

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 10 January 2023
Time: 6.30 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Garten (Chairman), Hastie (Vice-Chairman), Bryant, Forecast, Fort, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Hinder and Naghi

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.

AGENDA

Page No.

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 need to be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information
8. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022 - to follow
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
10. Question and Answer session for Local Residents (if any)
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
12. Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference 1 - 3
13. Strategic Plan Refresh 2023-28 4 - 14
14. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals (ERL PAC) 15 - 41

Issued on 23 December 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 6 January 2023). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on 6 January 2023). 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.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 DECEMBER 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Executive or Lead Members expect to take and the non-Key decisions that the Executive or Lead Members expect to take during the next four-month period. The plan will be updated weekly for the relevant period and a new plan for a new four-month period, published monthly on the last Friday of the month.

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

1. Results in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £250,000; or
2. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough

The current members of the Executive are:

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 <p>Councillor David Burton Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910</p>	 <p>Councillor John Perry Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741</p>	 <p>Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000</p>	 <p>Councillor Martin Round Lead Member for Environmental Services MartinRound@maidstone.gov.uk 07709 263447</p>
 <p>Councillor Simon Webb Lead Member for Housing and Health SimonWebb@Maidstone.gov.uk 07878 018997</p>	 <p>Councillor Claudine Russell Lead Member for Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Councillor Paul Cooper Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070</p>	

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision or a Part II decision may not be taken, unless it has been published on the forward plan for 28 days or it is classified as urgent:

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key and part II decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan.

Copies of the Council's constitution, forward plan, reports and decisions may be inspected at the Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the Council's website: www.maidstone.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Executive which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on www.maidstone.gov.uk or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number 01622 602899 for further details.

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Maidstone Leisure Centre To decide the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre ω	Executive	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	8 Feb 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 7 Feb 2023	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk

Agenda Item 13

Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

10 January 2023

Strategic Plan Refresh 2023-28

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC	10 January 2023
Planning and Infrastructure PAC	11 January 2023
Communities, Housing and Environment PAC	17 January 2023
Corporate Services PAC	18 January 2023
Executive	8 February 2023
Council	22 February 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse Director of Strategy Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report proposes refreshed areas of focus for the Council's Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2028.

Committee are asked to consider the changes and recommend any amendments to the Executive for consideration.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendation:

1. That the Committee consider the proposed refreshed areas of focus for the Council's Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2028, set out in Appendix A, and recommend that they be approved by the Executive subject to any suggested amendments.

Strategic Plan Refresh 2023-28

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>This report considers the proposed areas of focus for the Strategic Priorities for the next five years and identifies action for progressing the shaping of the areas of focus for 2023-2028.</p>	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Consideration has been given to the crosscutting objectives in formulating the proposed areas of focus for the Strategic Plan</p>	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Risk Management	The Council's corporate risk strategy includes strategic risks associated with the Strategic Plan.	Insight, Communities and Governance
Financial	The Strategic Plan sets the Council's Priorities and the direction for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Insight, Communities and

		Governance Manager
Legal	<p>The Council has a statutory 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 this duty.</p> <p>This review of the Council's priorities within the Strategic Plan will enable the Council to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner which meets the needs of the borough and aspirations of local inhabitants and stakeholders.</p> <p>In reviewing the priorities, the Council is obliged to ensure that its financial obligations are adhered to. The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget and continue to monitor the budget during the course of each municipal year and take remedial action if at any time.</p>	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2023-2028 changes are required to services involving personal data, then Data Protection Impact Assessments will be undertaken.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2023-2028 changes are required to services involving personal data, then an Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken.	Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Public Health	One of the Council's cross cutting objectives is that Health Inequalities are addressed and reduced. The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an impact assessment. If as a result of the update to the milestones and the emerging MTFS for 2023-2028 changes are	Public Health Officer

	required to services involving personal data, then Data Protection Impact Assessments will be undertaken.	
Crime and Disorder	The recommendations include proposals for amendments to the areas of focus under Safe Clean and Green.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
Procurement	No direct implications	Insight Communities and Governance Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The recommendations includes proposals for amendments to the areas of focus under Safe Clean and Green.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategic Plan was adopted in December 2018 and covers the period until 2045. The decision was taken for it to be a 26-year plan to ensure continuity, and a basis on which all other Maidstone Borough Council plans and strategies could be developed. The Strategic Plan was developed involving a wide cross section of Councillors, staff and other stakeholders before being adopted in December of that year. The vision and priorities are clear and remain relevant.
- 2.2 The areas of focus were last refreshed in 2021 to respond to the significant impact of the pandemic and to plan the Council's approach to the recovery.
- 2.3 In July the Executive approved a recommendation that the Strategic Plan 2019-45 milestones be refreshed for 2023-28. The Council's Wider Leadership Team reviewed the existing areas of focus at an away day and the proposals were discussed and amended by the Executive.
- 2.4 This report proposes refreshed areas of focus for 2023-2028 consistent with the Council's Vision and four priorities; it reflects both the long-term ambitions of the Council whilst also responding to the current national and local environment including recovery from the pandemic, increased housing need, financial insecurity and the climate crisis.
- 2.5 The revised areas of focus proposed can be seen at Appendix A. Column A shows the existing milestones and Column B shows the proposed milestones. An overview of the changes and the purpose are outlined below under each priority heading.

Embracing Growth Enabling Infrastructure.

- 2.6 Minimal changes have been made under this priority but some amendments have been made to language to show emphasis and to reflect progress on the local plan, and the importance of engagement.

Safe Clean and Green

- 2.7 There is a broadening of the action on parks and public spaces, to reflect not only enforcement activities but also promotion of these spaces.
- 2.8 Language has been changed on milestones on community safety and cleanliness to make them stronger, and on Climate Change and Biodiversity to demonstrate that Council activity goes beyond the action plan.
- 2.9 An additional action has been included to reflect the work and investment being made in the service and to reflect the need to meet the requirements of all new government legislation.

A Thriving Place

- 2.10 On initial sight it may appear there has been substantial change under this priority. However, many of the changes have been combined to demonstrate focus.
- 2.11 The area of focus on community resilience and to encourage pride in our borough has been merged under homes and communities.
- 2.12 Existing actions on Maidstone East and the opportunity sites have been merged and a new milestone created to reflect the large programme of work and significant investment being made in the town centre.

Homes and Communities

- 2.13 Two new actions have been added. The first has been added to reflect the Council's commitment to support residents and reflect the current financial crisis. The second is the commitment to deliver 1,000 affordable homes.
- 2.14 Some changes have been made to the language on the milestone for rough sleeping to reflect the proactive and innovative actions taken by the council.
- 2.15 There is a change of emphasis on the milestone on temporary accommodation from reduction in use to increase in supply. Whilst the use of temporary accommodation is not desirable the change in emphasis reflects the current climate of financial insecurity which has resulted in an increased demand which the Council is required to support. The new milestone reflects that the Council will meet this demand but do so by investing in accommodation.
- 2.16 The specific action on working with the Integrated Care Partnership has been removed as it is felt that this is covered under the action working in partnership for community resilience.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Strategic Plan was adopted in December 2018 and covers the period until 2045. It was developed involving a wide cross section of Councillors, staff and other stakeholders. The vision and priorities are clear and remain relevant. The proposed refresh to the areas of focus for the next 5 years has been set out in Appendix A.
 - 3.2 The Committee could recommend the amendments as set out in the final column of the table, or they could recommend amending the wording, adding or deleting areas of focus.
 - 3.3 Members could recommend retaining the current areas of focus as they were when they were last updated in 2021. However, those areas of focus reflected the current environment and immediate recovery from the pandemic.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to consider the new areas of focus as presented at Appendix A and recommend that they be approved by the Executive subject to any suggested amendments. The Council is now facing fresh challenges and opportunities and the proposed areas of focus reflect these developments.
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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.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Key officers and the Executive have been consulted in the development of these areas of focus at independent away days.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The approved refreshed areas of focus will be submitted to Council for approval as the Strategic Plan is a budget and policy framework document.
 - 7.2 Once approved the new areas of focus will be shared with all officers to ensure the delivery of the Council's priorities. The refreshed Strategic Plan will be made available on the Council's website.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Strategic Plan Proposed Areas of Focus 2023-28
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Strategic Plan 2019-2045 -

https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/269721/Strategic-Plan-2019.pdf

Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure		
Ref	A -Current Areas of Focus (2021-26)	B- Proposed Areas of Focus (2023-28)
1.1	Engaging with our communities on the Local Plan Review	Undertake engagement throughout the continuous process of the local plan development
1.2	The Council will take a proactive role in creating and consider investing in new places	The Council will take a proactive role in creating and consider investing in new places
1.3	Working with partners to get infrastructure planned, funded and delivered	Working with partners to get strategic infrastructure planned, funded and delivered
1.4	Intervening where necessary in the market, to deliver key employment sites	Intervening where necessary in the market, to deliver key employment sites
Safe, Clean and Green		
Ref	A- Current Areas of Focus (2021-26)	B- Exec Proposed Changes (2023-28)
2.1	Taking action against those who do not respect our public spaces, streets, green spaces and parks	Promote our parks and open spaces and ensuring that we enhance their natural qualities and meet the needs of residents and visitors. Take action against those who do not respect our public spaces.
2.2	Improving community safety by working with our partners to make people less vulnerable to crime	For people to be safe and feel safe we'll work with our partners to take action against those who break the law.
2.3	Maintain resident satisfaction with the cleanliness of the borough	Working to ensure resident satisfaction with the cleanliness and appearance of the whole borough
2.4	Implementation of the biodiversity and climate change strategy and action plan Changed to have a stronger emphasis	The impact on climate change and biodiversity will be central to all decisions.
2.5		Continue to maintain the quality and ensure the resilience of the waste service
Thriving Place		
Ref	A-Current Areas of Focus (2021-26)	B-Exec Proposed Changes (2023-28)

3.1	Deliver a sustainable and vibrant leisure and cultural offer	Deliver a sustainable and vibrant leisure and cultural offer. For example utilising opportunities such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund investment plans
3.2	Promote inward investment in the Borough to ensure a diverse employment and business offer	Promote inward investment in the Borough to ensure a diverse employment and business offer
3.3		Develop an ambitious Town Centre Strategy which reflects the needs of the wider community and creates a vibrant and transformed town centre for all.
	Working with community groups and parish councils, to develop more sustainable community resilience and to encourage pride in our borough	Merge into new – Action under Homes and communities at 4.3
	Working with partners to redevelop the Maidstone East site and modernise the bus station in the County Town	Merge into new – The bus station project is now completed and the Maidstone East site forms part of the town centre strategy action above at 3.3
	Developing and delivering plans for the five opportunity sites in the town centre and the staplehurst regeneration project	Merge into new – this now forms part of the town centre strategy which is covered in a new action at 3.3. The Staplehurst regeneration has moved on.

Homes and Communities		
Ref	A-Current Areas of Focus (2021-26)	B-Exec Proposed Changes (2023-28)
4.1	Reducing Rough Sleeping in a sustainable way	Continue our holistic and innovative approach to reduce rough sleeping in Maidstone
4.2	Reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless families	Increase supply of TA to assist with need and bring down the unit cost whilst working towards long-term housing solutions.
4.3.		Work with Anchor Institutions and partners to develop community resilience, improve well-being and taking action to support residents in financial crisis, aiming for no-one to be left behind
4.4		Urgent identification and delivery of 1000 affordable homes to ensure availability of good quality housing for Maidstone's residents
4.5	Improving housing through use of our statutory powers to promote good health and wellbeing	Improving the quality of housing through the consistent use of our statutory powers to promote good health and wellbeing
	Working with the integrated care Partnership to identify opportunities to reduce health inequalities in the borough	Deleted as covered in action 4.3. working with partners and 4.5

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND LEISURE POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10 January 2023

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee	10 January 2023
Executive	25 January 2023
Council	22 February 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report forms part of the process of agreeing a budget for 2023/24 and setting next year's Council Tax. Following consideration by this Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2022 of the draft Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2023/24 – 2027/28, this report sets out budget proposals for services within the remit of the Committee. These proposals will then be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 25 January 2023. The Executive will subsequently consider all elements of the budget for 2023/24 at its meeting on 8 February 2023, with a view to determining a final set of proposals for submission to Council on 22 February 2023.

Recommendation to the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee

That the Committee recommends to the Executive that it approves:

1. The revenue budget proposals set out in Appendix A.
2. The capital budget proposals set out in Appendix B.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	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.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Cross Cutting Objectives	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Risk Management	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Financial	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
Staffing	The process of developing the budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Legal	Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) the Section 151 Officer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the authority, including securing effective arrangements for treasury management. The legal implications are detailed within the body of the report which is compliant with statutory and legal regulations such as the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Local Authorities. The Council is required to set a council tax by the 11 March in any year and has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget. The budget requirements and basic amount of Council Tax must be calculated in accordance	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)

	<p>with the requirements of sections 31A and 31B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by sections 73-79 of the Localism Act 2011).</p> <p>The Council is required to determine whether the basic amount of council tax is excessive as prescribed in regulations – section 52ZB of the 1992 Act as inserted under Schedule 5 to the Localism Act 2011. The Council is required to hold a referendum of all registered electors in the borough if the prescribed requirements regarding whether the increase is excessive are met.</p> <p>Approval of the budget is a matter reserved for full Council upon recommendation by the Executive on budget and policy matters.</p>	
Privacy and Data Protection	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
Equalities	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
Public Health	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Procurement	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Biodiversity & Climate Change Manager]

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council's Strategic Plan will be delivered over the next five years, given the resources available. In so doing, it establishes the framework for the annual budget setting process.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 8 November 2022, this Committee considered a draft MTFS for the five years 2023/24 to 2027/28. No material amendments were proposed to the MTFS by this Committee or subsequently by the Executive when it considered the MTFS at its meeting on 23 November 2022, so it will now go forward to Council for approval at its meeting on 22 February 2023.
- 2.3 The financial projections underlying the MTFS were prepared under a number of different scenarios, given uncertainty about local government funding and economic conditions generally. In the core scenario (Scenario 4) it was assumed that the Council would increase Council Tax by the maximum possible within the referendum threshold, but there would still be a budget gap of £2.5 million in 2023/24, mainly owing to the impact of inflation on the Council's costs, with a steadily increasing budget gap in subsequent years.
- 2.4 There is now better information about the funding context for 2023/24, given in particular the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, announced on 19 December 2022. In addition, savings proposals totalling £1.1 million for 2023/24 have been developed. Whilst the longer term position remains challenging, these recent developments have had a positive impact, such that it is now anticipated that the Council will be able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, provided that the savings proposals are adopted and Council Tax is increased up to the referendum threshold. Further details are set out below.

Autumn Statement 2022

- 2.5 The Chancellor announced the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022. The background was the need to demonstrate that the government had a clear plan to meet a shortfall in the public finances of around £55 billion. The shortfall was met through a mix of tax rises and spending cuts, although the real impact of the cuts will not be felt until after 2024.
- 2.6 The key points from the Autumn Statement for local government were as follows.
 - Council Tax referendum limit - The core threshold was increased from 1.99% to 2.99%, and the Adult Social Care precept will be 2% in 2023-24.

- Business rates - The multiplier will be frozen in 2023-24, rather than increasing by inflation as in the past. Local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income arising.
 - Business rates reliefs - Retail, Hospitality and Leisure reliefs were extended into 2023-24, and a Supporting Small Business Scheme has been introduced.
 - Business rates revaluation – The revaluation scheduled for April 2023 will go ahead but there will be a more generous transitional scheme.
- 2.7 The effect of the increase in Council Tax referendum thresholds is that lower tier authorities like Maidstone may put up Council Tax by up to 2.99%, whilst upper tier authorities may increase their Council Tax by up to 4.99%. If both Maidstone BC and Kent County Council increase Council Tax by the maximum possible, the additional amounts payable by a Band D Council Tax payer would be as follows:
- Maidstone Borough Council - £8.20
 - Kent County Council - £72.90
- 2.8 Maidstone Borough Council retains around 10% of the business rates that it collects and the baseline contribution to the Council's overall budget is approximately £4 million. The announcement in the Autumn Statement that government will compensate councils for the loss of income from freezing business rates for ratepayers means that, broadly, MBC's share of business rates will increase in line with inflation.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24

- 2.9 The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 was announced on 19 December 2022. This reiterated the key measures in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement relevant to local government. The main items of new information relevant to Maidstone Borough Council are as follows.

New Homes Bonus will be paid in 2023/24, but will be based on housing completions in 2021/22 only. Formerly NHB also included a legacy payment based on historic housing completions.

Services Grant will reduce in 2023-24, in part because there will no longer be an increase in National Insurance Contributions and no related compensation (the increase in NICs was originally planned by Chancellor Sunak, then reversed).

Lower Tier Services Grant – not payable in 2023/24 – the funding will be used along with New Homes Bonus to pay for the Funding Guarantee (see below).

- 2.10 It is proposed to create a new one-off Funding Guarantee, which will ensure that all authorities see at least a 3% increase in their Core Spending Power, before any decision they make about organisational efficiencies, use of reserves, and council tax levels. Core Spending Power is the measure used by government to evaluate what they consider to be the underlying financial

position of local authorities. This guarantee relates to 2023/24 only and there is no indication as to whether a similar guarantee will be offered in 2024/25.

2.11 The following table shows Maidstone Council's Core Spending Power for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

	2022/23	2023/24	Change	
	£000	£000	£000	%
Council Tax	18,207	19,124 ¹	+917	+5.0%
Retained Business Rates ²	3,594	4,186	+592	+16.5%
<i>Sub-total – Core Funding³</i>	<i>21,801</i>	<i>23,310</i>	<i>1,509</i>	<i>6.9%</i>
New Homes Bonus	4,216	1,889	-2,327	-55.2%
Services Grant	225	127	-98	-43.6%
Lower Tier Services Grant	149	0	-149	-100.0%
Funding Guarantee	0	2,640	+2,640	N/A
<i>Sub-total – One-off Funding</i>	<i>4,590</i>	<i>4,656</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1.4%</i>
Core Spending Power	26,391	27,966	+1,575	+6.0%⁴

Notes

¹ Assumes Council Tax increased to the referendum threshold. Notwithstanding that the Funding Guarantee is calculated before allowing for any Council Tax increases, the government's Core Spending Power calculations assume that all authorities will increase Council Tax by the maximum permitted.

² Notional Business Rates income based on the government's baseline. Growth above this baseline is not included here.

³ Council Tax and Business Rates are treated as part of the Council's core funding, whereas New Homes Bonus and other unringfenced government grants have historically not been used by the Council to fund ongoing revenue expenditure.

⁴ The government has advertised the Local Government Finance Settlement as giving local authorities an extra 9%. This is a national average and district councils like Maidstone are generally seeing a lower increase.

2.12 It can be seen that the Funding Guarantee has protected the Council against the reduction in the following elements of Core Spending Power:

- New Homes Bonus
- Services Grant
- Lower Tier Services Grant.

Specifically, the main benefit of the Funding Guarantee from Maidstone's perspective is that the Council is protected against the reduction in New Homes Bonus.

2.13 The Council agreed last year to set aside £1 million of New Homes Bonus for strategic policy and plan making and £3.2 million for the 1,000 Affordable Homes Programme, given the requirement over the 10 year life of the programme for a total revenue subsidy of £50,000 per unit. Within

the overall budget proposals for 2023/24, it is now proposed that £300,000 of the one-off funding will be set aside for strategic policy and plan making, with this sum being built into the revenue budget on an ongoing basis. The balance of one-off funding will be set aside for the 1,000 Affordable Homes Programme.

Revenue Budget Proposals

- 2.14 The draft MTFS described how, in bridging the budget gap, the Council would need to balance the requirement to make savings or generate increased income against the key priorities set out in the Council's Strategic Plan, namely:

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

- 2.15 It was explained that all budgets would be reviewed in detail to identify opportunities for savings, or increased income, which can be delivered with the minimum impact on the strategic priorities. To the extent that further growth is planned, above and beyond existing budgets, this would need to be offset by further savings.

- 2.16 The following growth and savings have been identified in the services falling within the remit of the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee.

- Economic Development – recharge of salaries to Business Rates Pool - £100,000 saving

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 their notional baseline income. Maidstone is a member of the Kent Business Rates Pool and has followed a policy of using its share of growth arising from membership of the pool to support the Council's economic development strategy.

Strong business rates growth means that Pool income is now sufficient to fund not only one-off projects (as hitherto) but also the core salary budget for the Economic Development team. As Pool income is not treated as part of the base budget, this generates a saving.

- Mote Park café - £30,000 saving

The Mote Park café is due to reopen in 2023. It is anticipated that as the café becomes established there will be net income from the operator under the terms of the agreement, amounting to £30,000 per annum ongoing.

- Reduce Market income budget - £45,000 growth

In spite of a reduction in the income budget last year, the market's income continues to fall short of targets. It was proposed in the Fees and Charges report that came to this Committee in December 2022 that charges to stallholders be reduced in order to make it a more attractive trading opportunity. Whilst it is hoped that this will have a positive impact in the longer term, a further reduction in income is budgeted for in 2023/24.

Budget proposals have been developed, following a similar approach, for services within the remit of the other Policy Advisory Committees. Taken in total, it is projected that the savings proposals will allow the budget to be balanced in 2023/24 provided that Council Tax is increased up to the referendum threshold.

Capital Budget Proposals

- 2.17 Capital investment helps the Council to deliver its strategic priorities. Capital programme schemes falling within the remit of this Policy Advisory Committee are as follows.

- Museum Development Plan - £389,000

This capital budget exists to support implementation of the Museum's 20 year plan. A key element of this plan is to improve the quality of displays and storytelling in the Museum's permanent galleries through a rolling programme of refurbishment and redisplay. The first phase of this work will be a new gallery telling the story of Maidstone from pre-history to the end of the medieval period. Work is under way on planning this gallery, with a target opening date of Summer 2024. Although included in the capital budget for 2022/23, most of the planned expenditure of £389,000 is now expected to slip to 2023/24. The Council's funding is expected to be matched by external fundraising by the Maidstone Museums Foundation.

- Leisure Provision - £7 million

Options for the future of the Leisure Centre were presented to this Committee in December 2022. This is an indicative budget at this stage, allowing for practical improvements to be made to the Leisure Centre in the short term, pending a refurbishment or replacement of the existing facilities in the medium term.

- Tennis Courts Upgrade - £20,000

This funding is required to bring the courts in the parks back up to an acceptable playing standard.

- Riverside Walk - £500,000

Proposals are under consideration for a riverside walk alongside the Medway by the Lockmeadow Millennium Bridge. Better access to the

river would be created from the Maidstone road bridge and other areas of interest along the river would be linked, such as the memorial park and Archbishop's Palace. Improvements to the riverside path would increase safety and reduce antisocial behaviour. Costings and detailed proposals are still to be developed and third party funding will be sought for the project. Specific proposals will be brought forward in due course but for the purpose of developing the capital programme an indicative budget was included in the capital budget for 2022/23. The planned expenditure of £250,000 is now expected to slip to 2023/24.

- Mote Park Kiosk Refurbishment & Extension- £200,000

Following the opening of a new visitor centre on the southern side of Mote Park Lake, this project is intended to provide clean and safe facilities to replace the existing toilet block on the northern side.

- Town Centre Strategy - £5.5 million

The emerging Town Centre strategy action plan will present short, medium and long term projects for improvements in the Town Centre, as part of a wider package of town centre projects. The capital programme includes an indicative sum of £5.5m to assist with delivery of these projects.

Details are set out in Appendix B to this report for the next five years. Amongst the Council's capital schemes, the Affordable Homes programme has a ten year life cycle, so a ten year programme will be presented for the Council as a whole.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Recommend the budget proposals relating to this Committee as set out in Appendices A and B for approval by the Executive.
- 3.2 Propose changes to the budget proposals.
- 3.3 Make no comment on the budget proposals.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Executive must recommend to Council at its meeting on 8 February 2022 a balanced budget and a proposed level of Council Tax for the coming year. The budget proposals included in this report will allow the Executive to do this. Accordingly, the preferred option is that this Committee agrees the budget proposals at Appendices A and B.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The Council's finances are subject to a high degree of risk and uncertainty. The draft MTFS includes an evaluation of the Council's financial resilience,

from which it can be seen that it has adequate, but not excessive, reserves and is positioned well to manage the financial challenges that it faces.

- 5.2 In order to address risk on an ongoing basis 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 of its meetings.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Executive received an initial report on the MTFS at its meeting on 20 July 2022 and it agreed the approach set out in that report to development of an MTFS for 2023/24 - 2027/28 and a budget for 2023/24.
- 6.2 Policy Advisory Committees and the Executive then considered a draft MTFS at their meetings in November 2022.
- 6.3 Public consultation on the budget has been carried out. Details are set out in Appendix C. Members are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The timetable for developing the budget for 2023/24 is set out below.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Action</i>
25 January 2023	Executive	Consider 23/24 budget proposals
8 February 2023	Executive	Agree 23/24 budget proposals for recommendation to Council
22 February 2023	Council	Approve 23/24 budget

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 – 2027/28
- Appendix B: Capital Budget Proposals 2023/24 – 2032/33
- Appendix C: Budget Survey 2023

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.

Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 - 2027/28

Service	Proposal	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Economic Development	Recharge of salaries to Business Rates Pool	-100					-100
Mote Park Café	Adjust income target	-30					-30
Market	Reduce market income budget	45					45
OVERALL CHANGE IN BUDGET (£000)		-85	0	0	0	0	-85

Negative figures shown above represent a reduction in expenditure budgets, or increased income targets.
Positive figures indicate increased expenditure, or a reduction in the income budget.

**Economic Regeneration and
Leisure Policy Advisory Committee**

Appendix B

Capital Budget Proposals 2023/24 - 2027/28

	22/23	Five Year Plan					Total
	Projected	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Mote Park Visitor Centre	1,307						
Mote Park Lake - Dam Works	486	20					20
Museum Development Plan		389					389
Leisure Provision	100	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	7,000
Tennis Courts Upgrade	20	20					20
Riverside Walk Works		250					250
Mote Park Kiosk Refurbishment & Extension	50	200					200
Town Centre Strategy		450	2,700	2,350			5,500
TOTAL	1,963	4,329	3,700	3,350	1,000	1,000	13,379



BUDGET SURVEY 2023

Produced November 2022

ABSTRACT

A report summarising the results of Maidstone Borough Council's Budget Survey 2023.

Consultation@maidstone.gov.uk

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of Maidstone Council's Budget Survey 2023/24. The survey was conducted to gauge opinion on Council spending as well as its priorities and investment programmes.

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

Reductions in central government funding and the pandemic have had a significant 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 20 October and 20 November 2022.

The survey was carried out online, with a direct email sent to approximately 9,000 residents who had consented to being contacted by email. The survey was also promoted on the Council's website, social media, in Borough Insight and in the local press. The survey was open to all Maidstone Borough residents aged 18 years and over.

A total of 1,332 people responded to the questionnaire. Data has been weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias. The weighting profile is based on the 2020 mid-year ONS population estimates. However, the under-representation of 18- to 34-year-olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group, therefore the results for this group should be treated with caution. In addition, the result for minority groups should also be treated with caution due to the sample being unrepresentative of the local population.

The economically active group includes respondents in employment (full, part-time or self-employed) or who are looking for work.

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

With a total of 1,332 responses to the survey, the overall results in this report are accurate to $\pm 2.7\%$ at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% certain that the results are between $\pm 2.7\%$ of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 2.7% above or below the figures reported (i.e., a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 47.3% to 52.7%).

Findings

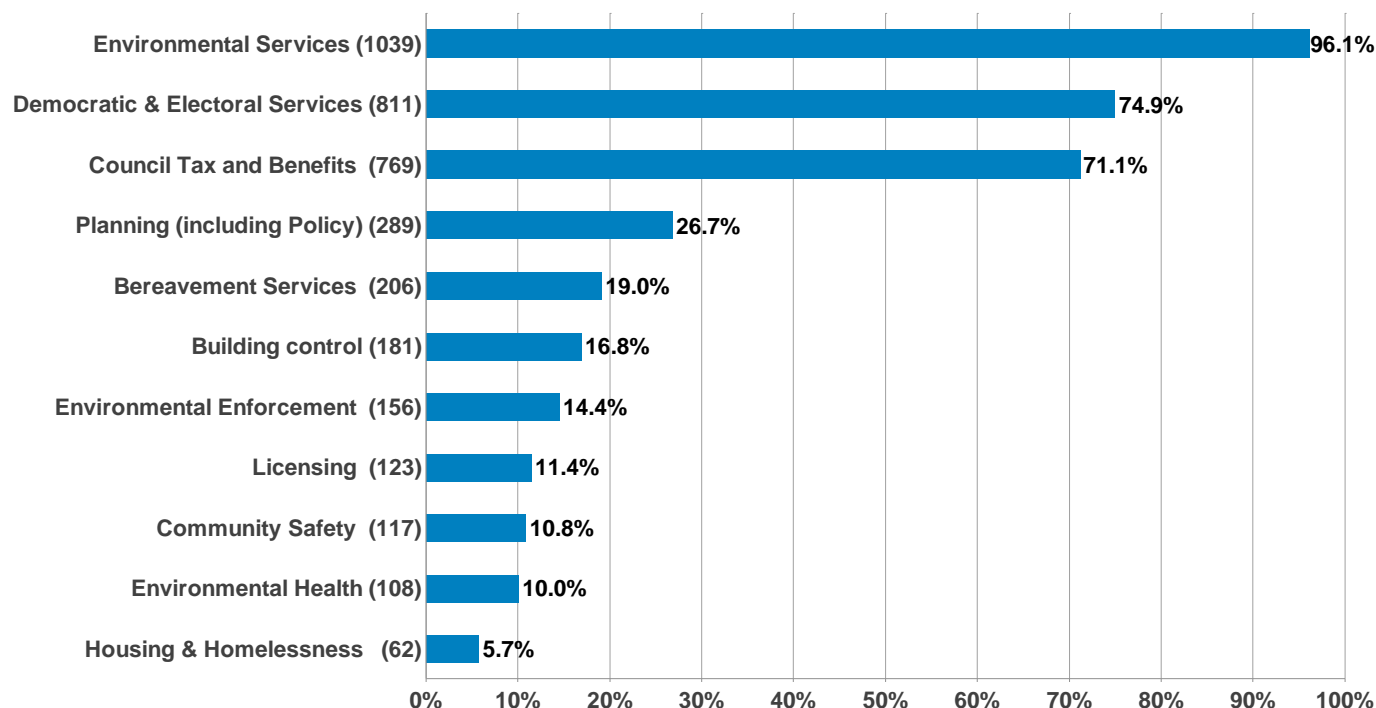
- Environmental Services was the most used service mandatory service and the most important mandatory service with 96% and 87% responding this way respectively.
- The most common mandatory service that people felt should be reduced was Democratic & Electoral Services with 936 answering this way.
- 87% of respondents told us they have used Parking Services making it the most used discretionary service, while Parks and Open Spaces was deemed the most important service (87%).
- Markets and Civic events were most common discretionary services that people felt should be reduced with 431 and 420 answering this way respectively.
- Infrastructure including flood prevention remained the top investment priority for the third year in a row.
- Overall satisfaction with the local area as a place to live has increased from 51.0% in 2021 to 57.8%.

Mandatory Services

Mandatory Services Used

The survey asked respondents to select the services they had used from a list of services that the Council is required to provide by law. A total of 1,082 responses were received.

The most common response was Environmental Services with 1,039 respondents telling us they have used this service. The least common response was Housing & Homelessness with 62 respondents telling us they have used this service.



Demographic Differences

- Female respondents and the economically inactive were significantly more likely than their counterparts to have used Council Tax and Benefits services.
- Economically inactive respondents were more likely than economically active to have used Democratic & Electoral services with 83.5% compared to 71.6% of economically inactive respondents.

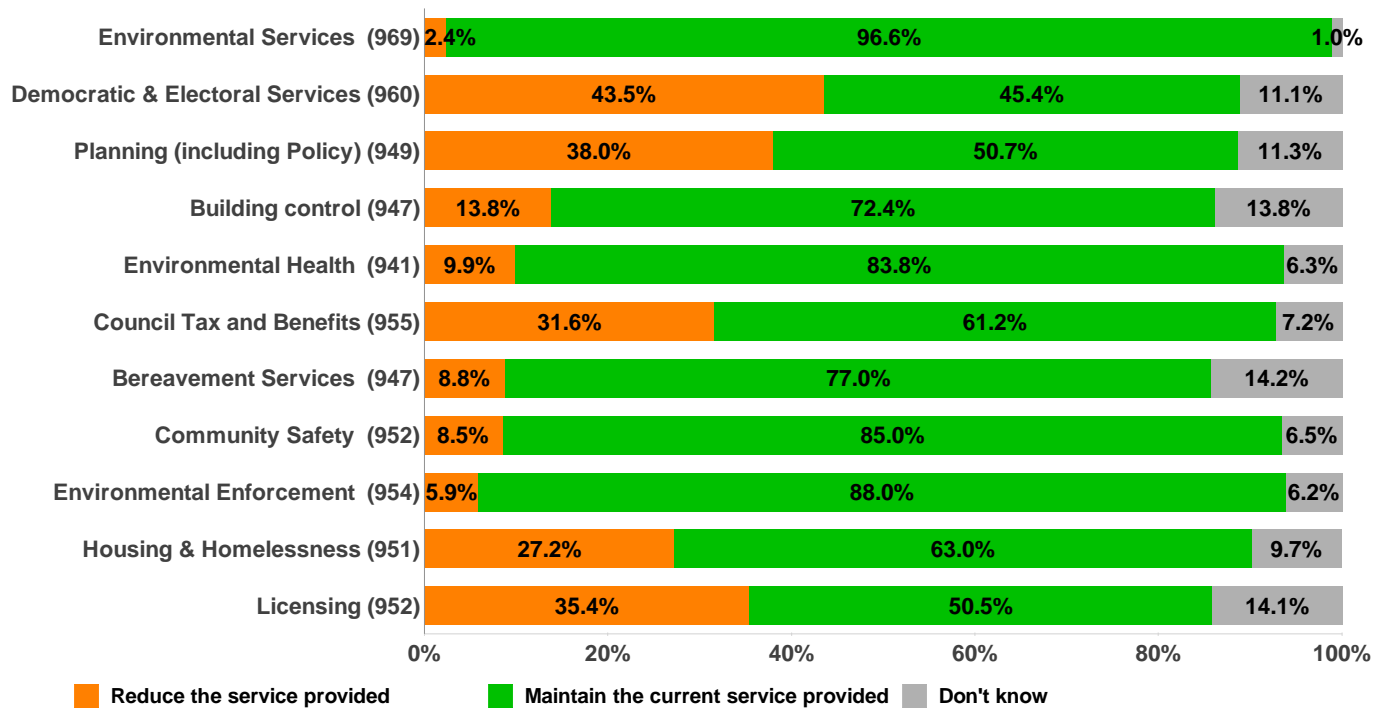
Mandatory Services Spending Approaches

Respondents were provided with the list of mandatory services detailing the current spend for each per council tax band D household. They were asked to indicate what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering the mandatory services. Three options were provided for respondents to select from:

- Reduce the service provided
- Maintain the current service
- Don't know.

There was a total of 969 responses to this set of questions. Democratic Services and Planning (including policy) had the greatest proportions where respondents stated 'reduce the service provided' at 43.5% and 38.0% respectively.

Environmental Services and Environmental Enforcement had the greatest proportions where respondents answered, 'maintain the current service' at 96.6% and 88.0% respectively.



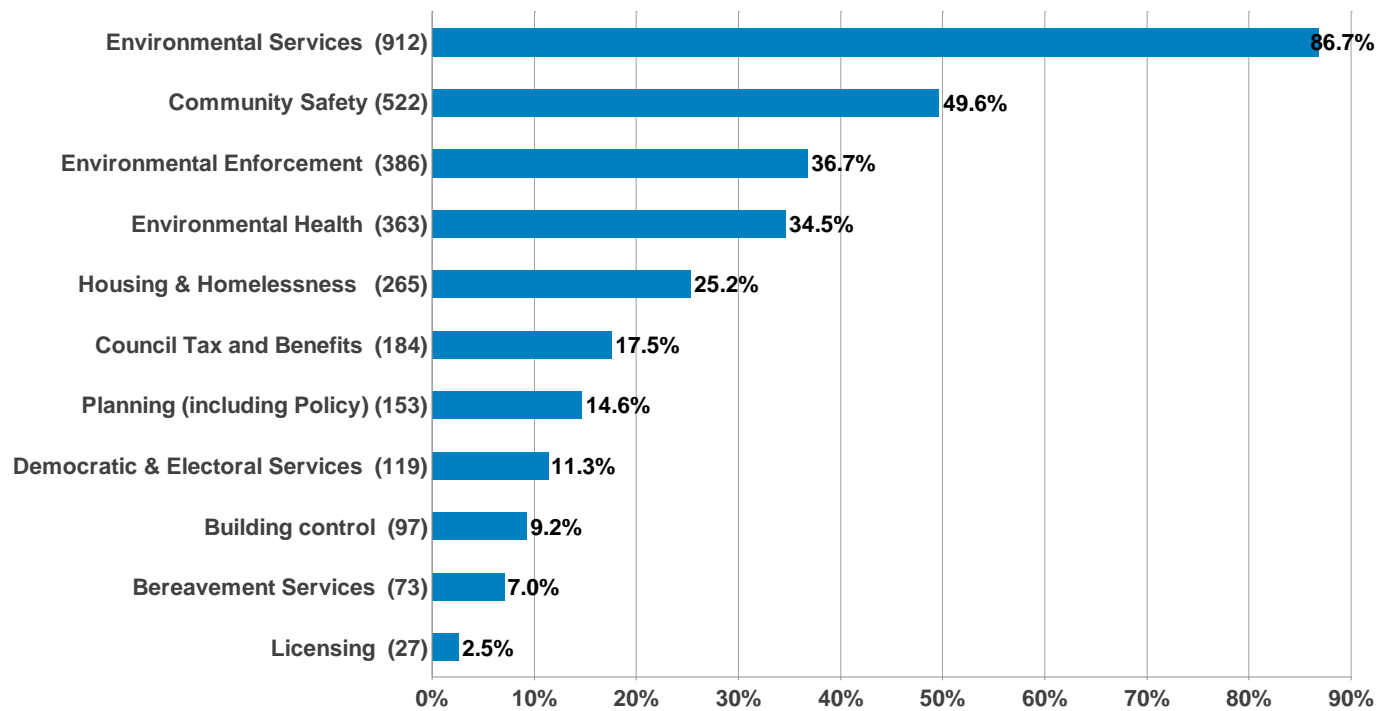
Demographic Differences

- A significantly greater proportion of respondents with a disability said that the Planning (including policy) service should be reduced with 57.3% answering this way compared to 34.8% of respondents without a disability.
- Respondents who have lived in the borough between 3 and 5 years had a significantly greater than average proportion that said Building Control should be reduced at 28.6%.
- A significantly greater proportion of male respondents said that Council Tax and Benefits services should be reduced with 39.2% answering this way compared to 26.0% of female respondents. Economically active respondents were also more likely than their counterparts to say that this service should be reduced.
- A significantly greater proportion of male respondents said that Bereavement services should be reduced with 12.8% answering this way compared to 4.6% of female respondents.
- Male respondents and respondents with a disability had significantly greater proportions than their counterparts that said that Community Safety services should be reduced.
- Male respondents and respondents under 35 years had greater proportions than their counterparts that said Environmental Enforcement services should be reduced.
- Respondents from minority groups and male respondents had significantly greater proportions stating that Housing & Homelessness services should be reduced at 63.9% and 34.4% respectively, compared to the overall response of 27.3%.
- Respondents who have lived in the borough for less than a year had a significantly lower proportion that said that Licensing services should be reduced compared to their counterparts.

Most Important Mandatory Services

The survey asked respondents to select which three Mandatory services provided by the Council were most important to them.

There were 912 responses to this question. The most common response was Environmental Services with 912 respondents selecting this service. The least common response was Licensing with 27 respondents selecting this service at one of their top three services.



Demographic Differences

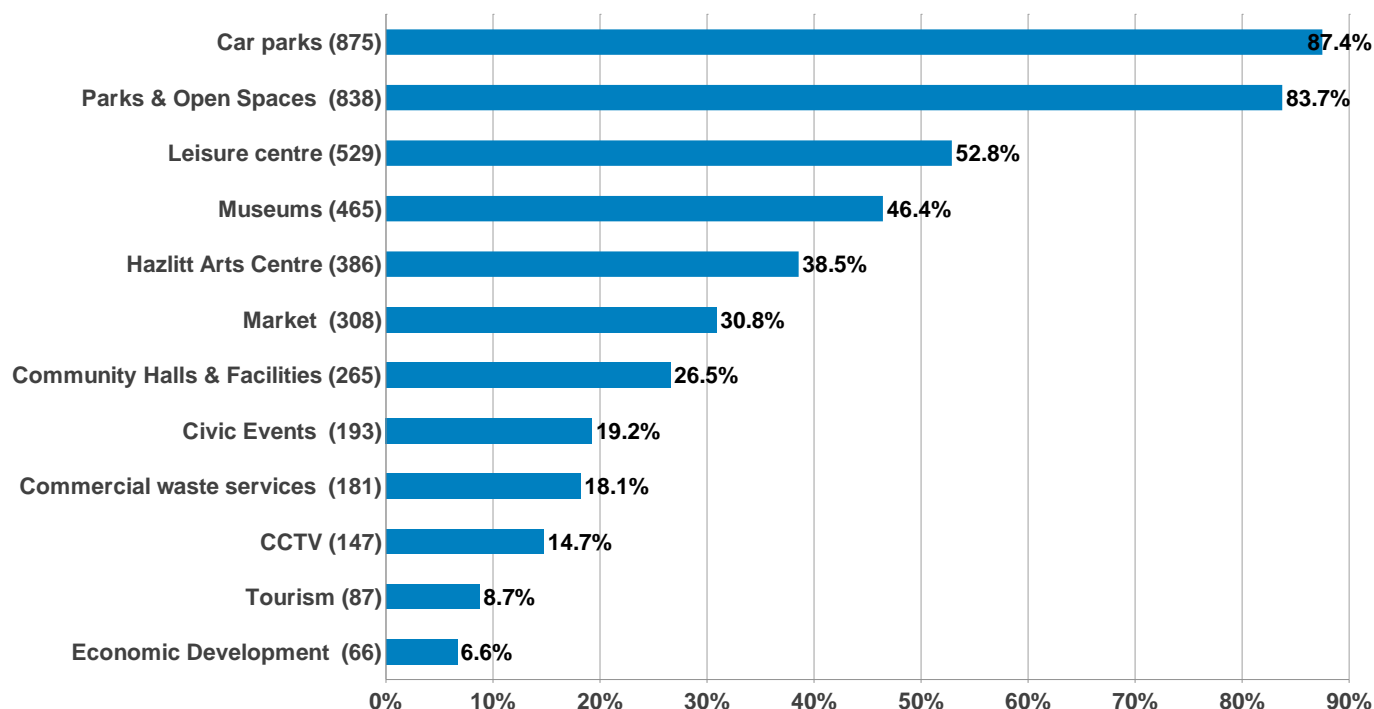
- Environmental services was the most common response across all demographic groups.
- Respondents who had lived at their current address for less than a year were only group where community safety did not have the second greatest proportion. This group's second choice was Environmental Health with 60.2% and Community Safety was third for this group.
- There were three groups whose third most important Mandatory Service response differed from the overall result. These were 18- to 34-year-olds, minority respondents and those who have lived at their present addresses for less than a year. These three groups put Environmental Health above Environmental Enforcement.

Discretionary Services

Discretionary Services Used

The survey asked respondents to select the services that they had used from a list of services that the Council is not required to provide by law but chooses to do so. A total of 875 responses were received.

The most common response was car parks with 875 (87.4%) telling us they have used this service. The least common response was Economic Development with 66 (6.6%) telling us they have used this service.



Demographic Differences

- Car parks and Parks & Open spaces were the two most common responses across all groups.
- Minority group respondents were significantly less likely to have used Parks & Open Spaces compared to white groups with 62.0% compared to 85.2% of white group respondents.
- Female respondents, the economically inactive and those without a disability were significantly more likely than their counterparts to have used the Leisure Centre.
- The data suggests that there is a linear negative relationship between age and using the Leisure Centre, meaning that as people age, they are less likely to use the Leisure Centre.
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years were more likely than the other age groups to have used the Market at 43.7%.
- Female respondents were significantly more likely to have used the Hazlitt Arts Centre with 43.3% selecting this service compared to 32.6% of male respondents.

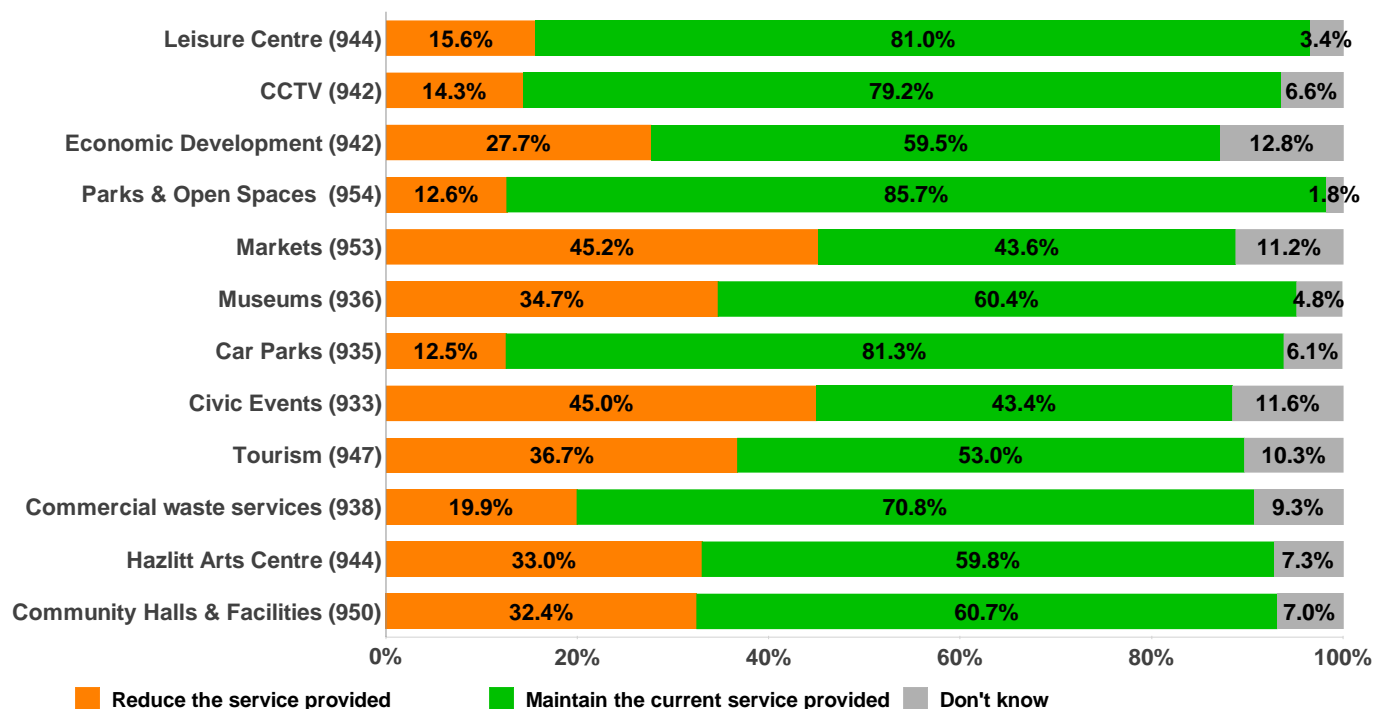
Discretionary Services Spending Approaches

Respondents were provided with the list of discretionary services detailing the current spend for each per council tax band D household. They were asked to indicate what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering the mandatory services. Three options provided for respondents to select from were:

- Reduce the service provided,
- Maintain the current service
- Don't know.

There was a total of 954 responses to this set of questions. Markets and Civic events had the greatest proportions where respondents stated 'reduce the service provided' at 45.2% and 45.0% respectively.

Parks & Open Spaces and Car Parks had the greatest proportions where respondents answered, 'maintain the current service' at 85.7% and 81.3% respectively.



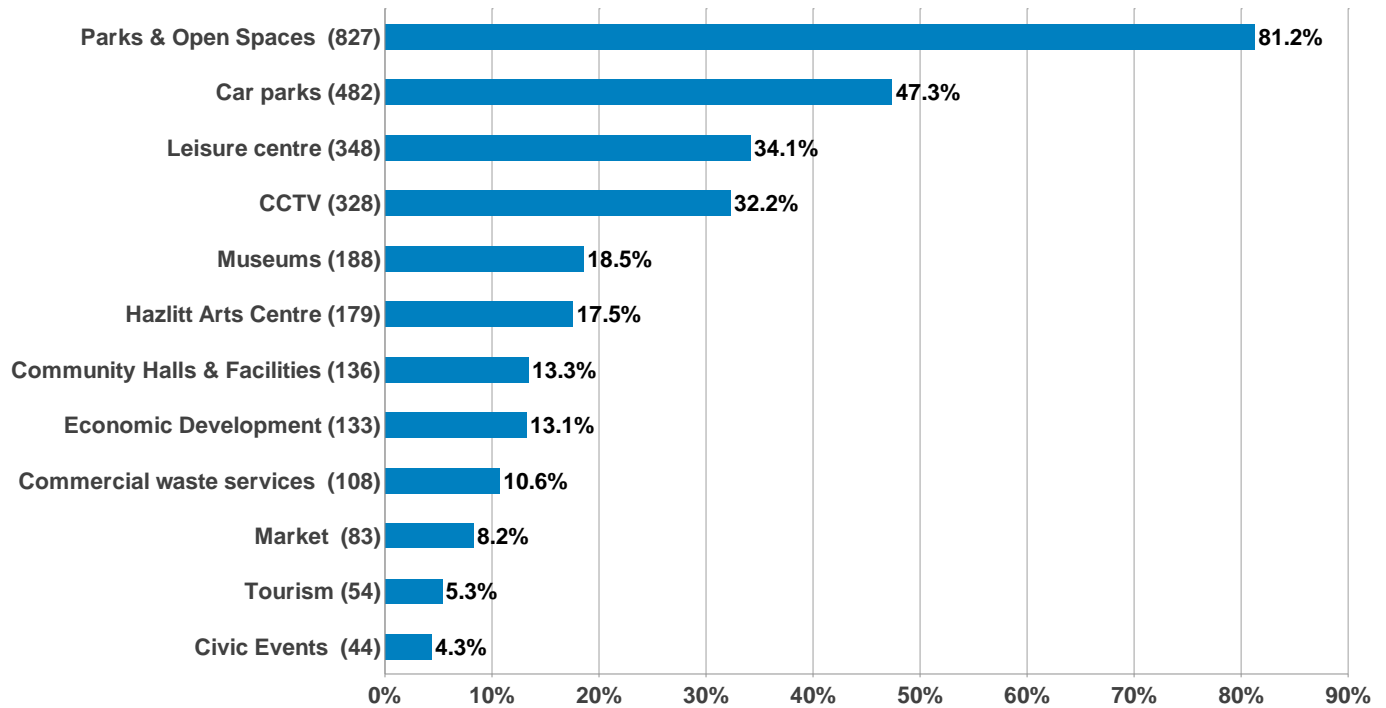
Demographic Differences

- A significantly greater proportion of respondents with a disability and those who are economically inactive said that Parks & Open Spaces should be reduced at 19.9% and 19.2% respectively.
- The proportion stating that Parks & Open Spaces should be reduced increases with age.
- A significantly greater proportion of economically inactive respondents said that the Market should be reduced with 50.1% answering this way compared to 42.6% of economically active respondents.
- A significantly greater proportion of male respondents said the Museum should be reduced with 37.9% answering this way compared to 30.5% of female respondents.
- Respondents with a disability had significantly greater proportion than those without a disability that said that Car Park services should be reduced with 19.7% answering this way compared to 11.1% of non-disabled respondents.
- Male respondents, economically inactive respondents and respondents in the age groups 55 years and upwards had greater than average proportions that said that civic events should be reduced.
- More than half of respondents with a disability said that Tourism should be reduced, significantly greater than the overall result and that for respondents without a disability.
- Respondents from minority groups and economically active respondents had significantly greater proportions stating that Commercial waste services should be reduced compared to their counterparts at 54.7% and 22.4% respectively.
- Male respondents and minority group respondents had significantly greater proportions than their counterparts that said that the Hazlitt Arts Centre and Community Halls & Facilities should be reduced.

Most Important Discretionary Services

The survey asked respondents to select the three discretionary services that were most important to them.

There were 827 responses to this question. The most common response was Parks & Open Spaces with 827 selecting this service. The least common response was Civic Events with 44 selecting this service as one of their top three.



Demographic Differences

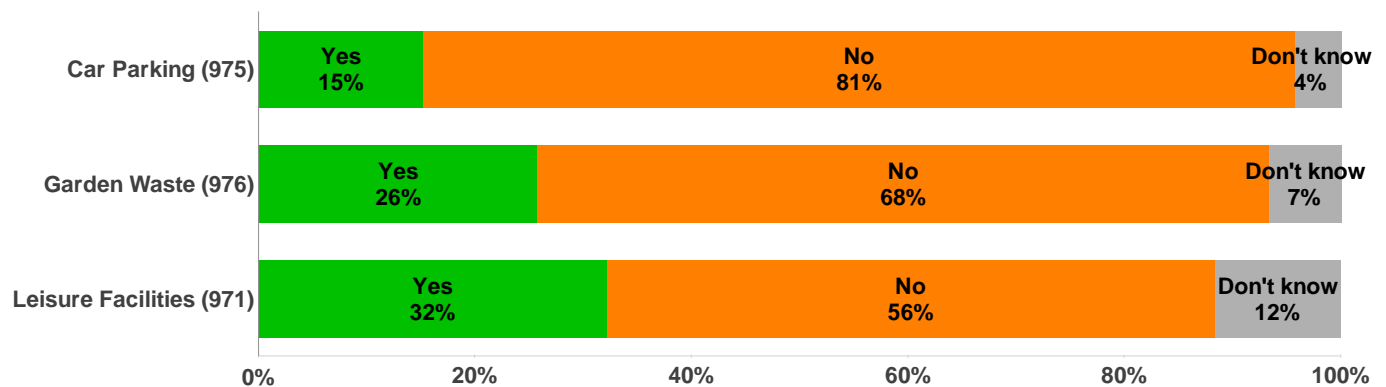
- Parks & Open Spaces was the most common response across all demographic groups.
- The second most common response was Car parks for all but three groups:
 - The Leisure centre was the second most common response for the 18 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 years groups. Both groups third most common response was Car parks.
 - The second most common response for those who had lived at their current address between 3 and 5 years was CCTV. This groups third most common response was the Leisure centre.

Paying more for services

The survey asked respondents if they would be prepared to pay more for car parking, garden waste and leisure facilities. There were 976 responses to this question.

Just under a third of respondents said they would pay more to use leisure facilities and just over a quarter said they would be prepared to pay more for garden waste collection.

Would you be willing to pay more for any of the following services?



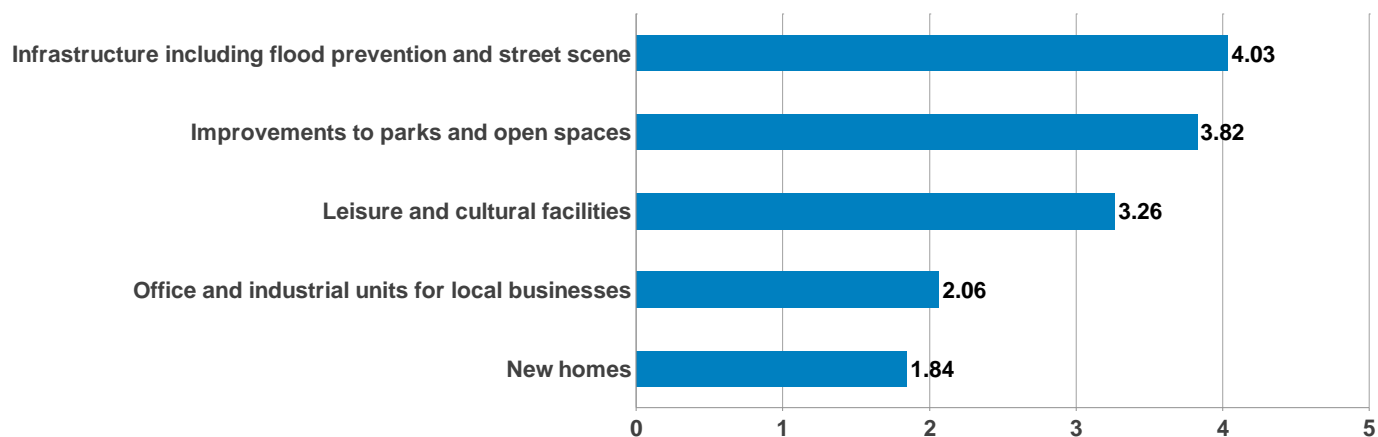
Demographic Differences

- Respondents from minority groups had a significantly greater proportion in favour of raising charges for car parking with 36.7% responding this way compared to 14.6% of respondents from white groups.
- Male respondents had a significant greater proportion in favour of increasing charges around leisure facilities with 41.3% answering this way compared to 24.9% of female respondents.

Priorities & Investments

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.



This question was asked in the 2021/22 Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020 and the 2022/23 Budget Survey undertaken in Autumn 2021. Since the 2021/22 survey the order of the top three programmes has not changed.

In 2021/22 New Homes was ranked as fifth but moved up a place to fourth in 2022/23 and Office and Industrial units for local businesses has dropped from fourth to fifth. For this year (2023/24) New Homes has moved back to being the lowest priority for residents.

Demographic Differences

- Economically inactive respondents were more likely than economically active respondent to rank infrastructure, including flood prevention and street scene, as their top priority with 62.2% responding this way compared to 42.7% of the economically active group.
- The survey data suggests that as age increases there is a greater likelihood of Infrastructure being ranked first.
- Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion that ranked new homes last with 62.9% ranking this priority as fifth compared to 51.8% of male respondents.

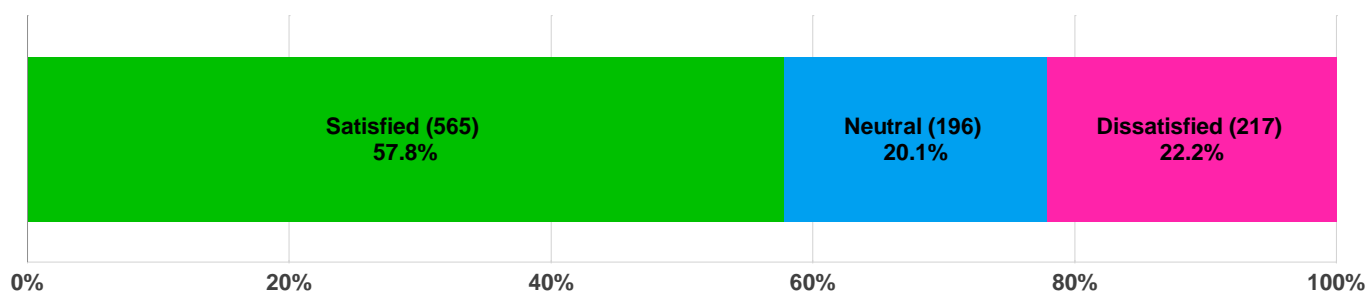
Living in Maidstone

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 978 respondents.

The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 438 answering this way.

In the last Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2021, 51.0% of respondents answered positively. This has increased by 6.8 percentage points to 57.8% for the current year and demonstrates an overall increase in resident's satisfaction with Maidstone as a place to live.



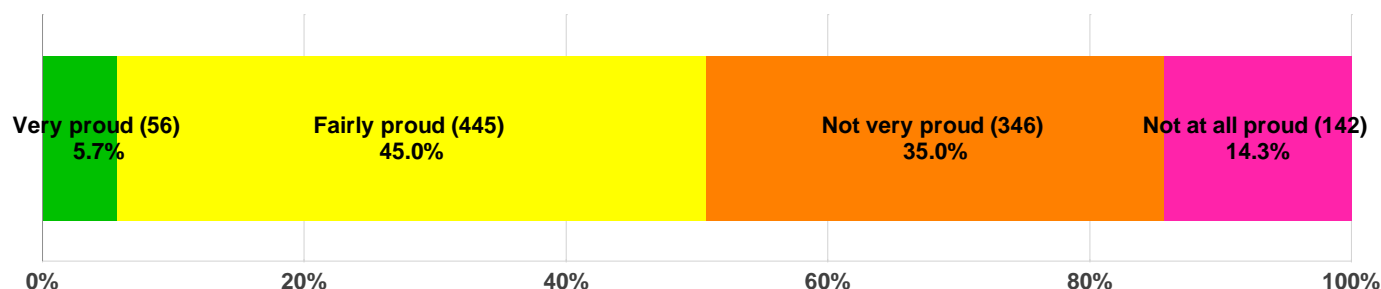
Demographic Differences

- Female respondents were significantly more satisfied with their local area as a place to live with 63.9% answering positively compared to 52.5% of male respondents answering the same.
- Respondents who have lived at their current address for more than ten years had lower proportions answering positively.

Pride in Maidstone Borough

The survey asked respondents: 'How proud are you of Maidstone Borough?', a total of 988 responded to this question.

Overall, 50.7% said they were either 'very proud' or 'fairly proud' of Maidstone Borough. The most common response was 'fairly proud' with 445 answering this way. In the last Budget Survey, undertaken in Autumn 2021, 50.4% of respondents answered positively. The change in the proportion responding positively compared to last year (0.3%) is considered negligible.



Demographic Differences

- Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that answered positively with 54.8% answering this way compared to 43.2% of economically inactive respondents.
- Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that answered negatively with 61.8% answering this way compared to 46.2% of respondents without a disability.

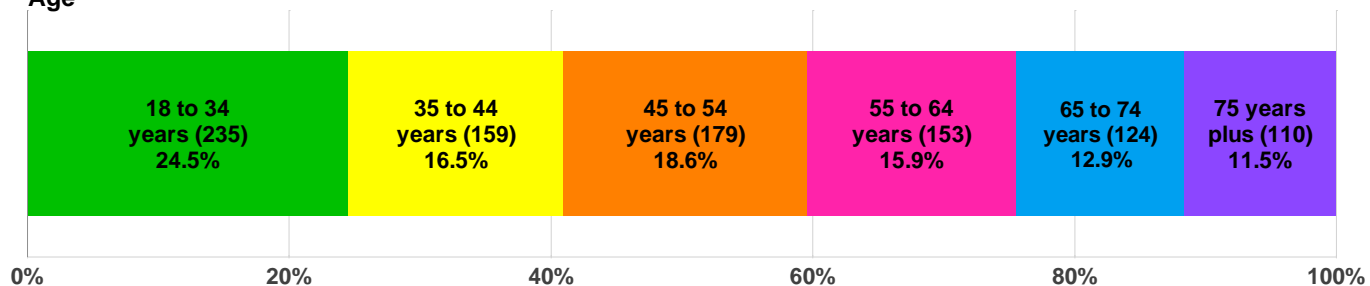
Budget Comments

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 371 comments were received. These comments have been grouped into themes, with some comments containing multiple themes. The table below provides a summary of the comments for each of the top ten themes identified.

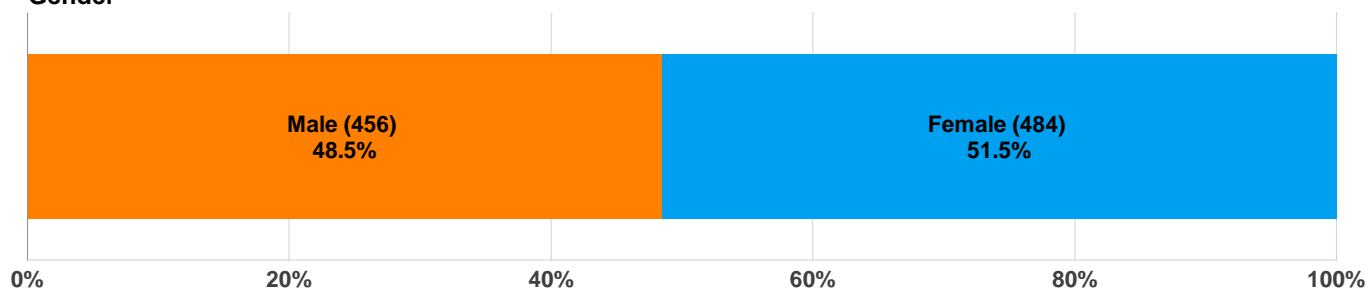
Theme	No.	Summary
Planning & Development (inc. infrastructure)	92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop building new homes. • No infrastructure improvements to support growth. • Too much green space disappearing to new housing.
Roads & Traffic	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of roads. • Difficulty in getting from A to B due to congestion. • Speeding lorries, particularly in the rural communities.
VFM & Management Efficiencies	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not feel there is value for money from the amount of Council Tax paid (rural locations and suspension of services mentioned) • Spend money more wisely. • Don't spend money on 'vanity' projects. • Better contracts for services. • Cut managers and/or their salaries.
Crime, Safety & ASB	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about levels of ASB. • Request for more CCTV. • Requests for more visible policing.
Town centre	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments that the Town centre was shabby, with empty shops and little to attract people. • Several mentioned feeling unsafe in the Town Centre. • Desire to see improvements in the Town Centre.
Cleanliness	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements that cleanliness has deteriorated. • Increased litter and graffiti. • Requests for more litter bins.
The Environment & Waste Services	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about disruption to waste collections. • Concerns about pollution (many in reference to traffic). • Perception that the Council is anti-nature.
Parking & Public Transport	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments about new developments without parking facilities. • Suggestions of cheaper or free town centre parking. • Disappointment about the removal of Park & Ride service. • Comments about inadequacy bus services.
Inward migration	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments about people moving to the Borough from other areas (many mentioned London boroughs moving their tenants to Maidstone) and the impact of population increase on local services.
Deliver Essentials & Maintain Services & Support the Vulnerable	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the essentials. • Ensure support is vulnerable for most vulnerable. • Maintain current services.
Attracting visitors & inward investment	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring support for local businesses. • Making Maidstone a place where people want to invest.

Demographics

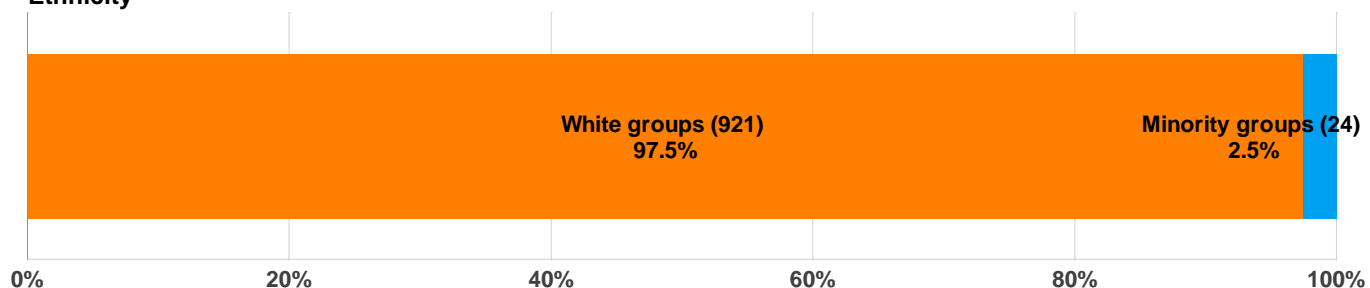
Age



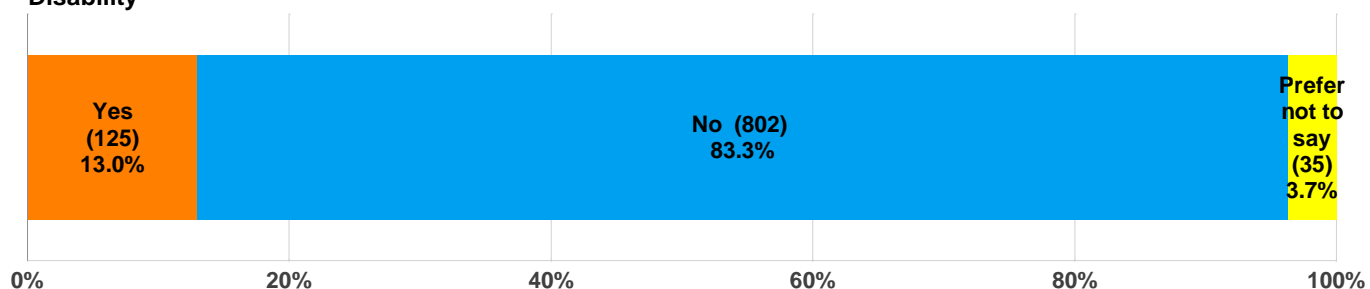
Gender



Ethnicity



Disability



How long have you lived at your present address?

