ongoing administrative burden as access rights will change with changes in staff, tenancies and homeowners. From a practical point of view, unsupervised gates with electronic access points in other parts of the town have had limited success. One such gate in the High Street has done little to prevent access from non-residents owing to system failures and residents failing to secure the gate properly.

c£50,000

Gates, fences and barriers act as deterrents or encourage compliance amongst those in society inclined to follow the rules or socially acceptable standards of behaviour. We have seen elsewhere in the borough groups who refuse to leave when staff attend to lock gates as they know we will not lock them in as we must extend a duty of care to all people; especially where we know there is an increased risk of vulnerability or substance misuse. It should be noted that parks like Mote Park and Cobtree Manor are only closed to vehicles. Equally, as often seen in public parks, groups will continue to gather in locked parks after climbing gates or railings to meet free of intrusion/interference from police or other agencies. Locking the park, without a human security presence is as likely to present a challenge to young people as much as a deterrent.

TBC

1.6 Lighting in the park may create a safer environment but could also attract users at a time when we want to discourage them	Lighting has been investigated and partial costs have been obtained for the supply of 24 vandal resistant low-level bollard style lights at £23000, however this does not include any groundworks/trenching and reinstatement work which is estimated at a further £12000 -£15000. Works to undertake this level of lighting would also be subject to planning permission. If consideration was given to introducing more lamp columns the costs are likely to be significant if not double that estimated. Lighting would increase the visibility and natural surveillance of the park, thus improving the guardianship of the park. This will also support police and outreach officers working in the park, particularly around the bandstand. There is also a counter concern in that lighting would only increase the attraction of the park at a time when we want to divert young people into other activities as outlined in 4.0. Increasing the lighting in the park will also be subject to planning permission and consideration will need to be given to the ecological impact of the lights as part of that process. There is no identified budget for this work but an application for section 106 money could be considered if deemed appropriate, reasonable and cost effective to do so.	c£35,000- £37,000
2.0 <b><u>Reinstating the bandstand frill panels.</u></b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
2.1 Reinstating the frill will provide a visual and physical deterrent to those who perch on the bandstand but remedial works are needed before the frill can be reinstated as appropriate.	The bandstand is a focal point in the park and is sometimes referenced as a hotspot for anti-social behaviour as it provides sheltered space for sitting/perching on the platform edge. The bandstand was originally designed with panels between the pillars – this metal was removed in the 1940s for the war effort. Parks officers have started assessing designs and options to re-instate the panels and in doing so also commissioned a structural assessment of the bandstand as it is displaying signs of movement from the vertical. The assessment has revealed that remedial works will be required and until the extent of this work is understood any work on the design of infill panels is on hold. The structural integrity of the bandstand could be improved with a range of works that could require the panels to be structural support as well as a decorative and a safety feature. MBC Property services have been asked to expedite this matter and their work with parks and heritage conservation officers to provide a suitable solution as part of the ongoing management of the asset.	TBC



### **Improve the lighting within the park**

#### **3.0 Upgrade the existing CCTV in the Park**

3.1 Upgrade the existing Pan, Tilt Zoom (PTZ) camera to a more advanced version with

#### **Detail**

The upgraded PTZ camera will improve on the existing camera's resolution and will offer both a covert Infra-Red mode and an active White Light option. The latter option, controlled by a CCTV controller, will light up the

#### **Estimated Cost**

c£19,000

improved resolution and a controllable “white light” to deter people after dark.



area that is being actively monitored ensuring those that are being watched are acutely aware of the active surveillance. This will be an active deterrent to people in the park particularly after dark.

- 3.2 Instal an array of bullet cameras to increase passive monitoring over a considerably wider field of vision. Analytics behind these cameras can be used to actively monitor for activity after a specific time, triggering an alarm in the control room to draw the controller’s attention.

The field of vision for a PTZ camera is typically 90° in the direction the camera is pointing/facing. From the centre column in Brenchley Gardens this is typically in the direction of the bandstand due to our risk, threat and harm assessment. This means a further 270° of vision is unwatched until the controller actively moves the camera. Whilst 360° cameras are available, the advances in technology limit the quality of these cameras considerably and reduce their evidential quality. To provide a significantly wider field of vision it is proposed to install 4 new static cameras located on a 4-way camera bracket, replacing the now defunct speaker system on the column. These bullet cameras, with built in IR capability, will complement the upgraded CCTV to provide significantly increased field of vision. In addition, the bullet cameras offer an analytical function whereby unusual activity in the park, after a set time, will trigger an alarm in the control room. This will allow the controller to actively check the park through these cameras and the upgraded PTZ, notify the police as necessary or simply “light them up” with the white light feature.

Priced above

- 3.3 Move the existing PTZ camera to CCTV Column by North Entrance to give greater coverage of hotspot areas.



A visual assessment has also been undertaken to determine whether the park would benefit from further cameras. Consideration was given to the rear of the museum, but there is no “line of sight” connection to allow the camera to feed into the existing wireless network. However, an unused column from the previous system is still situated by the North pedestrian entrance from the high-level footbridge. The current PTZ camera from the central column will be relocated to this column to allow us to monitor activity along the high-level footbridge and some areas of the park which are known ASB and Crime hotspots due the lack of surveillance. Some removal or trimming of foliage will likely be necessary to enable this camera a useful view of the area.

Priced above

#### 4.0 Additional One Maidstone Ambassadors

- 4.1 Additional One Maidstone Ambassadors will provide not only a deterrent to unwanted ASB in the vicinity of the park but will help to tackle ASB and criminality in the areas by acting as eyes and ears for partner agencies.



#### Detail

Whilst Brenchley Gardens has been the focus of a lot of negative attention recently, residents, businesses and Ward members of High Street Ward in particular will be aware that the North end of Week street, in the vicinity of the Earl Street junction has been an ASB/crime hotspot, particularly since lockdown. The natural honeypots of fast-food restaurants and suspected issues with young people obtaining alcohol from adults utilising nearby off licences has led to a number of steps being taken. This includes a new “bottle watch scheme” whereby off licenses mark their bottles discreetly so that officers can identify where the alcohol was purchased. We are also working with McDonalds to explore opportunities to train their floor staff in safeguarding techniques to protect young people.

We need to be mindful, in regard to both coercion into gangs and violence against women and girls that we take steps to address some of the underlying issues in young people’s development and behaviour and give them opportunities to access advice and services.

#### Estimated Cost

Up to £60k (2 x £30k) per annum

MBC Community Protection will also shortly be opening a new youth provision, in a joint venture with KCC Youth Services, within the Mall. Funding sourced from the Kent Violence Reduction Unit will mean the facility will be open for a year, offering a convenient "safe space" for young people to spend time with trained youth professionals, getting advice or just hanging out in a safe space.

However, we will need to continue to challenge some of the unwanted behaviours and deter those who advocate it. This has to be done in the right way and care is needed in regard to the language used in relation to young people. Comments on a recent incident included many people calling for physical violence and vigilantism against groups of young people, who in this particular incident were only 12-14 years old themselves. This incident, like many others escalated over a period of time and there were opportunities for earlier intervention to prevent anyone getting hurt.

Recent discussions with One Maidstone have identified a possibility of increasing the guardianship in the area by increasing their existing team of ambassadors to provide a dedicated presence in the area. The presence, who will actively monitor the park and surrounding area at core times during the week, will support businesses, MBC CPT and the police to identify those responsible for criminality and ASB, thus enabling the agencies to take appropriate actions, such as formal warnings (CPWs), Acceptable Behaviour Agreements or criminal charges as necessary.

Ideally this would mean a pair of officers, or one if the budget cannot be found, to be utilised to actively work in the area not only as eyes and ears but as a barometer to any potential issues so they can be prevented from escalating. They will also be empowered, under their Community Safety Accreditation, to enforce the current PSPO and other powers deemed appropriate by the Chief Constable. This will build on the success of the current PCSO Task Force who have been active in the area but are not a sustainable resource for this area exclusively.

Appendix 3- Photos of Brenchley Gardens Bandstand

Fig 1 – Crowd gathers around the Bandstand



Fig 2 – Bandstand showing original frill/railing



**Fig 3 – The Bandstand in 2021**



## **Contracting Out of Homelessness Reviews Function**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing and Environment
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Housing Advice Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### **Executive Summary**

The Council is the local housing authority for the purpose of homelessness services under the Housing Act 1996. The legislation provides any applicant with a right to request a review of certain homelessness decisions made by the authority.

A homelessness review is a fresh assessment of the circumstances at the time of the review. The initial outcome may be upheld, or an alternative decision reached. In terms of decision making, reviews can only be decided by an officer who was not involved with the original decision and who is also senior to the original decision maker.

Under the Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996 SI No. 3205, the Council has the power to contract out different housing functions, including the review function. Presently, the Council contracts out the homelessness review function to Housing Reviews Limited, the authorisation for which is made under the delegated powers of the Head of Housing and Community services, under paragraph 2.3.9 (3) of the Council's Constitution.

This report seeks to expressly ratify the delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Community Services under the aforementioned paragraph of the constitution to contract out the Council's homelessness review function under section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

### **Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That it be noted that the Head of Housing and Community Services has been using his delegated authority under part 2.3.9 of the Constitution to contract out the Council's homelessness review function; and
2. Further to that delegation the Committee grants specific delegation to the Head of Housing and Community Services to contract out the Council's homelessness review function under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
CHE Committee	30-11-2021

# Contracting Out of Homelessness Reviews Function

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The homelessness review function is a statutory function with procedures set out by Homelessness (Review Procedure etc) Regulations 2018. We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims as set out in section 4 [preferred alternative].	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The report recommendations support the achievements of both the 'Health Inequalities are addressed and reduced' and 'Deprivation and Social Mobility is improved' cross cutting objectives by ensuring that the Council has a robust homelessness review function.	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks associated with this proposal have been set out in the body of the report.	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	There will be no impact on current staffing by delivering the recommendations.	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Legal</b>	This report provides confirmation of the legal authorisation for the Head of Housing and Community Services to delegate the function of carrying out homelessness reviews under section 202 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to a third party. Paragraph 2.3.9 (3) of the Council's Constitution is broad, and we seek an express reference to the Council's homelessness duties and obligations under sections 202 and 203 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives could lead to confusion or argument in respect of the Head of Housing	Team Leader, Contentious and Corporate Governance

	and Community Services right to delegate review functions on behalf of the Council to a third party.	
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	The Council's service level privacy notice for Housing Services will be amended to include details of the sharing of personal information with Housing Reviews Limited for the purpose of carrying out the Council's homelessness review function.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	There are no equality implications expected as a result of the recommendations in this report, as it does not propose a change in how the homelessness review function is being delivered and therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Housing Advice Manager
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendations will have a no impact on Crime and Disorder.	Head of Housing and Community Services
<b>Procurement</b>	A waiver of the Council's contract standing orders to tender for a reviews service would be sought, the reasons for this are detailed in paragraph 2.13	Head of Housing and Community Services & Section 151 Officer
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	No impact.	Head of Housing and Community Services

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is the local housing authority for the purpose of homelessness services under the Housing Act 1996. The legislation provides an applicant with a right to request a review of certain homelessness decisions made by the authority.
- 2.2 A homelessness review is a fresh assessment of the circumstances, conducted at the time of the review. The initial outcome may be upheld, or an alternative decision reached. In terms of decision making, reviews can

only be decided by an officer who was not involved with the original decision and who is also senior to the original decision maker.

- 2.3 The authority is permitted by legislation, the Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996, to contract out certain functions under Parts 6 and 7 of the 1996, including the function of carrying out reviews of homelessness decisions. An authorisation given under this Order must be for a period not exceeding 10 years.
- 2.4 There are specialist organisations who undertake homelessness reviews on behalf of Local Authorities, providing a cost effective and efficient option to the alternative of directly employing a member of staff.
- 2.5 Indeed, the Council has been contracting out its homelessness review function to Housing Reviews Ltd since 2010, with this having been authorised each year by the Head of Housing and Community Services, under a general delegated power to fulfil the Council’s duties in relation to homelessness by entering into a 12-monthly contract with Housing Reviews Ltd.
- 2.6 Paragraph 2.3.9 (3) of the Council’s Constitution provides that the Head of Housing and Community Services must “ensure the Council’s duties and obligations in relation to homelessness and the operation of the Council’s allocation scheme are fulfilled”. This is a broad reference, but as there is specific mention of the Council’s duties and obligations in relation to homelessness, inclusion of both sections 202 and 203 of Housing Act 1996 (as amended) can be inferred.
- 2.7 The Council’s Constitution does not specifically state that authorisation to contract out any of Council’s homelessness functions can be made under the Head of Housing and Community Services delegated powers. This means there is a risk that such authorisation could be open to challenge as not being compliant with the Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996.
- 2.8 The following table highlights the number of review requests received over recent years:

Year	Number of reviews requests
2018/19	30
2019/20	40
2020/21	22
2021/2022 (to date)	12

- 2.9 Many of the reviews are requested by legal firms who specialise in challenging the homelessness decisions of the local authority. Due to the legal complexities involved with homelessness reviews, the decision-making process can be protracted.
- 2.10 With the Council contracting out the homelessness review function, it not only ensures that an officer completely independent of the case carries out the review, complying with the Review Regulations, it provides for a focus

and prioritisation of the review requests, helping to ensure decisions on the review are reached in a timely matter. The specialist knowledge held by the Reviews Officer helps to ensure complex areas of housing law and legal provisions are negotiated without delay. This is particularly important if the applicant is occupying nightly paid temporary accommodation pending a decision on the review.

- 2.11 The Council still retains the ability to undertake homelessness reviews, with a small number of the reviews being undertaken by the Housing Advice Manager each year.
- 2.12 Since the Council first contracted out the homelessness review function to Housing Reviews Limited, in September 2010, the Council has paid an amount c.£55,125.00 for the service of carrying out homelessness reviews.
- 2.13 In 2018 the Council sought quotations from other suppliers providing a homelessness review service, in line with the Council's procurement procedures as well as attempting to recruit to a Homelessness Reviews Officer. With only a limited number of suppliers able to be identified who offer this service, Housing Reviews Limited were found to be competitive with their charges and offered value for money. Two recruitment campaigns failed to identify a suitable candidate for the position. Given their proven record of service delivered to the Council, Housing Reviews Limited have been contracted each year to deliver the Council's homelessness review function.
- 2.14 The total spend to Housing Reviews Limited on delivering the Council's homelessness review function is approaching the Council's threshold for requiring a tender for the service. Since the service of carrying out homelessness reviews is extremely niche, with only a limited number of suppliers providing this service, and significant legal costs could be incurred by the Council if reviews are not carried out robustly, as review decisions can be challenged by way of a county court appeal, a waiver of the Council's contract standing orders to tender would need to be sought.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Continue contracting out the homelessness review function to Housing Reviews Limited as authorised by the Head of Housing and Community Services under their general delegated powers without expressly specifying in the Constitution that the powers include sections 202 and 203 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). However, as the Council's Constitution does not specifically state that authorisation to contract out the Council's homelessness reviews function can be made under the Head of Housing and Community Services delegated powers, there is a risk that such authorisation could be interpreted as not lawfully contracting out this statutory homelessness function.
- 3.2 Homelessness reviews could be carried out in-house, however due to the legal complexities involved and the limited capacity of senior officers to carry out reviews, it is likely that some may not be completed in a timely

fashion, impacting adversely on the turnover of temporary accommodation units and costs associated with the provision of temporary accommodation, as well as opening the Council to increased risk of legal challenge and criticism.

- 3.3 Some local authorities have recruited specialist reviews officers, often sharing them between authorities. This option was previously explored but current volume of reviews does not justify this response and the costs of employing a Reviews Officer does not offer value for money in comparison to the cost of contracting out homelessness reviews.
  - 3.4 Formalise and confirm the intention that the Council's Constitution under paragraph 2.3.9 (3) includes the authorisation of contracting out the Council's homelessness review function under section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) to the Head of Housing and Community Services.
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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option 3.4 is the preferred option. This option ensures that the Council is not at risk of legal challenge that the current authorisation of delegated powers to contract out the homelessness review function is unlawful.

##### Value for Money

The Council has spent c.£55,125.00 on contracting out its homelessness reviews function over a period of approximately 12 years. The Homelessness Reviews Officer post unsuccessfully recruited to was a grade 11 post with an annual salary of £36,798 before on costs. It is therefore demonstrated greater value for money in contracting out the function and recruiting an inhouse post.

##### Knowledge of complex housing law

Conducting homelessness reviews requires a thorough and detailed knowledge of complex homelessness legislation and case law. As homelessness reviews are often submitted by law centres and legal practitioners, conducting reviews can often extend for a significant period of time. Contracting out the homelessness review function, ensure both sharp focus is given to the reviews, as well as drawing on the specialist knowledge and skills of the Reviews Officer.

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#### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
- 5.2 There is a risk that Housing Reviews Limited do not deliver the service to the expected level of the Council and within the required timeframe. This

risk can be mitigated by the Council entering into, and renewing, contracts with Housing Reviews Limited for a period of no more than 12 months at a time. The Council also retains the right to carry out in-house reviews even where the Council has contracted out the homelessness review function.

- 5.3 Should the review function not be contracted out and delivered wholly in-house, there is a risk that some decisions will take longer than necessary due to the complexity (in legal terms) of the applicants' situation and the lack of capacity for the reviewing officer to consider it in a timely manner. This could result in longer stays in temporary accommodation and additional costs associated with the use of nightly-paid accommodation.

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## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 None Required.

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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 The Head of Housing and Community Services to renew and keep under review annual contracts with Housing Reviews Limited to deliver the Council's homelessness reviews function.
- 7.2 A contract standing order waiver report to be submitted to Director of Finance and Business Improvement or Head of Finance to approve.
- 7.3 The Council's service level housing service privacy notice will be amended.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- 8.1 None.

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Housing Act 1996
- Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 (Section 70)
- The Local Authorities (Contracting Out of Allocation of Housing and Homelessness Functions) Order 1996.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017