

EXECUTIVE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 26 October 2022
Time: 6.30 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Burton (Chairman), Cooper, Parfitt-Reid, Perry, Round, Russell and S Webb

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. Urgent Items
3. Notification of Visiting Members
4. Disclosures by Members or Officers
5. Disclosures of Lobbying
6. To consider whether any items should be considered in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information
7. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 1 - 4
The Records of Decision Referred to in these Minutes can be accessed here:
[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)
8. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
9. Questions from Local Residents to the Leader or Individual Lead Member (as appropriate)
10. Questions from Members to the Leader or Individual Lead Member (as appropriate)
11. Matters Referred to the Executive for Reconsideration (if any)
12. Issues Arising from Overview and Scrutiny (if any)

Issued on 18 October 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

13. Reference from Council - Motion - Water Quality	5 - 11
14. Reference from Planning Committee - Review of Increasing Occurrence of Hard Surfacing and the Impact on Drainage	12 - 13
15. Any Matter Relating to a Serious Service Failure or Nuisance (if any)	
16. Receipt of Written Representations from Members of the Council (if any)	
17. Executive Forward Plan	14 - 27
The Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 January 2023 can be accessed here:	
Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council	
18. Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025	28 - 55
19. Archbishop's Palace - Exclusivity Agreement	56 - 64
20. 1st Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report 2022/23	65 - 139
21. Proposed Change to Maidstone AQMA and Request to Consult on New Air Quality Action Plan	140 - 152
22. Town Centre Strategy - Procurement of Professional Team	153 - 163

PART II

To move that the public be excluded for the item set out in Part II of the Agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test.

	Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description	
23. Exempt Appendix B to Item 22 – Town Centre Strategy - Procurement of Professional Team	3 – Financial/Business Affairs	164

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5.00 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5.00 p.m. on Monday 24 October 2022). 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.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 JULY 2022

Attendees:

Executive Members:	Councillors Burton (Chairman), Cooper, Parfitt-Reid, Perry, Russell and S Webb
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19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Round.

20. URGENT ITEMS

There was an additional Appendix 2 that had been published and circulated for item 17 – Medium Term Financial Strategy that would be taken with that item.

21. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

It was agreed to item 18 - Corporate Planning Timetable, prior to item 17 – Medium Term Financial Strategy as there was a logic to considering the timetabling item first.

22. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

23. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS OR OFFICERS

There were disclosures by Members or Officers.

24. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

25. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE DUE TO THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public, unless any Member of the Executive wished to refer to detail within item 23 – Property Acquisition for 1,000 Affordable Homes Programme, in which case the Executive would enter into closed session due to the possible disclosure of exempt information.

26. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

27. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

28. QUESTIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS TO THE LEADER OR INDIVIDUAL LEAD MEMBER (AS APPROPRIATE)

There were no questions from local residents.

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OR INDIVIDUAL LEAD MEMBER (AS APPROPRIATE)

There were no questions from Members.

30. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE FOR RECONSIDERATION (IF ANY)

There were no matters referred to the Executive for Reconsideration.

31. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (IF ANY)

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny.

32. MATTERS REFERRED BY ANY OTHER COMMITTEE (IF ANY)

There were no matters referred by any other committee.

33. ANY MATTER RELATING TO A SERIOUS SERVICE FAILURE OR NUISANCE (IF ANY)

There were no matters relating to a serious service failure or nuisance.

34. RECEIPT OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (IF ANY)

There were no written representations from Members of the Council.

35. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive noted the following amendments:

- There would a Q1 performance monitoring report in September.
- Duplicated reports would be removed.
- The review of the Housing Assistance Policy would be moved 2 months to November 2022.
- The Housing Strategy would be moved 2 months to December 2022.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

36. CORPORATE PLANNING TIMETABLE

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Plan 2019-2045 milestones for 2023-28 be refreshed and the corporate planning timetable at 3.5 of the report be approved.

(See Record of Decision)

37. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

RESOLVED: That

1. The issues and risks associated with updating the Medium-Term Financial Strategy be noted;
2. The assumptions described in the report for planning purposes and to establish the remit for detailed budget development, and together with the additional information provided at Appendix 2, which shows the effect of 0% council tax increase on the four scenarios presented, be approved;
3. It be noted that Lead Members on the Executive, together with Officers and Members of Policy Advisory Committees, will carry out a detailed review of initial budget proposals. The purpose of this review will be to identify possible savings required to eliminate budget gaps; and
4. The proposed approach outlined to development of an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 – 2027/28 and a budget for 2023/24 be approved.

(See Record of Decision)

38. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

RESOLVED: That

1. The Annual Governance Statement at Appendix A be approved and signed by the Leader; and
2. The local Code of Corporate Governance as amended at Appendix B be approved.

(See Record of Decision)

39. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2022 - 2024

The Executive considered the report on the Local Development Scheme and resolved to recommend the approval of the Local Development Scheme 2022-2024 for the reasons set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Local Development Scheme 2022-2024, attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

40. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROTOCOL

RESOLVED: That the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

(See Record of Decision)

41. PROPERTY ACQUISITION FOR 1,000 AFFORDABLE HOMES PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

1. That the financial returns for the proposed acquisition as shown in Appendix 1, which is part 2 of the report, which support the Housing Development and Regeneration Investment Plan and the overall Development Strategy, are approved;
2. That the site acquisition in line with 2.6 of the report is approved;
3. That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement is granted delegated authority to:
 - 3.1 negotiate terms for the purchase of the proposed acquisition for the sum as referred to in the Part 2 report, subject to the site securing planning consent;
 - 3.2 Procure and enter into all such deeds, agreements, contracts and documents which may be required to facilitate the purchase of the site, and the subsequent redevelopment works required to deliver the scheme referred to in this report. Including (but not limited to) any related appointments such as a suitably qualified Employers Agent and Contractor; and
 - 3.3 Subject to satisfactory conclusion of all due diligence to negotiate and finalise and complete all legal formalities, deeds and agreements which may be required to facilitate the purchase;
4. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services is authorised to appoint the solicitors required to negotiate and complete the necessary contract documentation, deeds and agreements associated with the purchase of the site and the procurement and appointment of contractors and consultants on the terms as agreed by the Director of Finance & Business Improvement; and
5. Post completion of the procurement process a contractor be appointed to bring forward for approval a detailed project delivery and investment plan (prior to the development itself commencing).

(See Record of Decision)

42. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 6.55 p.m.

Executive

26 October 2022

Reference from Council – Motion - Water Quality

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Council	20 July 2022
Executive Meeting	26 October 2022

Wards affected	All
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Executive Summary

At the meeting of the Council held on 20 July 2022, a motion relating to water quality was moved by Councillor Jeffery, seconded by Councillor English. During the debate, the mover and the seconder said that they were willing to accept suggestions that two further paragraphs be added to the motion. At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Jeffery moved that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.9.2, the motion, as amended, be referred directly to the Executive. This proposal was seconded by Councillor English and agreed by the Council.

This reference makes the following recommendation to the Executive:

That the Executive consider the motion, as amended, relating to water quality.

Reference from Council – Motion – Water Quality

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Council held on 20 July 2022, the following motion was moved by Councillor Jeffery, seconded by Councillor English:

Residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharges, which include untreated sewage, into our local rivers and seas and the impacts on wildlife and on human health.

The UK has the dirtiest rivers in Europe. Here in this Borough we have two river systems, the Medway and the Stour. Southern Water reported around 42,000 hours of sewage spills into the Medway and its tributaries in 2020 and the Environment Agency reports show large sections of the river as having poor or bad water quality. River Beult's SSSI categorisation, for instance – one of the few UK examples of a lowland clay river, is consistently in a 'poor' chemical and ecological state (EA data). In addition to the Medway, the Stour rises in Lenham and becomes an important designated wildlife area after flowing through Ashford and Canterbury, yet it too has similarly poor water quality reports.

Releasing sewage into rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe rainstorms, but an everyday occurrence even in 'normal' rainfall events, exacerbated because of new properties adding to the existing drainage infrastructure without modification or upgrading, and that we are in a situation of cumulative overload on the sewerage and wastewater treatment systems.

Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Southern Water or by national government. Both the local (e.g. LPRSP14A) and national planning policy requires a robust approach to both water quality and pollution, and a recent legal opinion from the Environmental Law Firm confirms the need to consider cumulative impacts. Yet planning consultation documents show that it has not been the practice of Council planners to ask Water Companies to report on cumulative impact, i.e. whether or not one or more developments may lead to any potential increase in 'emergency' discharges into rivers through stormwater overflows (CSOs) or because of sewage treatment works' capacity constraints.

This Council resolves to:

1. *Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its streams and rivers, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with its local planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
2. *Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impacts of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewerage overload'.*

3. *Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharges so that this is factored into decisions made in new iterations of the local plan, including the overall level of future development.*
 4. *Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharges including untreated sewage on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents.*
 5. *Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies and local authorities.*
 6. *Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite the Chief Executive of Southern Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of CSO and sewage plant discharge.*
 7. *Ask Southern Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major developments, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewerage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).*
 8. *Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.*
- 1.2 During the debate, the mover and the seconder said that they were willing to accept suggestions that the following paragraphs be added to the motion:
9. Request that water providers, to include South East Water and Southern Water, are consulted regarding the availability of water supply to any new major developments, or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.
 10. Consider the whole issue of surface water and how it is disposed of.
- 1.3 At the conclusion of the debate, in exercising his right of reply, Councillor Jeffery proposed that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.9.2, the motion, as amended, be referred directly to the Executive for consideration. This proposal was seconded by Councillor English and agreed by the Council.
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2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND WHY NOT RECOMMENDED

2.1 Not applicable.

3. REPORT APPENDICES

3.1 A copy of the briefing note which was prepared to assist Members in their consideration of the original motion is attached as Appendix A.

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

4.1 [Minute 37](#) of the meeting of the Council held on 20 July 2022:

Briefing note for full Council 20th July 20

Item 14: Notice of motion – Water Quality

The proposed motion highlights a range of concerns in relation to water quality, including:

- Waste - water discharges into rivers and seas
- Impact on wildlife and on human health
- Reported quantity of sewage spills into the River Medway
- The impact of new development on sewage and wastewater treatment systems
- The cumulative impact of new development and the existing pressures on water courses

The motion then invites full Council to make resolutions in relation to 8 different matters. For ease of reference for Members, these 8 points are set out below together with responses in order to assist members in formulating a view.

It is worth noting at the outset here that whilst the Council will undoubtedly have influence on the issues at the heart of the proposed motion, its direct powers are more focussed around the management of new development rather than existing development (Point 1 below). The Community Protection Team also has certain direct powers around private drainage and misconnections to surface water drainage networks which outflow into water courses, but this is mainly small scale and domestic in nature.

It is the utility providers and regulatory bodies that do have responsibility for water management (Southern Water and Environment Agency)

1. Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its streams and rivers, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with its local planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Council has no powers within either local planning policy or the national planning policy framework to influence the impacts of existing development. However, if the above wording were to specifically reference the impacts of new development, then the Council can seek to influence this as part of local planning policy and development management functions within the context of the national planning policy framework –

Set out below are the relevant aspects of national planning policy and emerging local planning policy that are relevant to water quality.

National planning policy as articulated through the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) sets out the Government's approach to planning policies and planning decisions. Within the document the following paragraphs set out the Government's approach to water management, especially wastewater:

- *Paragraph 20 (b) – Strategic Policies in Local Plans should consider wastewater infrastructure*
- *Paragraph 34 – plans should set out the developer contributions needed for infrastructure, including water management*
- *Paragraph 174(e) – planning policies and decisions should not contribute to pollution, including water pollution, and should improve water quality.*

Within the adopted Maidstone Local Plan 2011-2031 the Council has policies to manage a development's impact on water. These include policies to minimise a development's water pollution impact (Policy DM3 Natural Environment) and improve water efficiency (Policy DM2 Sustainable Design).

In the submitted Local Plan Review the Council has developed policies to manage growth in a way that will try to mitigate its impacts on the rivers and streams. This has been done through the management of pollution impacts and better water efficiency. The relevant proposed policies are listed below:

Maidstone Local Plan Review 2022-2037

- *Policy LPRSP14(a) Natural Environment*
- *Policy LPRSP14(c) Climate Change*
- *Policy LPRQ&D1 Sustainable Design*

In addition to the above, the council works with the utility providers and regulatory bodies that do have responsibility for water management (Southern Water and Environment Agency) to develop the relevant infrastructure projects to support the growth proposed in the Local Plan and Local Plan Review. These are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and are updated annually as part of the monitoring process.

2. Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impacts of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewerage overload'.

Members may well choose to confirm that they recognise the issues described in this point and to request that it is a matter explored with the relevant agencies through the scrutiny process (see point 6 below).

3 Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharges so that this is factored into decisions made in new iterations of the local plan, including the overall level of future development.

The Council has no control over the monitoring of discharges or cumulative impacts thereof and would not be in a position to compile the suggested evidence base.

However, this might also be a matter for the scrutiny process (point 6 below) to explore with the relevant agencies in order to encourage the compilation of the data requested – at which point officers could establish how this might be considered in developing policy.

4. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharges, including untreated sewage, on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents.

5. Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies and local authorities.

Points 4 and 5 are possibly best considered jointly. Undoubtedly, it is appropriate for the Council to seek to better understand the matters at the heart of this motion, albeit with limited direct controls other than in relation to new development. Therefore, one of the most effective mechanisms in seeking to obtain information will be working collaboratively with other local authorities and agencies in order to lobby, obtain information from, and seek to influence the relevant statutory or regulatory bodies.

Point 6 below, refers to the fact that this issue is on the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the benefits of joint working in order to increase the levels of knowledge, understanding and influence around this matter may well be something that members would wish to recommend forms part of that work.

6. **Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite the Chief Executive of Southern Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of CSO and sewage plant discharge.**

This matter has been confirmed as a subject area for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

7. **Ask Southern Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major developments, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewerage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).**

Under Section 106 of the Water Industry Act 1991, land owners enjoy the right to connect up (“communicate”) with the mains drainage system. The quality of the discharge from treatment works is regulated by the Environment Agency so Southern Water regularly have their licenses reviewed with the treatment works being the subject of WINEP (Water Industry Natural Environment programme) five-yearly reviews.

The Development Management function could request information in relation to treatment works etc, but water companies would not be bound to provide this and in the absence of contextual information, it would not be possible to base a recommendation to Committee upon it. The notable exception here are the areas (River Sour Catchment for Maidstone) which are impacted by Natural England Guidance around Nitrate and Phosphate levels, in which planning decisions are necessarily based on detail around how these levels will be managed and kept within the confines of guidance.

8. **Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (ie. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.**

Clearly, some of the points above, not least the inclusion of this topic on the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will assist both Members and Officers in developing their knowledge, and thus their ability to influence this important topic.

It nonetheless remains important that, in presenting reports to Members, Officers are qualified in providing advice or views around the particular impacts of specific actions. Therefore, other than the controls provided within the existing policy framework (see point 1 above) it is unlikely that officers will be in a position in relation to the majority of matters around sewage outflow, and impacts thereof, to provide the detail of information referred to in this point. Moreover, were officers to attempt to do this by way of either a narrative or referencing specific impacts, this could leave decisions based on or influenced by this information open to challenge.

Agenda Item 14

EXECUTIVE MEETING

26 October 2022

Reference from Planning Committee – Review of Increasing Occurrence of Hard Surfacing and the Impact on Drainage

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Planning Committee	21 July 2022
Executive Meeting	26 October 2022

Wards affected	All
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Executive Summary

The Planning Committee have requested that consideration be given to a review of the increasing occurrence of hard surfacing of commercial and residential land (and their impact on drainage) by considering enforcement options and looking at planning policy (in particular looking at design parameters in the proposed Design and Sustainability DPD).

This reference makes the following recommendation to the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure:

That the increasing occurrence of hard surfacing of commercial and residential land (and their impact on drainage) be reviewed by considering enforcement options and planning policy, in particular the proposed Design and Sustainability DPD.

Reference from Planning Committee – Review of Increasing Occurrence of Hard Surfacing and the Impact on Drainage

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

1.1 At its meeting on 21 July 2022, the Planning Committee noted that there appeared to be an increasing occurrence of hard surfacing in the Borough, and it was discussed how this could be addressed.

1.2 An excerpt of the Minutes from the meeting is included below:

'The Committee raised concerns around surface water draining into foul water networks, which caused a strain on the infrastructure and led to a higher risk of flooding and pollution in the Borough. The strength of enforcement actions brought against those who converted soft landscaped areas to impervious hard surfaces was questioned, and it was suggested that this should be referred to the appropriate Committee or Lead Member to investigate further.'

The Head of Planning and Development suggested that it could be considered for incorporation into the Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document (DPD) to enable stronger enforcement action against unapproved hard surfacing.'

2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND WHY NOT RECOMMENDED

Not applicable.

3. REPORT APPENDICES

None.

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 21 July 2022:

https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/primary-services/council-and-democracy/primary-areas/your-councillors?sq_content_src=%2BdXJsPWh0dHBzJTnBJTJGJTJGbWVldGluZ3MubWFpZHN0b25lLmdvdi51ayUyRmRvY3VtZW50cyUyRmc0Nzg1JTJGUHJpbnRIZCUyMG1pbmV0ZXMIMjAyMXN0LUp1bC0yMDIyJTJwMTguMDA1MjBQbGFubmluZyUyMENvbW1pdHRIZS5wZGYIM0ZUJTNE5ZhbGw9MQ%3D%3D

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2022 TO 31 JANUARY 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:

14	 <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.

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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
Proposal for Improvements to King Street Car Park Proposal to improve the visual appearance of King Street Car Park through a new planting scheme.	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	21 Oct 2022	No	No Open	Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee 17 Oct 2022	Proposal for improvements to King Street Car Park	Jennifer Stevens jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk
Statements of Common Ground - Soft Sand and Lower Thames Crossing To sign off two draft Statements of Common Ground. There are between MBC and National Highways, and MBC and various mineral authorities including KCC	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	21 Oct 2022	No	No Part exempt	Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee 17 Oct 2022	Statements of Common Ground - Soft Sand and Lower Thames Crossing	Mark Egerton markegerton@maidstone.gov.uk
Design and Sustainability DPD Issues and Option Reg18a consultation	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	21 Oct 2022	Yes	No Open	Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee 17 Oct 2022	Design and Sustainability DPD Issues and Option	Helen Garnett helengarnett@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Cobtree Café Letting A report on the letting of Cobtree Manor Park Café	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	Leader of the Council	26 Oct 2022	No	No Open		Cobtree Café letting	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk
Cobtree Staff Welfare Facilities A report on the provision of new staff welfare facilities	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	Leader of the Council	26 Oct 2022	No	No Open		Cobtree staff welfare facilities	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk
Archbishop's Palace Update on plans for the Archbishop's Palace	Executive	Lead Member for Corporate Services	26 Oct 2022	Yes	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 12 Oct 2022. Consultation with key stakeholders	Archbishop's Palace	Mark Green markgreen@maidstone.gov.uk
Proposed Change to Maidstone AQMA and Request to Consult on New Air Quality Action Plan As a result of a continuing trend of improvements in air quality in Maidstone in recent years	Executive	Lead Member for Environmental Services	26 Oct 2022	No	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 11 Oct 2022	Maidstone AQMA Modelling. Proposed Change to Maidstone AQMA and Request to Consult on New Air Quality Action Plan	Stuart Maxwell stuart.maxwell@midkent.gov.uk

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Communication and Engagement Strategy updated strategy and in year action plan	Executive	Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement	26 Oct 2022	Yes	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 11 Oct 2022. Informal Cabinet, Wider Leadership Team and CHE PAC	Communication and Engagement Strategy	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk
Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Executive	Leader of the Council	26 Oct 2022	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 12 Oct 2022	Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Paul Holland paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Reference from Council - Motion - Water Quality The reference from Council outlines the previous consideration of the Motion on Water Quality, which is due to be considered by the Executive. 19	Executive		26 Oct 2022	No	No Open	The motion was previously considered by the full Council, and has been referred directly to the Executive in accordance with Part C1, Rule 12.9 of the Borough Council's Constitution.	Reference from Council - Motion - Water Quality	Oliviya Parfitt, Debbie Snook oliviyparfitt@maidstone.gov.uk, debbiesnook@maidstone.gov.uk
Town Centre Strategy - Procurement of Professional Team The aim of this report is to secure agreement to the allocation of funding for a professional team to support the council in the preparation of our Maidstone Town Centre Strategy and authority for the appointment of the preferred supplier.	Executive	Leader of the Council	26 Oct 2022	Yes	No Part exempt	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 4 Oct 2022	Town Centre Strategy - Procurement of Professional Team	Alison Broom alisonbroom@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Carriage Museum options Future options for the Carriage Museum 20	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	18 Nov 2022	Yes	No Open	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2022 Consultation with key stakeholders	Carriage Museum options	Mark Green markgreen@maidstone.gov.uk
Museum Opening Hours Review of Museum Opening Hours	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	18 Nov 2022	No	No Open	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2022 Consultation will take place with staff and Museum visitors	Museum Opening Hours	Mark Green markgreen@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023-24 We are required to review our Council Tax Reduction Scheme on an annual basis and to put a scheme in place by March 2023.</p> <p>21</p>	Executive Council	<p>Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement</p> <p>Lead Member for Corporate Services</p>	<p>23 Nov 2022</p> <p>7 Dec 2022</p>	Yes	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 16 Nov 2022	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023-24	<p>Zoe Kent</p> <p>Interim Head of Revenues & Benefits</p> <p>zoekent@swale.gov.uk</p>
Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Executive	Lead Member for Corporate Services	23 Nov 2022	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 16 Nov 2022	Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	<p>Adrian Lovegrove</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Fleet Replacement Programme Outline of the replacement programme for the Council's fleet over a 5 year cycle in line with the Council's Green Fleet Strategy and the Capital funding budget.	Executive	Lead Member for Environmental Services	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2022	Fleet Replacement Programme	Jennifer Stevens jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk
Granada House Refurbishment Report on the outcome of the tender process and seeking approval to proceed with the works and the necessary financial commitments	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2022 Update to Cabinet/Lead Member prior to PAC Meeting, once procurement process is complete.	Granada House Refurbishment	Andrew Connors Housing Enabling Officer andrewconnors@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>Council Fire & Building Safety Policy</p> <p>The role and expectations on all Council's following the Grenfell tragedy is changing, and so the creation of a new policy to cover work in this area is very important and timely. The report and policy addresses and responds to changing guidance and legislation, as well as provides clarity in terms of best practice in terms of the Council will work to best effect with other authorities through partnership working, to manage risk in the community.</p>	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2022	Council Fire & Building Safety Policy	<p>John Littlemore</p> <p>Head of Housing & Community Services</p> <p>johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Rural England Prosperity Fund, Investment Plan a new fund has been allocated to the council for investment in our rural areas	Executive	Leader of the Council	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Open	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2022 Informal Exec and Key Stakeholders consulted as part of developing the plan	Rural England Prosperity Fund, Investment Plan	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk
Maidstone Leisure Centre To decide the future of Maidstone Leisure Centre	Executive	Lead Member for Leisure and Arts	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Part exempt	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2022 Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2022 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 16 Nov 2022	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Governance and procedural arrangements for CIL Ward spend	Executive	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	23 Nov 2022	No	No Open	Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee 9 Nov 2022	Governance and procedural arrangements for CIL Ward spend	Carole Williams carole.williams@midkent.gov.uk
Cobtree Golf Course A report on Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course 25	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	Leader of the Council	23 Nov 2022	Yes	No Fully exempt		Cobtree golf course	Mike Evans mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023 - 2028 Update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy	Executive	Lead Member for Corporate Services	23 Nov 2022	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 16 Nov 2022	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023 - 2028	Adrian Lovegrove Head of Finance adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk
Heather House and Royal British Legion site A report seeking approval to enter into contract with contractors for proposed works to Heather House and Royal British Legion Buildings.	Executive		21 Dec 2022	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 13 Dec 2022	Heather House and Royal British Legion site	Andrew Connors, Alison Elliott Housing Enabling Officer, andrewconnors@maidstone.gov.uk, alisonelliott@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Housing Strategy 2022-27 The proposed themes for the new housing strategy were approved by the CHE Committee in early 2022, and these have since been subject to public consultation. Therefore the new housing strategy, as drafted, takes account of these consultation responses, and is now ready for consideration for adoption.	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	21 Dec 2022	Yes	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 13 Dec 2022	Housing Strategy 2022-27	John Littlemore Head of Housing & Community Services johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk
Mid Kent Waste Collection Contract Approval to enter into contract with the successful bidder following a competitive dialogue procurement process.	Executive	Lead Member for Environmental Services	21 Dec 2022	Yes	No Part exempt		Mid Kent Waste Collection Contract	Jennifer Stevens jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Equalities Policy and Action Plan - Update Annual Update report - providing an update on actions taken to meet objections, propose any revisions or changes	Lead Member for Corporate Services and Deputy Leader	Lead Member for Corporate Services	23 Dec 2022	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 14 Dec 2022	Equalities Policy and Action Plan - Update	Orla Sweeney orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
Charges for Replacement Wheeled Bins Yes Proposal to introduce charges for the replacement of damaged refuse and recycling wheeled bins, in line with the Mid Kent Waste Partnership.	Executive	Lead Member for Environmental Services	25 Jan 2023	No	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 17 Jan 2023	Charges for Replacement Wheeled Bins	Jennifer Stevens jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk
Strategic CIL Assessments & Spend	Executive	Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure	25 Jan 2023	Yes	No Open	Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee 11 Jan 2023	Strategic CIL Assessments & Spend	Rob Jarman, Carole Williams Head of Planning and Development, Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk, carole.williams@midkent.gov.uk

Agenda Item 18

EXECUTIVE

**26 October
2022**

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	11 October 2022
Executive	26 October 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Director	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance and Julie Maddocks, Communications Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Appendix 1 of this report is the Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2022-25; the Strategy sets out our priorities for and our approach to external communication and engagement. The Strategy is focussed on achieving Pride in Place with communications leading on a project to promote the Borough through events and promotion of the Town Centre over the next three years delivering the UKSPF. The Strategy is also supported by an action plan to deliver Council priorities, the plan is not exhaustive and is regularly updated to reflect the needs and priorities of services.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. That the Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2022-25 and Action Plan for 2022-23, at Appendix 1 be approved.

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-25

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>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the vision and priorities set out in the Strategic Plan.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
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>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the cross-cutting objectives by setting out actions to communicate, inform and engage with key audiences on our priorities.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Risk Management	Communications have a key role to play in managing and mitigating risks through proactive campaigns and responsive media relations.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance

Legal	No specific legal implications are identified. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act local authorities have 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 and the Communications and Engagement Strategy demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty. The Council is required to observe the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity; the Strategy supports this.	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Information Governance	The Communications team process data in accordance with the principles of data protection.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	Safe, Clean and Green is a key priority for the Council, the strategy and action plan contain actions to improve public perception in terms of safety and campaigns to promote safety and the work of the Council's enforcement teams.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Procurement	Any procurement required to enact the Strategy and Action Plan will be completed in line with financial procedure rules.	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	A fundamental element in combating biodiversity loss, mitigating and adapting to the impacts of Climate Change is effective communication and engagement. Flooding, heatwaves, drought and storms are projected to worsen in Maidstone due to climate change and residents and businesses must be informed and able to adapt and build resilience to the worsening impacts. Vulnerable community members will be hardest hit. Rising energy bills, food waste, and petrol cars are costly and polluting, and	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	effective engagement with the public and businesses to raise awareness of small changes and greener alternatives will ultimately save money and go a long way to mitigating and preparing for the impacts of climate change.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategy has been updated to reflect the emphasis on increasing Pride in Place and the proactive role communication and engagement plays in this.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Communications and Engagement Strategy is to ensure there is a consistent approach to delivering key Council messages, protecting and promoting our reputation and establishing a strong and trusted brand.
- 2.3 The strategy sets out that the Council's approach to communication and engagement including which channels we use and how we communicate and engage with local residents, stakeholders and businesses. Effective community engagement is essential to ensure the services the Council delivers are fit for the communities it serves. At other times the Council voluntarily and actively seeks out the views of the community to ensure that it is delivering high-quality, cost-effective services which meet the needs of our communities. An example of this is the Residents Survey which helps the Council to understand the needs of everyone across the borough and shape decisions and services required moving forward.
- 2.4 The Action Plan for 2022-23 sets out key campaigns and actions the Communications Team will be undertaking over this year to deliver the strategy and the council's priorities. The action plan does not contain every action and campaign undertaken by the team; for example, the internal communication activities, Borough Insight or activities to support the Mayor and civic events. Included in the plan are the strategic actions for each of our priorities. The action plan is a living document developed with the Executive and the Wider Leadership Team; as new projects are identified by services requiring communications support or delivery these will be added. Key activities for the team this year include delivering the Pride in Place project submitted as part of the Local Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This includes a creative communities grant for local voluntary and community groups to bid for funding to deliver events, funding for a Christmas event and promotion of events and activities in our Town Centre.
- 2.5 The team have responsibility for all internal and external messaging including through digital channels, social media platforms and working with the media. Core work for communications includes creating press releases and media statements to inform the public about initiatives and campaigns, branding, design and print for all signs, campaigns, events and Council initiatives as well as digital communications including video production. The

team actively seek opportunities to engage with the media to share messages about the Council's services, achievements and events.

2.6 Over the past year the team have:

- Issued 166 Press Releases
- Responded to 501 press enquires

This has led to

- 5,360 published articles
- Reach of 494 million

Across social media channels we have achieved:

- 27,931 followers
- 4,321,787 impressions
- 202,858 engagements

2.7 The Action Plan for this year focusses on the Council's priorities with activities and campaigns to support Thriving Place, Safe, Clean and Green, Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure and Homes and Communities. The strategy and plan focusses on sharing positive stories and a positive image of the Borough to promote pride in place whilst supporting the Council's core work and services.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Do not approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. This would mean the new activities and actions to support our priorities are not captured and we miss an opportunity to clarify the teams work aligned to the Council's priorities. This option is not recommended.
- 3.2 Make recommendations to amend the strategy and action plan as it deems appropriate for example requesting additional actions.
- 3.3 Agree the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan, to ensure we have an up-to-date strategy and appropriate action plan to support our Strategic Priorities. This is recommended.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 3.3 is recommended to ensure the Council has an up-to-date strategy and action plan for communication and engagement activity. The action plan has been developed with the Executive and Leadership Team to support the delivery of the Council's four strategic priorities within service budgets.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy seeks to minimise and manage risks in relation to the council's reputation. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out how we will communicate the council's priorities and strategic narrative which were heavily consulted on during 2018-19 as the new Strategic Plan was developed and then again when the plan was updated in 2020. The strategy includes an action plan setting out key campaigns to engage, communicate and consult with the public and key stakeholders across a range of services.
- 6.2 This issue was considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee on 11 October 2022 and the recommendation of the report was supported.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following approval, the Strategy will be made available on the Council's website and the actions will be implemented.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025 and Action Plan 2022-23
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Maidstone Borough Council

DRAFT Communications and Engagement Strategy

2022 - 2025

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For more information contact the MBC Communications Team

☎ 01622 602660 @ communications@maidstone.gov.uk

Author: Julie Maddocks, Communications Manager - August 2022





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Introduction

The MBC Communications and Engagement Strategy is driven by our Strategic Plan which sets out the Council's long-term aspirations for the whole borough and how they will be achieved.

At the centre of the Strategic Plan is a vision to make Maidstone a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential.





Purpose of the Strategy

The aims and objectives of the Communications and Engagement Strategy are to support the delivery of the MBC Strategic Plan by ensuring that all campaigns and projects are aligned to and support the narrative of the four priorities.

We deliver an excellent service internally and externally to demonstrate and promote the effectiveness of the Council, helping to build a good reputation and promote a positive perception of who we are and what we do.

Communications Priorities

The Communications team promotes, protects and upholds the Council's reputation as an effective, efficient and innovative organisation. We support the delivery of the Strategic Plan through working with Members, Services, Residents and other key Stakeholders delivering timely and effective campaigns, messages and events which promote and deliver the Council's Priorities. The Action plan for 2022-23 sets out the communications priorities highlighted below are key areas of activity.

Thriving Place

We will coordinate and facilitate engagement events (both internally and externally) to help create pride of place across the borough, this includes the delivery of the pride in place project funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Homes and Communities

We will increase the opportunities for people to engage with the Council on issues and services that affect them by developing existing and new channels of communication. We will deliver campaigns that support our goals to prevent homelessness and provide affordable homes for our residents

Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure

We will continue to support the Local Plan Review including making sure public facing documents are accessible and promoting engagement opportunities. We will promote our regeneration projects and our open for business approach.

Safe, Clean and Green

We will deliver communications support to achieve our ambitions for climate change and biodiversity through engaging and informing residents and businesses. We will deliver communication support as part of the Safer Streets Fund to promote Maidstone borough as a place where people feel safe and are safe.





Importance of Communications

It has never been more important for councils to communicate effectively with residents, media, partners and employees.

Whether it's to encourage greater self-service or to promote understanding of local priorities, effective communication has the power to engage communities, challenge misconception and help your council achieve its objectives.

Local Government Association

Through effective messaging, communications and engagement, we will support and deliver the four priorities contained within the Strategic Plan; A Thriving Place, Homes and Communities, Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure and Safe, Clean and Green.

It is vital that we communicate effectively with all our stakeholders, including residents, communities, businesses, charities and other public sector services. Good communications not only builds relationships but also maintains them. It helps provide clarity, accountability and reduce conflict.

Many residents, organisations, businesses and stakeholders interact with the Council regularly. During the pandemic we strengthened our relationship with the community and voluntary sector, we will continue to invest resource in maintaining those relationships and engaging with our residents.

There are a wide range of channels and techniques that the Communications Team use to tailor our messages, promotional material and publications to ensure we reach the right audiences.

With ever changing technology and information sharing communications needs to continuously evolve and improve the way messages are shared whilst promoting the work of the Council. This strategy aims to provide a consistent approach in delivering key messages from Maidstone Borough Council, protecting and promoting its reputation, establishing a strong identifiable brand and ensuring we have a borough that works for everyone.

Importance of Engagement

Effective community engagement is essential to ensure the services the Council delivers are fit for the communities it serves. At other times the Council voluntarily and actively seeks out the views of the community to ensure that it is delivering a high quality, cost effective services which meet the needs of our communities. An example of this is the Residents Survey which helps the Council to understand the needs of everyone across the borough and shape decisions and services required moving forward.

Events also play a large part in community engagement and MBC is committed to delivering and facilitating a wide range of events across the borough. It works closely with partner organisations to explore new ways of engaging with our communities. We value our partnerships, particularly with community and voluntary groups, as well as statutory/public sector partners and working with elected Members to promote the work of the Council.

One of the main focusses of our engagement will be to restore Pride in Place for the Maidstone Town Centre; according to High Street Renaissance research – 69% of people think culture on their high street makes their area a better place to live.

By developing our engagement we will help:

- Create civic pride
- Attract footfall to the high street and town centre and generate spend in our Borough
- Involve our residents in shaping and informing decisions and services





Who We Are and What We Do

The Communications Team is responsible for producing and delivering all internal and external messaging this includes via digital channels, social media platforms as well as working with the media. We also proactively create campaigns, marketing, branding and design for all our services.

We work to protect and enhance the trusted name of Maidstone Borough Council as well as the reputation of borough itself. By targeting the right audiences the Communications team support services to achieve better outcomes for the borough through promotion, raising awareness, changing perceptions and behaviour. We also help to identify, prevent and mitigate risks before they become a crisis during critical incidences.

The Communications Team is responsible for producing the MBC residential magazine – Borough Insight which is produced twice a year, (Spring and Autumn), reflecting, promoting and reporting on key issues, services and campaigns delivered, supported or led by the Council. A community focussed publication, the magazine is printed and delivered to 82,000 residential properties across the borough.

As well as reaching out externally we recognise the importance of internal communications. The Communications Team works on internal campaigns throughout the year promoting our priorities, key messages and initiatives such as health and wellbeing.

Channels of Communication

Press and Media Engagement

Press releases form the initial communications tool to provide accurate and timely information which is shared across a variety of channels; including direct contact with the media, locally, regional, nationally and internationally; social media, digital and internal comms.

From August 2021 to July 2022

- Number of press releases issued: 166
- Number of press enquires answered by communications: 501

We have also recently introduced GovDelivery – ‘Stay Connected’ digital newsletters which cover a variety of subjects including events, what’s on, business, environment, waste and recycling.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels between August 2021 - July 2022:

- Followers: 27,931
- Impressions: 4,321,787
- Engagements: 202,858

Branding, Design and Print

The Communications Team is responsible for ensuring that the Council’s corporate identity is used consistently throughout the organisation in all messaging and design work. A strong brand inspires confidence and positivity, which is why consistency is needed and a corporate identity style guide has been developed which is adhered to throughout our publications and literature.

42 Digital Communications

Communications is responsible for all of the Council’s social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

All of these are used to share information, create messaging, promote the work of the Council, and encourage engagement with our residents and businesses.

The followers and engagement has grown year on year and continues to do so.





How We Measure Success

The Communications Team delivers messages which reflect the strategic plan; to help achieve this they work to an action plan which outlines the four priorities, meet with each service area across the Council to help deliver messages around their work and review the plan on a monthly basis to ensure that messages are delivered in a timely manner. This helps to achieve the aims and deliver the outcomes of the Communications Strategy. PR campaigns created by the MBC team are driven by the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategic Plan.

We monitor daily, articles about Maidstone Borough Council across all media platforms and undertake sentiment analysis, the value of the coverage and the reach. We work with services to identify their desired outputs and outcomes and structure communications plans to meet this need. Assessing following the project whether these have been achieved.

Through using the Onclusive Media monitoring we can see accurate analytics:

31 July 2021 to 1 August 2022:

- Volume of articles published: 5,360
- Total average Advertising Value Equivalent - £14.5m
- Reach – opportunities to see: 494million people
 - Press: 29 million
 - Web: 312 million
 - Broadcast: 153 million

Maidstone Borough Council

DRAFT Communications Action Plan

2022 – 2023

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For more information contact the MBC Communications Team

☎ 01622 602660 @ communications@maidstone.gov.uk

Author: Julie Maddocks, Communications Manager - July 2022





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Communications Action Plan 2022 – 2023

The team works in line with a communications and engagement calendar which is populated and updated on a monthly basis reflecting services, projects and campaigns with both internal and external partners and stakeholders.

We work in partnership to produce, facilitate and run campaigns and projects highlighting what the Council does and how it works supporting residents and businesses to be a safe place to work and live.

Part of the role of the Communications Team is to help raise awareness and engagement of these campaigns using a variety of channels to deliver appropriate messages.

Focusing on the four MBC priorities under Thriving Place we also promote Maidstone as the Business Capital of Kent to inform and engage with investors, residents, businesses and stakeholders.



Priority - A Thriving Place

Maidstone is a borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and is an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents.

Maidstone is the Business Capital of Kent; we will continue to grow our local economy with high employment, good local jobs and thriving local businesses.

We want our town and village centres to thrive and be fit for the future. We will lead investment in the County town and rural service centres through our regeneration projects and working with partners.

We are proud of our heritage and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer.



MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

PRIORITY AREA	Key campaign messages	Audience and outcomes
A THRIVING PLACE		
UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Communities and Engagement	<p>The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government’s Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.</p> <p>MBC will be using the funding (£1.2m) over three years to restore and build Pride of Place in Maidstone Town Centre.</p> <p>This would include community engagement, marketing material, creative community grants to support and promoting all events and activities taking place. The Council would also establish MBC led flagship annual events - spring, autumn and winter – suggestions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">24 Nov 2022 – Magic of Christmas in Maidstone (working in conjunction with One Maidstone)Harvest Food & Drink Festival – Oct 2023 <p>Creative Communities Grants:</p> <p>In addition, as part of the UKSPF, the Council is inviting people to apply for Creative Community Grants; this will include individual artists and creatives, community groups and cultural organisations.</p> <p>The grant funding will help support events and activities that encourage arts engagement and community cohesion in the borough of Maidstone.</p>	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the work being carried out by Maidstone Borough Council and partners to introduce enforcement through our services areas work. To recognise the contribution of our resident’s contribution to our borough.</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety reflected Raise awareness of joint schemes between the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

47	Maidstone – The Business Capital of Kent - Economic Development	<p>To support and promote Maidstone as the Business Capital of Kent including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Networking events – at the MBC Business Terrace • Produce and publish a monthly Business Newsletter • To produce business led communications • To support and promote the work of the Maidstone Innovation Centre 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of Maidstone as the Business Capital of Kent and raise the profile of the Business Terrace and Innovation Centre</p> <p>Aims: To raise number of tenants to the Business Terrace and Innovation Centre and to encourage new businesses locate in Maidstone</p>
	Compassionate City – Communities and Engagement	<p>To promote and launch the annual Compassionate Community Awards working with Heart of Kent Hospice (HoKH).</p> <p>Supporting HoKH to promote and launch Maidstone Compassionate City – spring 2023</p>	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To establish Maidstone as a Compassionate City</p> <p>Aims: To work with communities to encourage engagement and introduce Maidstone as a Compassionate City</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Visit Maidstone - Economic Development	<p>To support and promote the visitor economy across the borough working with the MBC tourism led team – Visit Maidstone to encourage and increase visitor numbers to the attractions across the borough. This would help improve the economic picture for the entertainment, leisure and hospitality industry in and around Maidstone.</p> <p>The communications team will help promote and facilitate a variety of things including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events • Things to do in Maidstone • Visitor Information • Venues • What's On • Shopping • Food and drink 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Raise and improve the awareness of Maidstone as a place to visit, shop and stay</p> <p>Aims: Establish Maidstone as a first class visitor destination and to increase footfall, economic spend and visitor numbers to the borough</p>
Lockmeadow - Economic Development	<p>To support and promote the Lockmeadow entertainment complex marketing and promotional events.</p> <p>MBC owns the Lockmeadow building and works closely with all the tenants to support their work.</p> <p>The Council is also responsible for a variety of events which they schedule throughout the year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone River Festival entertainment stage • Producers Market – monthly • Maidstory (with One Maidstone) • Monthly charity Quiz- ongoing • Music on Terrace – Monthly • Santa's big post box – annually Nov/Dec • Riverside illuminated walk - ongoing 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the work being carried out by Maidstone Borough Council and partners to introduce enforcement through our services areas work</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety reflected Raise awareness of joint schemes between the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Town Centre Planning - Planning, Policy and Environment	<p>Working with the Planning, Policy and Environment team we support and promote Maidstone as the County Town highlighting the changes and improvement work planned to help restore trust, a feeling of safety and pride in the town centre including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business and investment opportunities• Town Centre Task Force• Reinvigorating the town• Five Opportunity Sites• Sustainability and Growth• Public Consultation	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To restore trust in Maidstone as a town centre for residents, visitors and businesses</p> <p>Aims: An increase in visitor numbers and businesses locating in the town centre. Promote improvement projects in and around the town centre and raise awareness of joint schemes between MBC and partner organisations</p>
Residents Survey - Communities and Engagement	<p>To promote and support the annual MBC Residents Survey including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public engagement events• Social media• Digital Marketing• Press Releases	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To understand what people think of Maidstone; their concerns, needs and the way people live and work across the borough</p> <p>Aims: An improved understanding of what our residents like, dislike, want and don't want in Maidstone. How they would like it to develop and improve</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

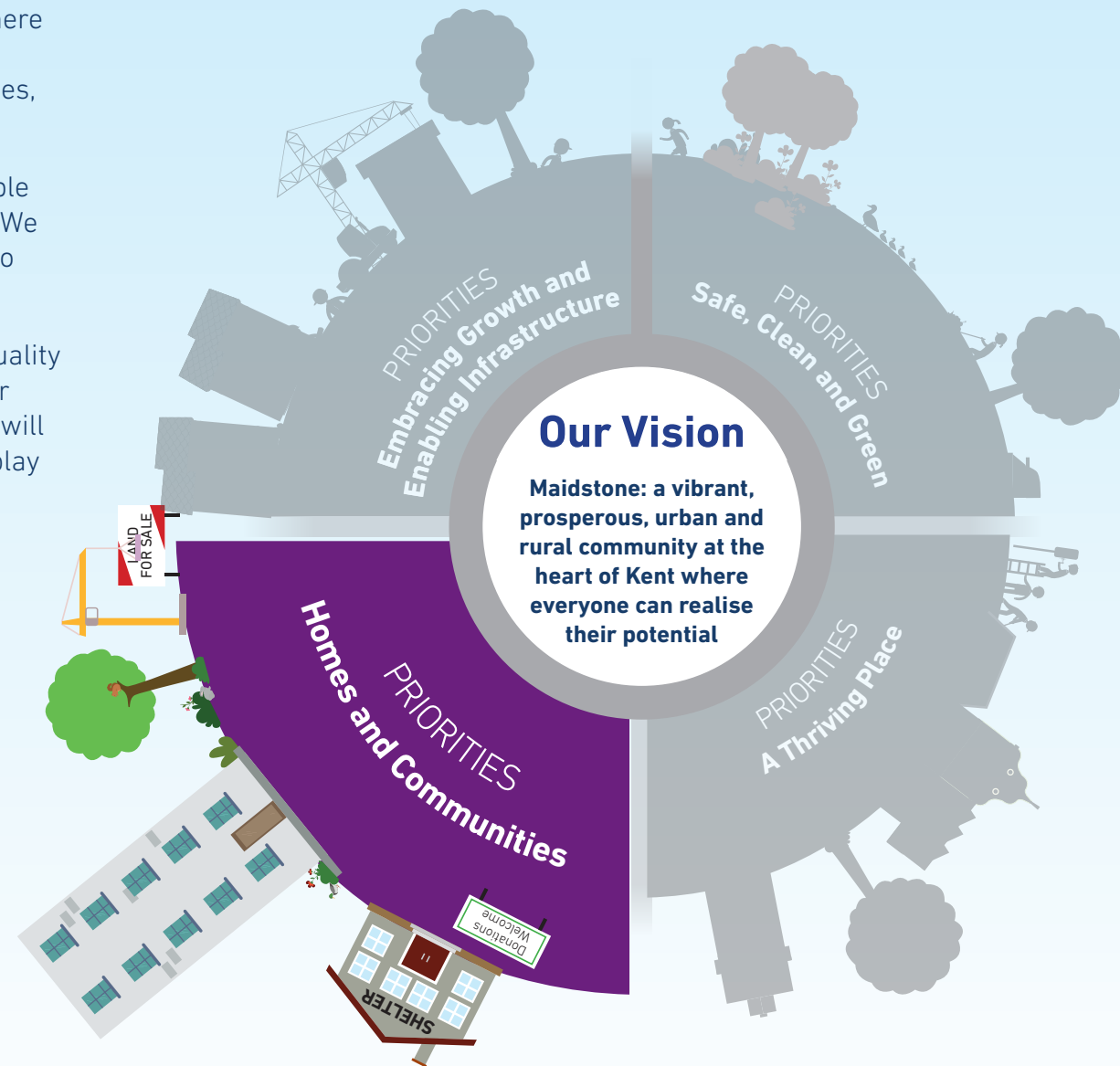
Maidstone Museum – Economic Development	<p>To promote and support Maidstone Museum exhibition and events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibitions• School visits• Meeting venue• Holiday activities for children• Schools virtual learning workshops• Father Christmas & festive producers market	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise the profile of Maidstone Museum by promoting events, exhibitions and encourage local people and visitors to use the facilities of the Museum and highlight the way that it supports the town centre community</p> <p>Aims: Increased visitor numbers to the Museum; improve dwell time, increase number of events planned and held as a meeting venue and improve sales to ticketed events and in the Museum shop</p>
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Priority - Homes and Communities

We want to have a place that people love and where they can afford to live. This means ensuring that there is a good balance of different types of homes, including affordable housing.

We will have safe and desirable homes that enable good health and wellbeing for our communities. We will address homelessness and rough sleeping to move people into settled accommodation.

We will work with our partners to improve the quality of community services and facilities including for health care and community activities. Residents will be encouraged and supported to volunteer and play a full part in their communities.



MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

HOMES AND COMMUNITIES		
1,000 Affordable Homes – Planning and Development	<p>To promote and support MBC’s commitment to acquiring an additional 1,000 houses for Local People on affordable terms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of work that is being carried out to achieve the commitment through press releases, social media and digital communications 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To enable and support MBC in reaching its commitment to acquiring 1,000 affordable homes in the borough</p> <p>Aims: To promote and establish Maidstone as a place for people to move to, live and buy a home</p>
MBC Engagement Events – Economic Development	<p>To support and promote engagement events taking place across the borough including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks and Open Spaces Town Centre Jubilee Square Maidstone Museum Lockmeadow Maidstone Leisure Centre Trinity Community Hub 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Raise awareness of events and increase community engagement across the borough</p> <p>Aims: To promote all that is happening in Maidstone to improve a feeling pride of place and increase visitor numbers, dwell time and tourism economy</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Help for Ukraine – Communities and Engagement	<p>To help and support Help and Homes for Ukraine across Maidstone borough including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community events for refugees and host families• Produce and provide information/literature• Provide information regarding housing, health and community facilities• Support – refugees and host families• Promote monetary payments	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To support host families and refugees from Ukraine providing them with a sense of place and reassurance in the borough of Maidstone</p> <p>Aims: To inform and reassure both host families and refugees of MBC services and community support that is available to them</p>
Energy Efficiency Support – Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Communities and Engagement	<p>To promote and support energy efficiency support and the work MBC services are providing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exceptional hardship payments; social housing payments• Debt advice and support• Housing Benefit• Universal credit customers• Council Tax Arrears funding – ongoing• Financial Inclusion – ongoing• Winter Fuel Allowance• Winter hardship payments	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To provide reassuring messages for residents and businesses outlining what is available to them through the work of the MBC energy efficiency support services</p> <p>Aims: To increase reassurance and provide information to refugees and host families to the support available to them</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Housing – Housing and Inclusion	<p>To promote and support the work of the MBC Housing Team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homefinder – Landlord promotion• Helping You Home• Trinity Community Hub• Annual Homeless Count• Outreach Team• Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To raise awareness of the work of the MBC Housing services</p> <p>Aims: To inform and engage with those that need help and support from the MGC Housing Teams</p>
Democratic and Electoral Services	<p>Support and promote the work of the Democratic and Electoral Services Team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Canvass• Electoral Register• MBC Committee Meetings• Local, PCC, Parish and General Elections• Candidate Nomination process• Registering for postal vote	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Highlighting and raising awareness of the MBC Democratic and Electoral Services Team</p> <p>Aims: To increase awareness and the community engagement and improve number of people casting their votes at elections</p>

Policy & Resources

To promote and support the work of the MBC Policy & Resources Team including Public Consultations:

- Residents Survey
- Community Resilience Fund
- Public engagement events
- Local Plan Review
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Leisure Facilities

Audiences:

Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone

Outcomes:

To encourage public engagement in all the consultations and events that MBC facilitate

Aims:

To improve awareness and increase engagement with residents and businesses

Priority - Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure

We want Maidstone Borough Council to work for the people who live, visit and work; now and in the future.

We want a borough where there is a variety of jobs, housing needs are met and infrastructure is in place to meet the growing needs of our residents and economy.

We also want to ensure we lead and shape our place as it grows, including leading master planning and investing to bring about high quality housing and jobs in the borough.



MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

EMBRACING GROWTH AND ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE		
Local Plan Review – Planning, Policy and Environment	<p>To promote and publicise the Maidstone Local Plan Review (LPR) to report on the process and inform the public of where they can access information on the progress of the review.</p> <p>The communications team supports the LPR by reporting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing information on each stage of the process• Inform the public on the LPR outcomes• Each consultation stage• How the process works	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Increase awareness of the requirements of a Local Plan Review and highlight the process behind it</p> <p>Aims: To engage with all residents, businesses and stakeholders to promote the process of the Maidstone Local Plan Review and improve understanding of the legal requirement</p>
Trinity Community Hub - Housing and Inclusion	<p>Supporting communications and promoting the re-opening of Trinity House ad a Community Hub in the centre of Maidstone comms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public and stakeholder engagement event• Official opening of Community Hub• Trinity Venue Hire• Community engagement events• The work of the MBC Outreach and Housing Teams• Partner organisations working with MBC teams	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of Trinity and the role it plays as a Community Hub in the town centre</p> <p>Aims: Provide an understanding and reassurance to residents, the local community and stakeholders of the role of Trinity Community Hub and increase awareness of the important role it will have</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

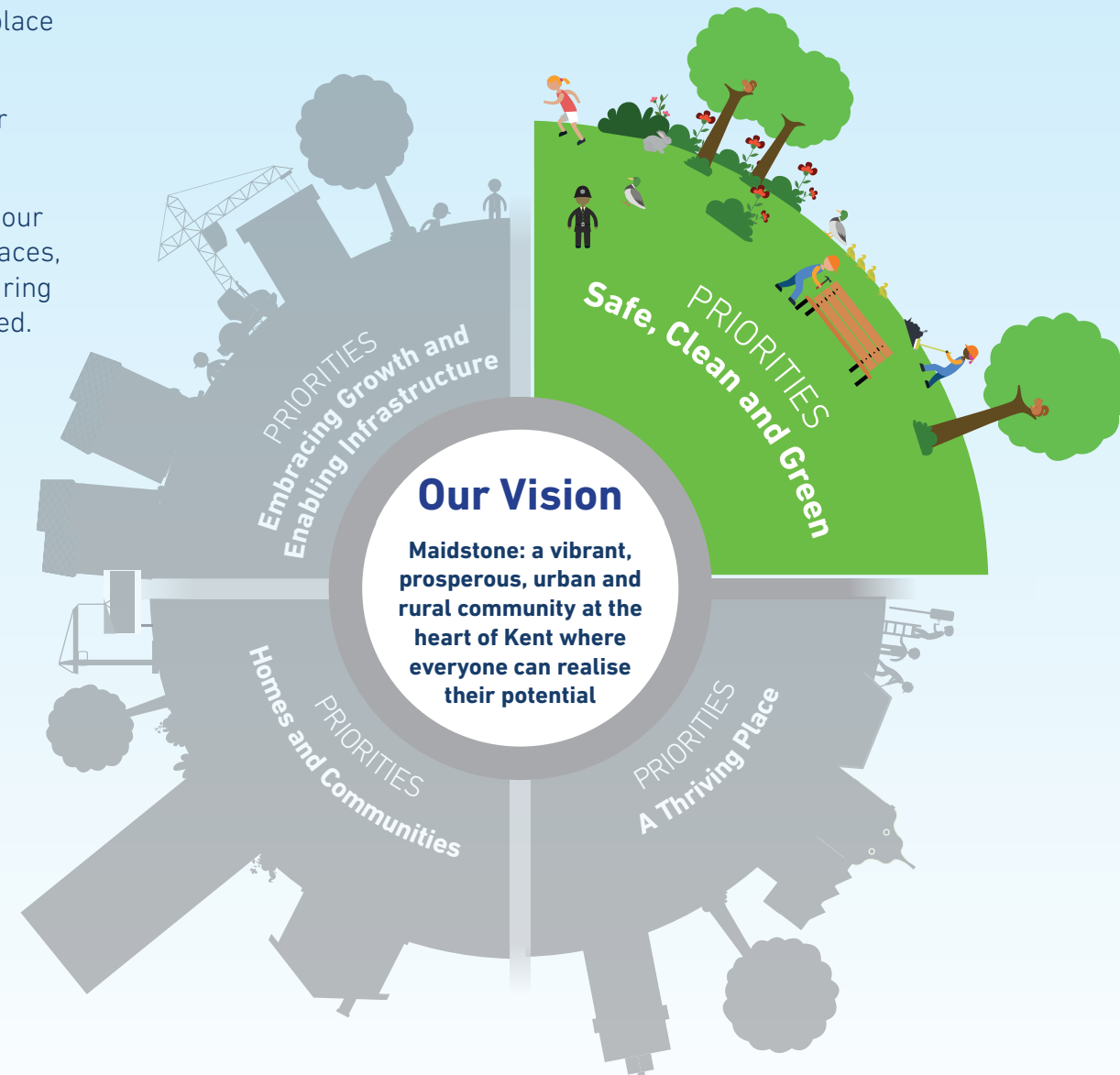
Maidstone Innovation Centre - Economic Development and Regeneration	<p>To support and promote the Maidstone Innovation Centre as the Med-Tech industry business centre including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tenants business profile• Business and office space available• Meeting venue hire	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To improve and raise awareness of the Maidstone Innovation Centre and the role it plays in the community</p> <p>Aims: Increase the number of tenants at the MIC and encourage usage of the conference room and venue hire</p>
LOC8 – Economic Development and Regeneration	<p>To promote and support the construction and opening of LOC8 - the new business development park situated just off junction 8 of the M20 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate official opening event• Promote and work with partner organisations	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To introduce LOC8 as a new facility for residents, businesses and stakeholders to use in the borough</p> <p>Aims: To help establish LOC8 as a Maidstone’s premiere commercial park</p>

Priority - Safe, Clean and Green

We will keep Maidstone an attractive and clean place for all.

Maidstone is a safe place to live and we want our residents to feel safe.

We want to protect and where possible enhance our environment and make sure our parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are high quality by ensuring they are looked after, well managed and respected.



MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

SAFE CLEAN AND GREEN		
Enforcement – Community Protection, Waste Crime, Housing and Inclusion	<p>Town Centre Task Force launch summer 2022- joint operation with Maidstone Borough Council Community Protection Team Kent Police and partners organisations.</p> <p>Place Based Enforcement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Enforcement • Community Protection • Waste Crime • Housing & Homelessness - • Animal welfare • Antisocial Behaviour Awareness 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the work being carried out by Maidstone Borough Council and partners to introduce enforcement through our services areas work</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety reflected Raise awareness of joint schemes between the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>
Safer Streets – Community Protection	<p>Maidstone has received £565,877 funding which has been secured by the Police & Crime Commissioner (Matthew Scott). This is to provide safety improvements around the town centre and Brenchley Gardens district. This will include more outreach workers, self-defence classes for women and an expansion of the Best Bar None scheme for licensed premises, which promotes good practice and improved customer safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBC will be working with: Kent PCC's Office • Kent Police • Kent County Council • Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust 	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the work being carried out by Maidstone Borough Council and partners to introduce enforcement through our services areas work</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety reflected Raise awareness of joint schemes between the community protection team, Police and any other third-party agencies</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Community Protection	<p>Promoting the work of the MBC Community Protection Team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maidstone Town Centre Task Force• Rural Task Force (based in Marden)• Safer Streets• Safety Advisory Group	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: To help the people of Maidstone to understand the work of the Community Protection Team and feel safer in the town and across the borough</p> <p>Aims: An improved sense of safety across the borough To raise awareness of the work of the Community Protection Team and improve their understanding of how they are helping the residents, businesses and third party partner organisations in the borough</p>
Environmental Services - Environmental Health	<p>Promoting the work of the Environmental Services Team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean Air for Schools• Improve air quality• Improve health and wellbeing• Improving environmental health• Anti-idling outside schools campaign	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve air quality• Improve health and wellbeing• Improving environmental health• Improving air quality across the borough of Maidstone• Improving the health of our children <p>Aims: Anti-idling - Clean Air for Schools campaign – to raise awareness for drivers to switch off engines outside schools. To improve air quality, health and wellbeing for residents of Maidstone</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Environmental Waste Team	<p>To promote and support the Waste & Recycling Team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waste collections services across Maidstone• Recycling advice and information<ul style="list-style-type: none">– including waste collections and services• Volunteer Opportunities – Litter Picking	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To improve awareness of service• Improve recycling in the borough• Encourage people to improve their recycling and waste habits <p>Aims: To raise awareness and continue to inform residents and businesses of the work of the Environmental Waste Team and services they provide</p>
Flood protection - Environmental Health, Communities and Engagement	<p>Flood preparation –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raising Awareness of flooding – town centre and surrounding areas• Call for Flood Wardens• Informing of danger of potential floods• Sign up for flood alerts	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the awareness of flooding and the dangers• Increase number of flood wardens across the borough <p>Aims: To keep our residents and businesses out the danger of floods, inform them of when flooding is expected and update them of the changing weather situation. To encourage people to sign-up to become Flood Wardens and for flood alerts</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Waste Crime Services	<p>To promote the work of the MBC Waste Crime Services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• #CleanUpMaidstone campaign• Community Projects including fly-tipping• Vehicle seizure joint operations with Kent Police	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Improved awareness of the work being carried out by Maidstone Borough Council and partners to introduce the Waste Crime Team</p> <p>Aims: An improved awareness of what the MBC Waste Crime Services carry out and promote the work that they do</p>
Parks and Open Spaces - Grounds & Open Spaces	<p>To promote Maidstone’s Parks & Open Spaces including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Love Parks Week• Green Flag Awards• Mote Park Café and visitor centre opening• Safety in Parks• Cobtree Manor Park Golf Club House• Events being held in the parks across the borough	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders - everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: An improved awareness for residents and visitors of the parks and open spaces that are available across the borough of Maidstone</p> <p>Aims: An increase in numbers of visitors to the parks and open spaces across the borough and more events in those areas</p>

MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN – July 2022 – June 2023

Mote Park Café and Visitor Centre - Economic Development, Parks and Open Spaces	<p>Working with the contractor - BBS Construction to promote the work being carried out on the new café and visitor centre in Mote Park including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New café leaseholder• Opening event• Venue availability• Facility Hire and use of the café for community groups	<p>Audiences: Residents, businesses, partner organisations, visitors to Maidstone, trade press stakeholders – everyone</p> <p>Outcomes: Promote the new facilities in Mote Park for residents, visitors and community groups</p> <p>Aims: An increase in number of users to the Mote Park Café and visitor centre and to encourage more community groups to use the facilities</p>
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Agenda Item 19

EXECUTIVE

26 October 2022

ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE – EXCLUSIVITY AGREEMENT

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	12 October 2022
Executive	26 October 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Deborah Turner, Corporate Property
Classification	Public
Wards affected	High Street, Fant

Executive Summary

The Archbishop's Palace is due to be returned to the Council's possession in early 2023. The Policy and Resources Committee agreed at its meeting on 23 March 2022 to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with Balfour Hospitality to develop detailed plans for the Palace. Extensive work has already been undertaken by Balfour Hospitality and an extension of the Exclusivity Agreement is required to enable this work to be completed.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. That the Exclusivity Agreement with Balfour Hospitality is extended for a further three months, and
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement to agree two further three-month extensions if required and in consultation with the Lead Member for Corporate Services.

Archbishop's Palace – Exclusivity Agreement

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p><i>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</i> <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i> <i>Homes and Communities</i> <i>A Thriving Place</i> <p>The project described in this report supports the Council's Strategic Plan objectives, most notably A Thriving Place.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p><i>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Heritage is Respected</i> <i>Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</i> <i>Deprivation is reduced and Social Mobility is Improved</i> <i>Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</i> <p>The report recommendations support the achievements of the cross-cutting objectives by respecting the heritage of the existing building with sensitive design and addressing environmental sustainability by upgrade works to improve the use and condition of the building.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Financial	Once a detailed financial proposal has been submitted by the preferred bidder, the financial	Director of Finance, Resources &

	impact of that scheme can be fully considered. The running costs of the building are currently £250k per annum which are at present paid for by the tenant.	Business Improvement
Staffing	We may need access to extra external expertise to deliver the recommendations.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in local authority legislation (including the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011) and the Council's Constitution.	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Equalities	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
Public Health	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Crime and Disorder	No implications.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Procurement	The Council followed a procurement exercise in order to obtain Expressions of Interest, leading to the offer of an Exclusivity Agreement to the preferred bidder.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Implications include, new or change of use of buildings must integrate with MBC's Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and Net Zero 2030 commitment.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	MBC is currently initiating a decarbonisation study that will include the Archbishop's Palace and Gate House, and seek decarbonised heating systems, insulation and renewable energy options to meet MBC's Net Zero commitment – any new use/lease of the Archbishop's Palace would need to comply with recommendations made by this study.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

2.1 The Archbishop's Palace is currently let to Kent County Council (KCC) for use as a Registry Office and Coroners Court. The lease to KCC expired on 31st October 2020 but KCC have held over under the existing lease and remain in occupation. The intention is for KCC to vacate the building early in 2023, at which point responsibility for the property will pass back to Maidstone Borough Council.

2.2 Recognising that the Palace is a landmark building of unique significance for the borough and the town of Maidstone, extensive work has been carried out to consider future uses of the building. Initially, a feasibility report was commissioned from architects Simon Innes Associates, with a brief to identify potential uses that would deliver the following objectives:

- Respect the historic fabric of the building
- Bring the building promptly back into active use
- Any proposed use should be economically viable
- Develop linkages to the property with the surrounding area, particularly the River Medway, Lockmeadow and the Town Centre

The last point recognised the key role of the Palace in a potential Heritage Quarter, bordering the rivers Medway and Len, and including All Saints Church and the Archbishop's Tithe Barn and Stables (now the Carriage Museum).

2.3 The feasibility report from Simon Innes Associates was presented to the former Policy & Resources Committee in July 2021. It identified four possible uses for the Palace and provided a brief commentary on the viability of those uses, the uses being:

1. Co-Working and/or Serviced Offices
2. Training and Seminar Centre
3. Wedding and Seminar Venue
4. Boutique Hotel.

The Committee proposed a further two potential uses, ie:

- 5. Commercial Mixed Use
- 6. Mixed Use Culture and Weddings.

- 2.4 The Committee agreed a programme for taking forward these ideas, including a public consultation exercise held in Autumn 2021. The public consultation drew over 2,000 responses. Details were reported to the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20th October 2021. The top three options were a wedding and seminar venue, mixed use culture and weddings, and a boutique hotel.
- 2.5 Expression of Interest (EOI) were invited, asked potential partners to explain their proposed use of the Palace and their reasons for why that option should be considered, their source of funding, their previous experience of heritage properties, evidence of similar projects/case studies, proposed timescales, methodologies and any proposed partnership arrangements. The invitation highlighted the results of the public consultation and residents' top priorities, and stated that proposals that reflected residents' preferred options would be favourably considered.
- 2.6 An open tendering process was conducted in order to test the market as fully as possible. The opportunity was advertised via Kent Business Portal and the Contracts Finder website. Wide publicity was given to the opportunity and there has been direct engagement with businesses in Kent and elsewhere that were considered likely to be interested.
- 2.7 Submissions made in response to the tendering process were considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2022. It was agreed to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with Balfour Hospitality, to enable them to carry out detailed work and develop a proposal for future use of the Palace.
- 2.8 Balfour Hospitality is a group of businesses including hotels, restaurants and the Hush Heath Winery. The bid proposed a luxury boutique hotel based within the Palace grounds together with restaurant, conference, wedding and training facilities. The hotel was envisaged as the focus for the development of wine tourism in Kent. Hush Heath forms part of a partnership of eight wineries in Kent, all of which would benefit from the development of tourism, in the same way as happens in the Champagne region of France, Napa Valley in California and Margaret River in Australia. Balfour Hospitality sees the town of Maidstone as the ideal location for such a hotel, being the county town of Kent, as well as being within easy reach of London.
- 2.9 Balfour Hospitality would provide public access to the Archbishop's Palace, in the same way as the Hush Heath Estate, which is open every day of the year except Christmas Day. In conjunction with the hotel, the Palace would be a venue for training in wine and hospitality.

Work carried out to date

- 2.10 Balfour Hospitality have carried out extensive work to develop their proposals, comprising ground investigations, architectural and design work, obtaining advice on planning and conservation and landscaping, and structural surveys. An archaeological survey of the site has been carried out. Balfour Hospitality have engaged with local stakeholders including All Saints Church and Kent Garden Trust. We understand that this work confirms that Balfour Hospitality will be able to put forward a business case for a lease of the site and a planning application for the necessary works.
- 2.11 At this stage, it is envisaged that a further three months, running up to the end of January, will be required in order to carry out the necessary work, including submission of a planning application. It is therefore proposed that the existing six month Exclusivity Agreement entered into in May 2022 with Balfour Hospitality be extended for a further three months.
- 2.12 Given the risk of further delay, including delays in obtaining planning permission, an option for two further three month extensions will be incorporated into the agreement.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1:** To extend the existing Exclusivity Agreement for three months with two further three-month extensions if required.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** To terminate discussions with Balfour Hospitality.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 1. Extensive work has already been carried out in developing plans for the Palace. The response to the invitation for expressions of interest did not indicate a wide range of alternative options on which the Council could rely if discussions with Balfour Hospitality are terminated.
-

5. RISKS

- 5.1 Empty Building - By continuing to work up plans for the Archbishop's Palace, we are more likely to have an agreed plan for the building when it is returned to MBC from KCC. Although it may not be possible to commence any refurbishment work immediately, there is less risk of reputational damage to the Council.
- 5.2 Maintenance and Management Costs - Any decisions as to the future of the building will affect the management and maintenance of the building both in terms of regime, cost and staff. These costs can be contained if there is a clear plan for the building in future.

- 5.3 Expertise and Resources - Historic sites require particular attention when considering any form of alteration and/or development. Careful consideration will be required when assessing the next steps as to whether the Council and its preferred partners can mobilise the necessary expertise and resources.
- 5.4 Communication - Engagement with stakeholders is key to ensure that the best option for the Council and its objectives are met.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Progress on this project has been reported regularly to Members. Specific consultation with the public has been carried out as described above.
- 6.2 The issue was considered by the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee on 12 October 2022, and the Committee raised some concerns but agreed the recommendations of the report. An excerpt from the Minutes has been attached as Appendix 1 to the report.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 See paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 above.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Excerpt from Minutes of the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee meeting held on 12 October 2022

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2022

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillor Brice (Chairman), Mrs Gooch (Vice Chair), Brindle, Cannon, Cox, Harper, Hinder, English and Garten
Lead Members:	Councillor Perry (Lead Member for Corporate Services)

47. ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE

The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and explained that a six-month exclusivity agreement had previously been entered into with Balfour Hospitality, to enable a detailed proposal to be developed regarding the future use of Archbishop's Palace. To enable further work on the proposal, the Committee were asked to consider a three-month extension on the agreement, with the option to extend for a further two three-month periods if required. The aim was for the detailed proposal to be completed in early 2023.

The Committee agreed that developing the plan, including seeking planning permission as required, could be a lengthy process and agreed that the extension of the exclusivity agreement should be granted to allow this to be completed. Balfour Hospitality's interest in the site presented an opportunity for the town, and time to complete their detailed proposal should be given.

There were concerns surrounding the financial risk to the Council if either the plan submitted by Balfour Hospitality was rejected by the Council, or if Balfour Hospitality concluded that their original proposal was no longer viable following further investigations during the exclusivity period. In those situations, the building could be left empty for an extended period which would have a financial impact on the Council. Confirmation was requested that Balfour Hospitality would consult fully with local residents, and that the results of the consultation would be taken into account when developing their plan.

In response to the concerns raised, the Lead Member for Corporate Services felt confident that the experience and commitment demonstrated by Balfour Hospitality would lead to economic benefits for Maidstone and attract visitors to the town, and that concerns by local residents would be fully considered within the proposed plan.

The Director of Finance, Resource and Business Improvement added that the decision to grant the exclusivity agreement had been made by the former Policy and Resources Committee, and that the requested extension would allow the original aspirations of that agreement to be fulfilled. In response to further questions, it was clarified that Balfour Hospitality could apply for planning permission for the site, but would not be able to carry out any works unless their full proposal was considered by the Committee, and approved by the Executive.

Contingency planning would be undertaken if it became likely that a significant gap would occur between the date of the building being vacated by Kent County Council, and the date that the agreed developer would commence their management obligations of the building.

RESOLVED: to recommend to the Lead Member for Corporate Services that

1. The Exclusivity Agreement with Balfour Hospitality be extended for a further three months; and
2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement to agree two further three-month extensions if required, in consultation with the Lead Member for Corporate Services.

EXECUTIVE

26 October 2022

1st Quarter Finance, Performance & Risk Monitoring Report 2022/23

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	12 October 2022
Executive Meeting	26 October 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager Georgia Harvey, Senior Information Governance Officer Alison Blake, Interim Head of Mid Kent Audit Anna Collier, Corporate Insight, Communities & Governance Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2022/23 financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Executive as at 30th June 2022 (Quarter 1). The primary focus is on:

- The 2022/23 Revenue and Capital budgets; and
- The 2022/23 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045.
- Corporate Risk Register

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

At the Quarter 1 stage the Council has incurred net expenditure of £0.059m against the approved profiled budget of £1.488m, representing an underspend of £1.428m.

Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 1 for the services reporting to CS PAC is -£0.193m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.704m, representing an underspend of £0.897m.

At the Quarter 1 stage, the Council has incurred overall expenditure of £2.688m against a budget allocation within the Capital Programme of £35.476m.

Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 1 for CS PAC was £0.084m against a total budget of £12.633m.

Performance Monitoring

A number of targets were missed due to current issues with the economy and the after-effects of Covid-19, although there were improvements in a number of other areas.

Corporate Risk Update

The report outlines all the Council's corporate risks. Of particular note is the addition of a new risk relating to the May 2023 elections and arising from the introduction of Voter ID. All other corporate risks have been reviewed and updated with some changes to risk scores and risk descriptions as noted in the report. The risk register (Appendix 3) details how the Council is responding to these risks and undertaking necessary preparations and actions to reduce likelihood and impact where possible to do so.

Recovery & Renewal Update

The Recovery and Renewal Action Plan at Appendix 4 details the progress made against actions for the last two quarters.

A number of initiatives, increasing access to funding to support vulnerable households, have been successfully delivered. These include the issue of fuel vouchers in August with the remainder to be issued in September, helping 431 households.

There has been significant progress as part of the culture change project to help facilitate new ways of working across the organisation. An event was held in July involving staff, partners and service users to help understand how the Council is perceived and what needs to adapt or change to achieve continuous improvement in its approach to service design and delivery.

Twenty organisations were funded from the 1st phase of the Community Resilience Fund amounting to £58,429.00. There will be a second wave of funding available in Autumn/Winter 2022 for organisations in the VCS.

Seventeen events were held throughout the summer months in Maidstone Town Centre to support a 'vibrant visitor economy'. This included Fusion Festival, Brenchley Gardens Concerts and Art in the Park.

There has been delay with some actions including the Mid Kent Skills hub, however this is expected to move forward once commercial terms have been agreed. A Volunteering and Funding Support Event, organised by Funding for All, in partnership with MBC is currently under development and is due to take place at the end of November.

Purpose of Report

The report enables the Executive to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues as at 30th June 2022.

That the Executive consider the write-off the irrecoverable Housing Benefits overpayment listed at Appendix 5 to the report.

This report makes the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 1 for 2022/23, 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 1 for 2022/23 be noted;
3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 1 for 2022/23, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted.
4. That the Risk Update, attached at Appendix 3 be noted.
5. That the Recovery & Renewal Update, attached at Appendix 4 be noted.
6. That the irrecoverable Housing Benefits overpayment, listed at Appendix 5 to the report, be written off.

1st Quarter Finance, Performance & Risk Monitoring Report 2022/23

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<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)
Cross Cutting Objectives	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)
Risk Management	This is addressed in Section 5 of this report.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Financial	<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</p>	Senior Finance Manager (Client)

	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.	
Staffing	<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)
Legal	<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
Information Governance	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

Equalities	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
Public Health	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Procurement	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)
Biodiversity and Climate Change	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

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27 - including the budget for 2022/23 - was approved by full Council on 23rd February 2022. 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.
- 2.2 This report also includes an update to the Committee on progress against its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and an updated covering corporate risks.
- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 1 is a report setting out the revenue and capital spending position at the Quarter 4 stage. Attached at Appendix 2 is a report setting out the position for the KPIs for the corresponding period. Attached at Appendix 3 is a report providing an update on corporate risks, in response to the Policy & Resources Committee's previous request for regular updates on this subject.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Executive is asked to note the contents but may choose to comment on the content.
 - 3.2 That the Executive write-off the irrecoverable Housing Benefits overpayment listed at Appendix 5 to the report.
 - 3.3 That further action be taken to recover the Housing Benefits overpayment listed at Appendix 5 to the report
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget, the Capital Programme, KPIs and Corporate Risks at the end of June 2022, the Executive can choose to note this information or could choose to comment.
 - 4.2 That the Executive write-off the irrecoverable Housing Benefits overpayment listed at Appendix 5 to the report as all reasonable debt recovery has taken place.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.
 - 5.2 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2022/23. The budget is set against a continuing 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 Executive the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The KPIs update ("Performance Monitoring") have been reported to the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) quarterly:
 - Economic Regeneration & Leisure PAC on 4 October 2022;
 - Communities, Housing & Environment PAC on 11 October 2022;
 - Corporate Services PAC on 12 October 2022; and
 - Planning & Infrastructure PAC on 17 October 2022.
 - 6.2 Each committee also received a report on the relevant priority action areas. The report was also presented to the Corporate Services PAC reporting on the priority areas of "A Thriving Place", "Safe, Clean and Green", "Homes and Communities" and "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure".
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Quarter 1 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Policy Advisory Committees during September/October 2022.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: First Quarter Budget Monitoring 2022/23
 - Appendix 2: First Quarter Performance Monitoring 2022/23
 - Appendix 3: Risk Update 2022/23
 - Appendix 4: Recovery & Renewal Update 2022/23
 - Appendix 5: Housing Benefit Overpayment Write-off
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

First Quarter Financial Update 2022/23

Corporate Services – Policy Advisory Committee

12 October 2022

Lead Officer: Mark Green

Report Author: Paul Holland

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Part A

Executive Summary & Overview

This report provides members with the financial position as at 30 June 2022, covering activity for both the Council as a whole and this committee's revenue and capital accounts for the first quarter of 2022/23.

In 2021/22, income recovered more strongly than expected from the pandemic and the Council generated a modest surplus compared with budget. For 2022/23, there is no more direct government funding to cover the costs of Covid, but the Council has been able to set a balanced budget. Additional provision of £1.3 million was made within the 2022/23 budget for the expected impact of higher inflation on the Council's input costs. The projected peak level of inflation has continued to increase since the budget was set and this is likely to have an impact in particular on contract and energy costs, so the requirement for this provision will be monitored carefully to assess whether it will be adequate. If at any stage it appears that an overspend is likely, measures will need to be taken in-year to bring the budget back into balance.

The first quarter monitoring report provides the forecast year end position for revenue and capital and updates the Committee on a range of other inter-related financial matters including Local Tax Collection, Reserves and Balances, Treasury Management and Maidstone Property Holdings.

The headlines for Quarter 1 are as follows:

Part B: Revenue Budget – Q1 2022/23

- At the Quarter 1 stage, the Council has incurred net expenditure of £0.059m against a profiled budget of £1.488m, representing an underspend of £1.428m.
- For the services reporting directly to CS PAC, net expenditure of -£0.193m has been incurred against a profiled budget of £0.704m, representing an underspend of £0.897m.

Part C: Capital Budget – Q1 2022/23

- At the Quarter 1 stage, the Council has incurred overall expenditure of £2.688m against a budget allocation within the Capital Programme of £35.476m.
- Expenditure for services reporting directly to CS PAC of £0.084m has been incurred against the budget of £12.633m.

Part D: Local Tax Collection 2022/23

- Collection rates have been met for the first quarter. Going forward we will need to monitor how the financial environment impact the level of collection.
- The Council is working with the other councils to establish the first quarter forecast for the Kent Business Rates Pool in 2022/23.

Part E: Reserves & Balances 2022/23

- The unallocated balance on the General Fund at 1 April 2022 was £13.2m. It is anticipated that balances will remain above the minimum level set by Council.

Part F: Treasury Management 2022/23

- The Council held short-term investments of £38.75m and had £9.0m in short term local authority borrowing as at 31st March 2022.
- Balances as at 30th June 2022 are £27.3m in short-term investments and £9m of borrowing.

Part G: Maidstone Property Holdings Ltd. (MPH)

- MPH net rental income for Quarter 1 2022/23 was £145,852. Rent arrears as at 30th June 2022 totaled £10,548.

Part B

First Quarter Revenue Budget 2022/23

B1) Revenue Budget: Council

B1.1 At the Quarter 1 stage, the Council has incurred net expenditure of £0.059m against a profiled budget of £1.488m, representing an underspend of £1.428m.

B1.2 Tables 1, 2 and 3 below provide further insight into the Council's income and expenditure position for Quarter 1 2022/23 by providing alternative analyses: by Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), Lead Member, Priority and Subjective Heading.

Table 1: Net Expenditure 2022/23 (@ 1st Quarter): Analysis by PAC

Policy Advisory Committee	Full Year Budget £000	To 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Year End Forecast £000	Year End Variance £000
Corporate Services	13,026	704	-193	897	12,383	642
Planning and Infrastructure	-134	174	-230	404	-323	189
Communities, Housing & Environment	10,424	1,128	988	140	10,829	-406
Economic Regeneration & Leisure	-81	-518	-506	-12	305	-387
Net Revenue Expenditure	23,234	1,488	59	1,428	23,196	39

Table 2: Net Expenditure 2022/23 (@ 1st Quarter): Analysis by PRIORITY

Priority	Full Year Budget £000	To 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Year End Forecast £000	Year End Variance £000
Safe, Clean and Green	7,168	1,916	1,748	168	6,980	188
Homes and Communities	1,168	-1,265	-1,250	-14	1,761	-593
Thriving Place	1,328	361	486	-125	1,704	-375
Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure	-110	180	-243	423	-299	189
Central & Democratic	13,680	295	-682	977	13,049	631
Net Revenue Expenditure	23,234	1,488	59	1,428	23,195	39

Table 3: Net Expenditure 2022/23 (@ 1st Quarter): Analysis by SUBJECTIVE SPEND

Subjective	Full Year Budget £000	To 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Year End Forecast £000	Year End Variance £000
Employees	23,596	5,876	5,599	277	23,596	0
Premises	6,232	2,307	2,212	95	6,601	-370
Transport	662	149	110	39	662	0
Supplies & Services	14,672	2,887	2,828	58	15,361	-690
Agency	6,742	1,652	1,666	-14	6,742	0
Transfer Payments	37,820	7,312	6,110	1,202	37,820	0
Asset Rents	1,782	0	0	0	932	850
Income	-68,271	-18,695	-18,465	-230	-68,519	248
Net Revenue Expenditure	23,234	1,488	59	1,428	23,195	39

Table 4: Net Expenditure 2022/23 (@ 1st Quarter): Analysis by LEAD MEMBER

Lead Member for	Full Year Budget £000	To 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Year End Forecast £000	Year End Variance £000
Corporate Services	13,026	704	-193	897	12,383	642
Planning & Infrastructure	-134	174	-230	404	-323	189
Communications & Public Engagement	2,456	664	591	74	2,456	0
Environmental Services	6,256	1,725	1,646	79	6,068	188
Housing & Health	1,712	-1,262	-1,249	-13	2,305	-593
Leader of the Council	550	157	288	-131	787	-237
Leisure & Arts	-631	-675	-794	119	-481	-150
Net Revenue Expenditure	23,234	1,488	59	1,428	23,195	39

B2) Revenue Budget: Corporate Services PAC

B2.1 Table 4 below provides a detailed summary of the budgeted net expenditure position for the services reporting directly into CS PAC at the end of Quarter 1. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (i.e. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included). The Lead Member for Corporate Services is responsible for all the services shown below.

Table 4: CS Revenue Budget: NET EXPENDITURE (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Cost Centre	Approved Budget for Year £000	Budget to 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Forecast 31 March 2022 £000	Forecast Variance 31 March 2022 £000
Maintenance of Closed Churchyards	11	3	0	3	11	0
Drainage	32	8	0	8	32	0
Street Naming & Numbering	-73	-18	-13	-5	-73	0
Sandling Road Site	29	7	42	-34	167	-138
Maidstone House - Landlord	197	49	-291	341	197	0
Civic Occasions	44	27	30	-2	44	0
Members Allowances	408	102	100	2	408	0
Members Facilities	18	4	1	3	18	0
Contingency	1,823	291	-1	292	1,823	0
Corporate Projects	50	13	0	13	50	0
Corporate Management	477	35	32	4	477	0
Unapportionable Central Overheads	1,488	355	328	27	1,413	75
Council Tax Collection	57	24	27	-3	57	0
Council Tax Collection - Non Pooled	-356	-51	-43	-8	-356	0
Council Tax Benefits Administration	-152	-152	-164	12	-152	0
NNDR Collection	2	1	3	-2	2	0
NNDR Collection - Non Pooled	-234	2	5	-3	-234	0
MBC- BID	1	-14	-16	3	1	0
Registration Of Electors	59	17	14	3	59	0
Elections	221	126	107	18	221	0
Emergency Centre	22	9	5	4	22	0
Medway Conservancy	128	64	64	-0	128	0
External Interest Payable	2,263	0	19	-19	1,413	850
Interest & Investment Income	-100	-25	-21	-4	-100	0
Palace Gatehouse	-8	-2	-5	3	-8	0
Archbishops Palace	-97	-24	-31	8	-97	0
Parkwood Industrial Estate	-287	-66	-60	-6	-287	0
Industrial Starter Units	-17	1	-5	6	-17	0
Parkwood Equilibrium Units	-77	-20	-27	7	-77	0
Sundry Corporate Properties	-237	-59	-15	-44	-92	-145
Phoenix Park Units	-216	-54	-62	8	-216	0
Granada House - Commercial	-93	-61	-69	8	-93	0
MPH Residential Properties	-732	-168	-165	-3	-732	0
Heronden Road Units	-148	-40	-40	0	-148	0
Boxmend Industrial Estate	-92	-23	-32	9	-92	0
Wren Industrial Estate	-120	-34	-36	1	-120	0
General Fund Residential Properties	-57	-14	-13	-1	-57	0
Pensions Fund Management	1,757	0	0	0	1,757	0
Non Service Related Government Grants	-4,216	-1,054	-1,054	0	-4,216	0
Rent Allowances	-115	-22	-172	150	-115	0
Non HRA Rent Rebates	-9	217	309	-92	-9	0
Discretionary Housing Payments	1	57	48	9	1	0
Housing Benefits Administration	-339	-88	-88	-0	-339	0

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
Cost Centre	Approved Budget for Year £000	Budget to 30 June 2022 £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Forecast 31 March 2022 £000	Forecast Variance 31 March 2022 £000
Democratic Services Section	263	66	52	13	263	0
Mayoral & Civic Services Section	118	29	29	0	118	0
Chief Executive	189	47	47	-0	189	0
Head of Policy and Communications	121	30	43	-13	121	0
Revenues Section	568	242	247	-5	568	0
Registration Services Section	92	23	21	2	92	0
Benefits Section	507	209	205	4	507	0
Fraud Section	34	70	73	-3	34	0
Mid Kent Audit Partnership	212	59	9	51	212	0
Director of Finance & Business Improvement	148	37	36	1	148	0
Accountancy Section	823	225	164	61	823	0
Legal Services Section	628	157	172	-15	628	0
Director of Regeneration & Place	147	37	36	1	147	0
Procurement Section	113	-3	0	-3	113	0
Property & Projects Section	572	143	132	12	572	0
Corporate Support Section	283	71	65	6	283	0
Improvement Section	375	94	89	5	375	0
Executive Support Section	91	23	23	-0	91	0
Head of Commissioning and Business Improvement	123	31	9	23	123	0
Mid Kent ICT Services	574	143	129	15	574	0
GIS Section	122	31	30	1	122	0
Director of Mid Kent Services	48	-61	-51	-10	48	0
Mid Kent HR Services Section	404	101	84	17	404	0
MBC HR Services Section	101	21	33	-12	101	0
Head of Revenues & Benefits	77	41	25	17	77	0
Revenues & Benefits Business Support	101	22	30	-7	101	0
Dartford HR Services Section	-14	-3	-7	3	-14	0
IT Support for Revenues and Benefits	26	11	11	-0	26	0
Emergency Planning & Resilience	88	22	14	8	88	0
Salary Slippage	-286	-71	0	-71	-286	0
Town Hall	121	41	31	10	121	0
South Maidstone Depot	221	99	101	-2	221	0
The Link	120	111	29	82	120	0
Maidstone House	398	187	287	-100	398	0
Museum Buildings	253	91	80	11	253	0
I.T. Operational Services	624	166	171	-5	624	0
Central Telephones	16	4	2	2	16	0
Apprentices Programme	71	18	3	15	71	0
Internal Printing	-4	1	8	-6	-4	0
Debt Recovery Service	-14	50	-3	53	-14	0
Debt Recovery MBC Profit Share	-95	-24	-22	-2	-95	0
General Balances	-1,179	-1,179	-1,179	0	-1,179	0
Earmarked Balances	4,507	-132	-159	27	4,507	0
Appropriation Account	1,782	0	0	0	1,782	0
Pensions Fund Appropriation	-1,757	0	0	0	-1,757	0
Total	13,026	704	-193	897	12,383	642

B2.2 The table shows that, at the Quarter 1 stage, for the services reporting directly to CS PAC, net expenditure of -£0.193m has been incurred against the budget of £0.704m, representing an underspend of £0.897m.

B3) PRC Revenue Budget: Significant Variances

B3.1 Within the headline figures, there are a number of both adverse and favourable net expenditure variances for individual cost centres. It is important that the implications of variances are considered at an early stage, so that contingency plans can be put in place and, if necessary, be used to inform future financial planning. Variances will be reported to each of the Policy Advisory Committees on a quarterly basis throughout 2022/23.

B3.2 Table 5 below highlights and provides further detail on the most significant variances at the end of Quarter 1.

Table 5: CS PAC Variances (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
Corporate Services	£000		
Sandling Road Site – Security costs for the site were not budgeted for when the Council took responsibility for the site. Possible sources of funding are being investigated.		-34	-138
Maidstone House Floors 1-4 – Part of a budget strategy saving of £0.590m relating to the acquisition of Maidstone House will be allocated to this budget to deal with this variance.	340		0
Contingency – Additional funding was included in this budget as a contingency for increased inflation costs. It is likely that a large portion of this funding will be used to cover additional contract and utilities costs.	292		0
Unapportionable Central Overheads – Due to staff vacancies payments to the Kent County Council Pension Fund are lower than forecast.	27		75
External Interest Payable – A significant portion of this budget relates to the Minimum Revenue Provision the Council has to make to meet the costs of borrowing for the capital programme. The budget assumed that there would be a higher level of borrowing at this stage than there actually has been.		-18	850
Sundry Corporate Properties – This budget included a budget strategy saving of £0.148m relating the income from new property acquisitions. To date there have been no acquisitions.		-43	-145
Rent Allowances & Non-HRA Rent Rebates - The variances on the cost centres are due to the rent allowances /rebates awarded and the income received from government. These are estimated costs until the year-end subsidy claim is submitted.	108		0
The Link - Part of a budget strategy saving of £0.590m relating to the acquisition of Maidstone House will be allocated to this budget to deal with this variance.	82		0
Maidstone House - Part of a budget strategy saving of £0.590m relating to the acquisition of Maidstone House will be allocated to this budget to deal with this variance. The current variance relates to higher than forecast electricity costs.		-108	0
Debt Recovery Service – Income levels are higher than forecast for the first quarter, but at this stage it is not assumed that they will continue at the same level.	53		0

B4) Other Revenue Budgets: Significant Variances

B4.1 Tables 6, 7 and 8 below highlight and provide further detail on the most significant variances.

Table 6: Planning Services PAC Variances (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
Planning & Infrastructure	£000		
PLANNING SERVICES			
Development Control Majors – While income levels have been high during the 1 st quarter it is still not certain that these will be sustained over the remainder of the year. It is also proposed that this underspend will be utilised to fund some changes that are proposed within the Planning team.	118		0

Local Plan Review

B4.1 The Local Plan Review (LPR) process is an important, high profile and continuous task undertaken by the Planning Services team. The associated revenue spending profile however is cyclical and does not fit the conventional 12-month financial planning process for general revenue expenditure. Instead, spending tends to follow the five-year production period of each Local Plan with various peaks and troughs over that time period.

B4.2 The LPR process is therefore funded through an annual £200,000 revenue contribution, in addition to the existing service budget, with any remaining unspent balances at year end automatically rolled forward into the following financial year. The table below shows the available revenue resources currently allocated to fund LPR activities, and the spend as at 30th June 2022.

Opening Balance 01/04/2022	Spending April - June 2022	Forecast Spending July - March 2023	Forecast Spending Balance 31/03/2023
£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
1,461,727	42,737	1,420,073	-1,083

Table 6a, Local Plan Review budget (Q1, 2022/23)

B4.3 In addition to the annual funding a further £1m was allocated from the New Homes Bonus for 2022/23 for the LPR.

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
Planning & Infrastructure	£000		
PARKING SERVICES			
Pay & Display Car Parks - The variance is created by increased income from Off-Street car parks. Occupancy levels have continued to improve. Long stay car park income is now slightly better than budget.	73		154

Table 7: Communities, Housing & Environment PAC Variances (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
Communities, Housing & Environment Committee	£000		
Parks & Open Spaces – The Grounds Maintenance team is being restructured and this underspend will be used to fund the costs of that.	37		0
Crematorium – Income is forecast to increase by 5% this year, and some of this additional income will be used to fund grounds maintenance works.	51		138
Public Conveniences - This cost centre was awarded a growth item, to fund the additional costs of the new toilets at Mote Park. The toilets are not yet open, so the additional budget is unspent. The toilets are expected to open in September.	29		50
Household Waste Collection - The variance of this cost centre is caused by the expected rise in the waste collection and recycling contract, which is expected to increase by more the 12% from 1st April. When confirmed the contract will be funded by the additional budget set aside in the contingency for this purpose.		-41	0
Public Health Obesity – The year-end forecast represents unused grant monies that will be carried forward to 2023/24 .	30		65
Homeless Temporary Accommodation - This is due to a surge in the need for temporary accommodation, and this is likely due to, but not limited to the rise in the cost of living at the moment. There are also issues with getting people out of temporary accommodation as soon as possible, and this has proved very difficult. The Housing team are currently looking at how the homefinder scheme can help boost access to more private letting.		-101	-659

Table 8: Economic Regeneration & Leisure PAC Variances (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

	Positive Variance Q1	Adverse Variance Q1	Year End Forecast Variance
Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee	£000		
Innovation Centre – There may be financial pressures due to business rates now not being funded from any retained Enterprise Zone business rates going forward. For 22/23 there is around £100k of retained rates that can be used to reduce this year's forecast and this will be reflected in future updates. Rent income has also been impacted slightly by a later go live date. Officers will continue to review the position and see if further funding can be identified.		-97	-220
Lockmeadow – At present the Council are paying the service charges for the food hall tenants. Due to increased utility costs the charges are now higher than had originally been anticipated.		-26	-150

B5) Virements

- B5.1 In accordance with the Council's commitment to transparency and recognised good practice, virements (the transfer of individual budgets between objectives after the overall budget has been agreed by full Council) are reported to the CS PAC on a quarterly basis.
- B5.2 Virements may be temporary, meaning that there has been a one-off transfer of budget to fund a discrete project or purchase, or permanent, meaning that the base budget has been altered and the change will continue to be reflected in the budget for subsequent years.
- B5.3 The virements made in Quarter 1 are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Virements (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

Reason	From	To	Value £	Type
Funding for Welfare Officer post from Recovery & Renewal Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Revenues Section	31,850	Temporary
Staff honorarium	Community Halls	Property & Projects Section	2,590	Temporary
Works to Granada House	Contingency	MPH Residential Properties	140,310	Temporary
Funding for staffing costs	Contingency	Customer Services Section	32,790	Temporary
Funding for Assistant Economic Development Officer post from Business Rates Growth Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Economic Development Section	36,160	Temporary
First payment for website contract from Business Rates Growth Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Economic Development - Promotion & Marketing	4,420	Temporary
Jubilee Mayor's Tea Party costs from Business Rates Growth Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Economic Development - Promotion & Marketing	3,330	Temporary
Quarterly subscription for football activity costs from Business Rates Growth Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Economic Development - Promotion & Marketing	3,000	Temporary
Funding for Enforcement Officer post from Recovery & Renewal Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Development Management Section	6,920	Temporary
Funding for Planning Officer post from Recovery & Renewal Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Development Management Section	7,560	Temporary
Funding for Temporary Heritage, Landscape & Design Officer post from Recovery & Renewal Reserve	Earmarked Reserves	Heritage, Landscape & Design Section	12,480	Temporary
Reduce rental income budgets	Contingency	MPH Residential Properties	28,620	Permanent
Costs of refuse collection at Mote Park	Mote Park Pay & Display Car Park	Mote Park	10,000	Permanent
Increase in costs of Communities & Strategic Partnership Manager post	Health Improvement Programme	Community Partnerships & Resilience Section	4,340	Permanent
			324,370	

Part C

First Quarter Capital Budget 2022/23

C1) Capital Budget: Council

- C1.1 The overall five-year Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27 was approved by the Council on 23rd February 2022. Some capital funding will now come from prudential borrowing as other sources of funding are not sufficient to cover the costs of the programme, although funding continued to be available from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) in 2022/23.
- C1.2 The 2022/23 element of the Capital Programme (including unused resources brought forward from 2021/22) has a budget of £35.476m. At the Quarter 1 stage, capital expenditure of £2.688m had been incurred, with budget remaining of £32.788m.

C2) Capital Budget: Corporate Services PAC

- C2.1 Progress towards the delivery of the 2022/23 CS PAC element of the Capital Programme at the Quarter 1 stage is presented in Table 10 below.
- C2.2 At the Quarter 1 stage, expenditure of £0.084m has been incurred against a budget of £12.633m million for CS PAC. This leaves a remaining budget of £12.549m.

Table 10: Capital Expenditure (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

Capital Programme Heading	Adjusted Estimate 2022/23 £000	Actual to June 2022 £000	Budget Remaining £000	Q2 Profile £000	Q3 Profile £000	Q4 Profile £000	Projected Total Expenditure £000	Projected Slippage to 2023/24 £000
Communities, Housing & Environment								
Housing - Disabled Facilities Grants Funding	1,640	93	1,547	90	210	210	603	1,037
Temporary Accommodation	4,330	10	4,320	285	1,352	1,370	3,017	1,313
Springfield Mill - Phase 2	731	735	-4				735	-4
Private Rented Sector Housing Programme - Scheme B - Maidstone East	688	25	662	74	172	189	460	227
Private Rented Sector Housing Programme - Scheme C - Heather House & Pavilion Building	99	5	94			94	99	-0
Private Rented Sector Housing Programme - Scheme D - King Street	74		74					74
Private Rented Sector Housing Programme - Indicative Schemes	2,323	356	1,967	1,601	63	136	2,155	168
1,000 Homes Affordable Housing Programme - Indicative Schemes	4,305		4,305	1,601	2,786	82	4,469	-164
1,000 Homes Affordable Housing Programme - Maidstone East	1,330		1,330					1,330
1,000 Homes Affordable Housing Programme - King Street	44	29	15				29	15
Market Sale Housing Programme - Heather House & Pavilion Building	515		515			515	515	
Acquisitions Officer - Social Housing Delivery P/ship	160	20	140	45	45	50	160	0
Granada House Refurbishment Works	950	24	926	8		300	332	618
Street Scene Investment	70		70	50	20		70	-0
Flood Action Plan	430		430			100	100	330
Electric Operational Vehicles	84		84		84		84	
Vehicle Telematics & Camera Systems	22		22	22			22	
Rent & Housing Management IT System	11	13	-2				13	-2
Installation of Public Water Fountains	15		15			15	15	
Crematorium & Cemetery Development Plan	137	124	12	13			137	-0
Continued Improvements to Play Areas	126		126	50	50	26	126	-0
Parks Improvements	152	10	142	75	35	32	152	0
Gypsy & Traveller Sites Refurbishment	1,421	424	997	500	497		1,421	-0
Waste Crime Team - Additional Resources	25		25	25			25	
Section 106 funded works - Open Spaces	400	38	362	175	100	87	400	0
Total	20,080	1,906	18,174	4,614	5,413	3,206	15,139	4,941

Capital Programme Heading	Adjusted Estimate 2022/23 £000	Actual to June 2022 £000	Budget Remainin g £000	Q2 Profile £000	Q3 Profile £000	Q4 Profile £000	Projected Total Expenditu re £000	Projected Slippage to 2023/24 £000
Economic Regeneration & Leisure								
Mote Park Visitor Centre	1,307	694	613	500	263		1,457	-150
Mote Park Lake - Dam Works	486	4	482	50	50	40	144	342
Museum Development Plan	389		389	23	10	18	50	339
Leisure Provision	100		100	20	40	40	100	
Cobtree Golf Course New Clubhouse	4		4			4	4	0
Tennis Courts Upgrade	20		20	20			20	
Riverside Walk Works	250		250					250
Total	2,556	698	1,859	613	363	102	1,775	782
Corporate Services								
Corporate Property Acquisitions	3,181		3,181	1,000	1,000	1,181	3,181	
Kent Medical Campus - Innovation Centre	341	5	336	50	200	86	341	-0
Lockmeadow Ongoing Investment	203	4	200	100	50	50	203	0
Garden Community	1,633	8	1,625	250	250	250	758	875
Infrastructure Delivery	1,000		1,000					1,000
Asset Management / Corporate Property	1,161	27	1,134	250	250	250	777	384
Other Property Works	980		980	100	440	440	980	
Biodiversity & Climate Change	1,478		1,478		144	103	247	1,231
Feasibility Studies	122	18	104	40	35	29	122	0
Digital Projects	25		25			25	25	
Software / PC Replacement	336	21	315	110	110	95	336	-0
Maidstone House Works	1,000	0	1,000	250		580	830	170
Automation Projects	200		200	50	75	75	200	
New Ways of Working - Make the Office Fit for Purpose	40		40	40			40	
Archbishop's Palace	400		400	25	10	10	45	355
Fleet Vehicle Replacement Programme	533		533	250	150	133	533	-0
Total	12,633	84	12,549	2,515	2,714	3,307	8,619	4,014
Planning & Infrastructure								
Bridges Gyratory Scheme	206		206	10	10	10	30	176
Total	206		206	10	10	10	30	176
TOTAL	35,476	2,688	32,788	7,751	8,500	6,624	25,563	9,912

C3) Capital Budget Variances (@ 1st Quarter 2022/23)

Corporate Services PAC

C3.1 The most (financially) notable CS PAC items in the table above are as follows:

Garden Community – Work is continuing on developing this project, with any unused balance being carried forward into 2023/24.

Infrastructure Delivery – At this stage there are no plans to spend this budget.

Biodiversity & Climate Change – A number of projects have been identified for this year and are being progressed. A number of other projects are unlikely to happen until next year and beyond, so any unused balance will be carried forward into 2023/24.

Communities, Housing and Environment PAC

C3.2 The most (financially) notable CHE PAC items in the table above are as follows:

Disabled Facilities Grants – Expenditure is historically less than the committed budget in each year, but unused funding is always carried forward allowing for works to be programmed in over the course of a number of years. A review of the DFG process is currently being undertaken and will feature in the draft new Housing Assistance Policy that will be delivered to the CHE PAC later in the year for commentary before being presented to the Executive.

Temporary Accommodation - This is the funding for the latest phase of property acquisitions to provide accommodation for temporarily homeless families and persons. There have been no acquisitions to date. It is hoped to acquire more properties this year, but it is proving difficult to obtain properties at reasonable valuations given the current overheated housing market.

Private Rented Sector Housing Programme/1,000 Homes Affordable Housing Programme – A number of schemes are at various stages of development at this stage, the main one at present being the Springfield Library site. Expenditure is very much indicative at this stage and expected to increase during the remainder of the year once schemes that are currently at the feasibility stage have progressed further and new sites are potentially secured. Some schemes will also contain elements of both private rented and affordable housing so the costs may change depending on the mix at the sites where this happens.

The current market conditions to identify and acquire suitable sites that also meet our required financial hurdles is proving challenging. Land prices remain high and are still rising due to a perceived (by vendors) link to rising house prices, which is challenging on its own, but also, rapidly rising construction prices are eroding the possible returns further from those same sites. That said a likely pipeline of schemes to deliver the programme has largely been identified, but the process of negotiating the purchase of the sites at a reasonable level, and in accordance with the prevailing RIC Red Book Valuations, needs to be undertaken in a careful and considered manner.

Granada House Refurbishment Works – The procurement process for the works is now complete and it is anticipated that works will commence in January 2023 and will take 8 months to complete. The unused funding will be carried forward into 2023/24. The costs of the works are likely to exceed the approved budget of £2.0m, so further funding will need to be identified as part of the development of the capital programme for 2023/24 onwards.

Economic Regeneration and Leisure PAC

C3.3 The most (financially) notable ERL PAC items in the table above are as follows:

Mote Park Visitor Centre – There have been some unanticipated costs that mean the project will cost around £150,000 more than initially budgeted for. Funding has been identified for this overspend.

Mote Park Lake Dam Works – This project is substantially complete with the only costs remaining being the retention payment due next year of £13,000.

Riverside Walk Works – Proposals are still being developed and there will be no spend this year.

Part D

First Quarter Local Tax Collection 2022/23

D1) Collection Fund

Part E

D1.2 Due to the risk in this area, including the risk of non-collection and the pooling arrangements in place for Business Rates growth, the Council monitors the Collection Fund very carefully.

D1.3 There are statutory accounting arrangements in place which minimise the in-year impact of collection fund losses on the general fund revenue budget, however, losses incurred in one year must be repaid in subsequent years so there is a consequential impact on future

Reserves & Balances 2022/23

Table 11: Local Tax Collection Rates (Q1 2022/23)

Description	Target Q1 2022/23	Actual Q1 2022/23
Council Tax	27.48%	28.20%
Business Rates	30.97%	35.80%

D2.2 The amount of Council Tax and Business Rates collected is marginally higher than the quarter 1 target. This will be closely monitored to understand the impacts of the UK financial environment on residents and businesses.

D3) Kent Business Rates Pool

D3.1 The council has continued to participate with other Kent authorities during 2022/23 to maximise the proportion of business rates growth it is able to retain. Forecasts from those in the pool have been requested and we will have an update for quarter 2. As in previous years, any funding will be allocated to spending which supports the delivery of the council's Economic Development Strategy.

D3.2 As part of the pooling arrangements, pool members share the risks, as well as the rewards of pool membership. Business rates retention scheme is extremely difficult to forecast, due to the number of unknowns e.g. the impact of the removal of expanded reliefs to businesses affected by Covid-19, and the longer term impacts on local, national and global economies.

E1) Reserves & Balances

E1.1 The combined total of the General Fund balance and Earmarked Reserves as at 1 April 2022 was £34.8 million, including £8.4 million set aside to fund future collection fund deficits. The makeup of the balance, and the forecast movements during 2022/23 are presented in Table 13 below.

E1.2 The closing balance enables a minimum general fund balance of £4.0 million to be maintained, as agreed by full Council in February 2022.

Table 13: Reserves & Balances Quarter 1 2022/23

	Balance 1st April 2022	Estimated movement in 2022/23	Estimated Balance as at 31st March 2023
	£000	£000	£000
General Fund			
Unallocated Balance	13,237	0	13,237
Subtotal	13,237		13,237
Earmarked Reserves			
Spatial Planning EM reserve	1,000	(1,000)	0
Neighbourhood Planning	97	(20)	77
Planning Appeals	286	0	286
Trading Accounts	0	0	0
Civil Parking Enforcement	400	(110)	290
Future Capital Expenditure	2,426	0	2,426
Future Funding Pressures	969	0	969
Homelessness Prevention & Temporary Accommodation	1,279	(500)	779
Business Rates Earmarked Balances	3,681	(70)	3,611
Funding for Future Collection Fund Deficits	8,391	(8,391)	0
Commercial Risk	500	0	500
Invest to Save	500	(50)	450
Recovery and Renewal Reserve	778	(112)	666
Renewable Energy	119	0	119
Enterprise Zone	4	0	4
Resources carried forward from 2021/22 to 2022/23	1,184	(1,184)	0
Subtotal	21,614	(11,437)	10,177

Table 14: General Fund and Earmarked Balances at Q1 2022/23

The Committee is asked to note that a recommendation will be made to the Executive to use £25,000 of the unallocated balance to fund the costs of drafting an updated Constitution.

Part F

Treasury Management 2022/23

F1) Introduction

The Council has adopted and incorporated into its Financial Regulations, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code).

The CIPFA Code covers the principles and guidelines relating to borrowing and investment operations. On 23rd February 2022, the Council approved a Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 that was based on this code. The strategy requires that Policy & Resources Committee should formally be informed of Treasury Management activities quarterly as part of budget monitoring.

F2) Economic Headlines

During the Quarter ended 30th June 2022, the Council's Advisors, Link Asset Services, reported:

- Following the 0.1% m/m fall in GDP in March and the 0.3% m/m contraction in April, the economy is now moving towards a recession (two quarters of falling output in a row).
- CPI inflation rose from 9.0% in April to a new 40-year high of 9.1% in May and it is not yet close to its peak. The increase in CPI inflation in May was mainly due to a further leap in food price inflation from 6.7% to a 13-year high of 8.5%. The further rise in core producer price inflation, from 13.9% to 14.8%, suggests that core goods CPI inflation will probably rise to 14% before long. We think that will take CPI inflation to a peak of around 10.5% in October.
- The MPC has now increased interest rates five times in as many meetings and raised rates to their highest level since the Global Financial Crisis. We think the MPC will raise rates from 1.25% now to a peak of 2.75% next year.
- Gilt yields have been caught up in the global surge in bond yields triggered by the surprisingly strong rise in CPI inflation in the US in May. The rises in two-year gilt yields (to a peak of 2.37% on 21st June) and 10-year yields (to a peak of 2.62%) took them to their highest level since 2008 and 2014 respectively.

F3) Interest Rates

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Table 14: Interest Rate Forecast

Link Group Interest Rate View 21.06.22												
	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25
BANK RATE	1.75	2.25	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.50	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25
3 month ave earnings	2.00	2.50	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.60	2.50	2.30	2.30	2.20	2.20
6 month ave earnings	2.50	2.80	3.00	3.00	2.90	2.90	2.80	2.70	2.60	2.50	2.40	2.30
12 month ave earnings	3.10	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.00	2.90	2.80	2.60	2.50	2.40	2.40	2.40
5 yr PWLB	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.20	3.10	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.90	2.90
10 yr PWLB	3.40	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.10	3.10
25 yr PWLB	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.30
50 yr PWLB	3.40	3.40	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10	3.10	3.00

BANK RATE

- The CPI measure of inflation is now forecast to rise further and the MPC will be keen to stifle the prospect of average earnings data (6.8% y/y currently including bonuses) providing further upside risk to inflationary factors that are primarily being driven by supply-side shortages.
- When Bank Rate reached 1% in May, the MPC indicated (no earlier than August) that it will also consider the extent to which it implements Quantitative Tightening (QT), primarily the selling of its gilt holdings. However, they are likely to take any such decision cautiously as they are already not refinancing maturing debt.
- Once Bank Rate reaches 1%, the MPC will need to consider the extent to which it implements Quantitative Tightening (QT), primarily the selling of its gilt holdings, although they are likely to take it cautiously as they are already not refinancing maturing debt.
- Notwithstanding the MPC's clear desire to increase Bank Rate throughout 2022, negative real earnings, the 54% hike in the Ofgem energy price cap from April (to be followed by a potential 40%+ further increase from October), at the same time as employees (and employers) have incurred a 1.25% Health & Social Care Levy, growing commodity and food inflation plus council tax rises - all these factors will hit households' finances hard. However, lower income families will be hit disproportionately hard despite some limited assistance from the Chancellor to postpone the full impact of rising energy costs.
- In the upcoming months, our forecasts will be guided not only by economic data releases and clarifications from the MPC over its monetary policies, but the on-going conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including the manner in which the West and NATO respond through sanctions and/or military intervention. Currently, oil, gas, wheat and other mainstream commodities have risen significantly in price and central banks will have to balance whether they prioritise economic growth or try to counter supply-side shock induced inflation.
- On the positive side, consumers are estimated to be sitting on over £160bn of excess savings left over from the pandemic so that will cushion some of the impact of the above increases. However, most of those are held by more affluent people whereas lower income families already spend nearly all their income before these increases hit and have few financial reserves.

PWLB RATES

- The yield curve has steepened considerably through the quarter and PWLB 5 to 50 years Certainty Rates are, generally, in the range of 2.75% to 3.75%.
- We view the markets as having built in, already, nearly all the effects on gilt yields of the likely increases in Bank Rate and the poor inflation outlook (although we thought that in May and markets went much further than expected in respect of the gilt market sell-off).
- It is difficult to say currently what effect the Bank of England starting to sell gilts will have on gilt yields now that Bank Rate has gone to above 1%. Nothing will be decided before August, however, but the Bank is likely to act cautiously as it has already started on not refinancing maturing debt. A pure roll-off of the peak £875bn gilt portfolio by not refinancing bonds as they mature, would see holdings fall to about £415bn by 2031, which would be about equal to the Bank's pre-pandemic holding.
- Increases in US treasury yields over the next few months could add further upside pressure on gilt yields as they have done since the turn of the year.

F4) Council Investments

The council held investments totaling £38.75m at the start of the year which has reduced to £27.3m on 30th June 2022. Investment levels have reduced due to repayments of grants to Central Government and precept payments to Parish Council's in April 2022.

A full list of investments held at this time is shown at Table 15 below. All investments are held in either short term notice accounts or money market funds, to be readily available to fund the Council's liabilities, including the capital programme.

Table 15: Short-Term Investments (1st Quarter 2022/23)

Counterparty	Type of	Principal £	Start Date	Maturity Date	Rate of Return	MBC Credit Limits	
						Maximum Term	Maximum Deposit
Goldman Sachs International Bank	Call account	2,000,000			0.23%	100 Days	£5,000,000
Lloyds Bank Plc	Call account	1,000,000			0.15%	6 Months	£5,000,000
Santander Bank Plc	Call account	5,000,000			0.70%	6 Months	£5,000,000
Goldman Sachs Asset Management	Money Market Fund	8,300,000			1.13%		£10,000,000
Landesbank Hessen Thuringen Girozentrale	Fixed Term Deposit	3,000,000	31/01/2022	29/07/2022	0.62%	6 Months	£5,000,000
Goldman Sachs International Bank	Fixed Term Deposit	3,000,000	14/04/2022	14/10/2022	1.48%	100 Days	£5,000,000
Landesbank Hessen Thuringen Girozentrale	Fixed Term Deposit	2,000,000	26/04/2022	26/10/2022	1.42%	6 Months	£5,000,000
National Bank of Kuwait London	Fixed Term Deposit	3,000,000	06/05/2022	07/11/2022	1.72%	6 Months	£5,000,000
Total Investments		27,300,000					

F4) Council Borrowing

The Council held external borrowing amounting to £9m on 31st March 2022 and the balance is still £9m at the end of June. A breakdown is shown in Table 15 below

Table 16: Council Borrowing (1st Quarter 2022/23)

Counterparty	Type of Institution	Principal £	Start Date	Maturity Date	Interest Rate
Middlesbrough Teeside Pension Fund	Local Authority	4,000,000	20/08/2021	19/08/2022	0.08%
PWLB	Government	2,000,000	11/11/2021	11/11/2071	1.73%
PWLB	Government	3,000,000	30/12/2021	30/12/2071	1.56%
		9,000,000			

Part G

Maidstone Property Holdings 2022/23



G1) Maidstone Property Holdings Ltd. (MPH)





- G1.1 MPH is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Council and was incorporated on 30th September 2016. It is primarily a vehicle for letting residential properties on assured short-hold tenancies.
- G1.2 An Internal Audit review identified that there should be a mechanism in place to enable the company to formally report to the Council. Given the current level of activity within the company is relatively low, it was decided that this would be done via the quarterly budget monitoring process (previously to the Policy and Resources Committee, now to this Committee). This section of the report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the company for the year to date.
- G1.3 The MPH financial year-end is 31st March, in order to align with the Council's financial reporting period. The external audit of the 2021/22 accounts is currently in progress.




G2) MPH Headlines

- G2.1 During 2021/22 management of residential accommodation has transferred from an external agent to the Council's in-house accommodation team. MPH also took on the lease of new flats at Tower Hill (Brunswick Street), Tylers Place (Union Street) Springfield Place and Springfield Mill.
- G2.2 Net rental income up to the end of the first quarter of 2022/23 totals £145,852 (2021/22 £517,666) This represents rent collected, less running costs, maintenance costs and recharges for staff time. As at 30th June 2022, rent arrears were estimated at £10,548.
- G2.3 The Council receives income from the company through charges made for services provided, and the property lease. After these charges and other expenses, it is expected that the company will achieve a breakeven position for 2022/23.
- G2.4 As company activity increases over time, governance and reporting arrangements will be kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate and commensurate with the scope of activity and associated risks.









P&R: Quarter 1 Performance Report

Key to performance ratings







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

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has been sustained
	Performance has declined
N/A	No previous data to compare





Communities

Performance Indicator	Q1 2022/23				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Number of new Council Tax Support (CTS) applications received	665				
Total number of live Council Tax Support (CTS) cases as of the end of the quarter	9,593				













The Council's Financial position

Performance Indicator	Q1 2022/23				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected (BV 010)	35.8%	30.97%			
Percentage of Council Tax collected (BV 009)	19.03%	18.49%			

The Way We Work

Performance Indicator	Q1 2022/23				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Total running costs of Maidstone House in the period	£154,681.30				

Q1 2022/23 KPIs across service Committees that were missed by more than 10%

Performance Indicator	Q1 2022/23				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Percentage of successful Relief Duty outcomes	47.12%	60%			
Footfall in the Town Centre	2,417,464	2,722,375			
Percentage of unemployed people in Maidstone (out-of-work benefits) [NOMIS]	2.9%	1.6%			
Number of youths unemployed (18-24)	543	373			

Economy

The “**Footfall in Town Centre**” KPI achieved an outcome of 2,417,464 against a target of 2,722,375, missing its target by more than 10%. When comparing it to last quarter, the footfall has increased by 6.8%.

When comparing it to the same quarter last year, the footfall count has a decrease of 6.6%, and still slightly falls behind pre-pandemic year (2019) and is 13% lower.

The “**Number of youths unemployed (18-24)**” KPI achieved a figure of 543 against a target of 373 in June 2022. The target of 373 is taken from an average monthly number of youths employed in 2019/20 (pre-pandemic). Unemployment among youth continues to fall every month. The number of youths unemployed in April 2022 is 42.1% lower than the number of youths unemployed in April 2021. However, it is still significantly higher than the pre-pandemic figure of 320 (April 2019).

“**Percentage of unemployed people in Maidstone (out of work benefits)**” KPI achieved an average figure of 3.0% for April – June 2022 against an average target of 1.6%. Unemployment rates in Maidstone have continued to fall in Q1 and are lower than the rates for the same period last year. Performance for this indicator continues to improve and moves more towards its pre-pandemic levels. For comparison, April, May and June 2021 rates were 5.2%, 4.8% and 4.5% respectively.

Communities

The “**Percentage of successful Relief Duty outcomes**” indicator achieved a result of 47.12% against a target of 60% and missed it by 12.88%.

The performance of 47.12% of homelessness relieved in the quarter demonstrates average performance and is much higher than the national average of homelessness relieved for the quarter of 38.2%, taken from the detailed LA tables for statutory homelessness Jan-Mar 22. It is also much higher than the Kent average of 33.8%, also taken from the LA tables for statutory homelessness.

It is recognised that relieving homelessness is more difficult than preventing homelessness, in particular with restricted access to the Private Rented Sector as a result of unaffordable market rents and an increase in demand for private rented accommodation from those who are not economically disadvantaged.

Additionally, we have experienced a sharp increase in the number of households that are presenting as homeless on the day due to domestic abuse, which limits the opportunity to relieve the homelessness before the main housing duty is triggered.



First Quarter Risk Update 2022/23

12 October 2022
Corporate Services PAC
Report Author: Alison Blake

Introduction

Risk management involves managing the ***effect of uncertainties on the achievement of our objectives*** and is a key principle of corporate governance. The importance of risk management is recognised in our Local Code of Governance, the Annual Governance Statement and through the Risk Management Framework.

Having arrangements in place to identify and manage our risks increases our chances of achieving corporate and operational objectives by controlling risks in balance with resources. Good risk management also increases our ability to cope with developing and uncertain events and helps to instil a culture of continuous improvement and optimisation.

The Risk Management Framework sets out how the Council identifies, manages and monitors risks. This includes the risk appetite statement, which articulates how much risk the Council is comfortable with and able to bear. In summary, the risk management process for the Council can be broken down into the following key components. Appendix 3B gives a one-page summary of the risk management process.



A key part of the risk management process is to report risk information to understand how the risks to the Council are changing. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the Council's corporate risks and how they have changed since the last report to this Committee in June. The role of this committee is to provide oversight and challenge over the management of the Council's most significant risks.

The report also describes the risks 'on the horizon' providing an indication of potential future risks which may materialise into risks the Council can manage as they become clearer.

Progress is being made in updating all operational risks alongside the introduction of the JCAD risk management software. 52% of services have now been trained in how to use JCAD and 21% of operational risks have been updated. The remainder of the training and operational risk updates is scheduled to be completed by the end of September. Appendix 3C outlines the services completed up to the 6th September. Once operational risks have been updated the themes and significant risks will be reported to Corporate Services Committee.

Corporate Risks

The Council's corporate risks are reported quarterly to the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee to ensure effective oversight and monitoring. The risks are reviewed and updated by risk owners including progress against any related risk actions. Existing and planned controls have been updated and the risk ratings reviewed and updated where necessary.

The table below summarises the **15** risks on the corporate risk register. Further detail on the corporate risks, including a description of the risk and details of existing and planned key controls are outlined below the table.

No	Corporate risk	June 2022 Current Risk	September 2022		Corporate Priority			
			Current Risk	Mitigated Risk				
1	Financial uncertainty	25	25	16	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Contraction in retail sector	25	25	20	✓			✓
3	Election failure / challenge	NEW	25	20	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Construction costs / contractor insolvency	20	20	16	✓		✓	✓
5	Environmental damage	16	16	16		✓	✓	✓
6	Housing pressures increasing	16	16	12	✓		✓	
7	Major unforeseen emergency	15	15	12	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	IT network failure	12	12	9	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Not fulfilling residential property responsibilities	12	12	9	✓		✓	
10	Major contractor failure	12	12	12	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Ability to access / leverage new funding	9	12	9	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Loss of workforce cohesion and talent	12	12	9	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Governance changes	12	9	6	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Reduced effectiveness of relationships with strategic partners	9	9	9	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Resilience of the voluntary & community sector	9	9	6		✓	✓	

Our Priorities



Summary of Changes

The risk of *failure or challenge of the May 2023* elections has been identified as a result of the Elections Act 2022 introducing voter ID. While the Council has mitigations in place to manage this risk there is a high dependency on external parties outside of the Council's control.

The *Financial uncertainty* risk description had been updated to include increasing contractor costs reflecting an additional pressure on the Council's finances. Increasing contractor costs is also now reflected in the *major contractor failure* risk.

Environmental damage risk description updated to remove reference to air pollution and instead reference flooding, severe storms, heatwaves and drought. The risk description also references the implication of the Council in supporting those affected by climate change events.

Housing pressures increasing risk description amended to reflect the cost-of-living crisis as a cause of this risk.

The *Ability to access new funding* risk has increased due to Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) funding potentially becoming more restricted in the future. The risk description has been updated to reflect this.

The *Governance Changes* risk has decreased as the new executive model becomes more embedded.

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
<p>General financial uncertainty. Unexpected changes to government funding, failure to achieve income or savings targets, and increases in inflation and contractor costs places further financial restrictions on the Council resulting in difficulty maintaining standards or meeting aims. <i>UPDATED</i></p>	Mark Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed work programmes in transformation and commissioning • Budget monitoring in place • MTFS in place and monitored • Scenario planning in budget setting • Strategies for maintaining income (e.g. pricing policies and proactive management of property portfolio) • Holding reserves to mitigate impact of financial restrictions • Robust risk assessment of new business opportunities 	(5 x 5) 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently updating MTFS to reflect impact of inflation • Lobbying to avoid unfavourable financial changes to government funding • Cost recovery through bidding for additional government support for one-off costs and strategic investments • Identifying measures to address future budget gaps • Maximise Council Tax to referendum limit 	(4 x 4) 16
<p>112</p> <p>General and localised economic pressure leads to contraction in retail sector, limiting the appeal of Maidstone town centre threatening social cohesion and business rates income.</p>	William Cornall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Key stakeholders including One Maidstone to safely reopen the High Street. • Regular network meetings with town centre retailers • Public realm improvement work • Supporting One Maidstone Business Improvement District • Acquisition of key property (Royal Mail former sorting office planning application to be submitted Q4 / Grenada House refurbishment works expected to commence Q4) • Work commissioned to promote Maidstone as business destination • Planning Guidelines documents have now been approved by SPI for the Five town Centre Opportunity sites. Planning permissions have now been granted on two of these and pre-application advice given in respect of land parcels on Maidstone Riverside. • Active management of Lockmeadow to enhance the local economy • Support delivered to the sector through Business Rates grants and assistance grants • Town Centre Opportunity guidance published and actively being used 	(5 x 5) 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking advantage of opportunities to support infrastructure investment • A targeted programme of place promotion campaign activities • Development of a Town Centre strategy to guide the reallocation of land uses within the Town Centre (including retail) • A programme of town centre events and activities is now in place funded through covid response monies. UKSPF Local Government Plan intends to continue and expand this (subject to release of funding) • The Council has made the decision to put in place a new Article 4 Direction for the core shopping area of Maidstone town centre to retain greater control over planning in that location. • Covid related Business Support grants will continue to be focussed upon this sector in part. • The Council has now received a circa £1.2m Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for the next three years, and officers are in the process of preparing a draft investment plan for the monies for consideration by Members. • The Leader has agreed the LIP and it has been submitted; we are awaiting the outcome; we need to add reference to our successful bid to the safer Streets Fund which has secured £565k investment for community safety in the town centre 	(4 x 5) 20

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
Elections Act 2022 introduction of Voter ID for May 2023 elections results in the election failing or being challenged. Leading to reduced electoral integrity, reputational damage, and potential impact on political leadership and decision-making capability for 2023/24. <i>NEW</i>	Alison Broom / Angela Woodhouse	All usual election risk mitigations are in place including project planning, contingency planning and risk assessments. In addition DES Manager on DLUHC BCN group working on Elections Act 2022 implementation and liaising with AEA.	(5 x 5) 25	Increased election staffing for 2023, All Council staff to be on standby to support elections, utilise internal comms, early contact of election staff, targeted training, prioritising of elections over corporate functions within Corporate and Electoral Support, contingency planning for post-election challenge impacts. However, risk mitigation is limited due to dependency on external factors (i.e. DLUHC delivering)	(4 x 5) 20
Inflation continues to rise and a significant economic event (e.g. further pandemic impacts, BREXIT, supply chain issues) causes significant changes in construction costs which may also result in a contractor insolvency, as they are generally locked into delivering schemes at a fixed price, and so need to manage their exposure to rising costs in their supply chain. For the Council, this leads to a narrowing gap between build price and end of property values, increased costs to the Council and a possible time lag in delivery of 1000 affordable new homes, owing to a lack of capacity in the construction sector.	William Cornall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of "off-site" and other Modern Methods of Construction where possible to ensure schemes are delivered efficiently • Designing buildable efficient schemes • Financial stability and overall exposure checks for contractor • Performance bonds and quality monitoring • Realistically set financial scheme approval hurdle rates 	(4 x 5) 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of suitable contractor frameworks to access. • Managing exposure levels to different contractors as the programme gathers momentum. • Delaying the letting of key contracts if tendering does not yield VFM proposals that are financially robust. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful scheme design evolution to enhance the "buildability" of new projects. • Appointment of a single architect, employers agent and development management specialist as a consistent professional team to support the Council in it delivery of the 1,000 homes programme 	(4 x 4) 16

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
<p>Increased impacts from climate change (including flooding, severe storms, heatwaves and drought) causes environmental damage reducing residents' quality of life and increasing adaptation support required from the Council. <i>UPDATED</i></p>	Angela Woodhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy and action plan has been developed and is being implemented across council Air Quality Action Plan in place Emergency planning arrangements Parks and open spaces strategy to reduce risk of damage from trees and nature based mitigation of climate impacts Budget available to deliver actions and additional funding allocated Communication / engagement activities to increase resilience and awareness of residents and businesses for adverse weather events Use of Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS) to understand impacts of severe weather in borough Member of the Kent Climate Change Network Permanent Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager in post Permanent Biodiversity and Climate Change engagement officer in post to support public and business adaptation to climate change Part of Medway Flood Partnership and Kent Resilience Forum Strong governance arrangements in place with operational board chaired by Director of Strategy Insight and Governance, Fortnightly oversight meetings with the Leader and quarterly reports to Corporate Leadership Team, Policy Advisory Committee and the Executive 	(4 x 4) 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Implementation of the B&CC strategy and action plan to engage with public and businesses to adapt to and mitigate impacts of climate change Review of our own estate in line with ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030, and work with partners to reduce carbon, reduce surface run off and increase natural solutions to mitigate impacts of climate change and pollution Partner with KCC, other Kent districts and private landowners on widescale tree planting and nature recovery to mitigate impacts of climate change Newly appointed Emergency Planning Officer will be trained on SWIMS and take on the task of uploading impacts on SWIMS more regularly and with closer ties to KCC. Establishing with MBC B&CC action owners the best way to measure progress through KPIs Work with Medway Flood Partnership to identify and develop actions, including natural flood management (nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage), which can help to reduce flooding. Ensure Local Plan review considers level of current and future projected flood/drought risk and that new developments are planned accordingly. Work with the Kent Resilience Forum, spatial planners and other partners to enhance adaptation and emergency planning contingencies for severe weather and other climate impacts. 'Strengthening' of power and water supply and other critical infrastructure should be a priority alongside ensuring more resilient settlements 	(4 x 4) 16

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
<p>The broader housing and cost-of-living crisis leads to housing pressures increasing on the Council, affecting both costs associated with homelessness and ability to meet wider housing needs in the borough.</p> <p>UPDATED</p> <p>115</p>	William Cornall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness prevention team in place with increased resource • Access to our own housing stock to use for temporary accommodation & market rented housing (within Maidstone Property Holdings) • Closer working with private sector & housing associations • Key policies are in place: Temporary Accommodation Strategy • Implementation of Housing Management Team • Council approval in place for MBC to develop up to 1000 affordable homes of its own • We work closely with the voluntary sector and community partners • Home Finders scheme in place and supported through Government funding • Affordable Housing supplementary guidance adopted in Summer 2020 • The Council acquired Trinity Place community asset has been refurbished and opened to enable a range of housing and related services to be provided. 	(4 x 4) 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued progress towards the temporary accommodation acquisition programme funded through the MBC capital programme • Leader of Council ambition to build 1000 new Council homes as soon as possible and plans to meet this aspiration have been approved and the programme is underway with the second major new land acquisition. • New draft Housing Strategy has been considered by the CHE committee and is now out for public consultation with a view to it being adopted in Q4 • The Council continues to work with Homes England to promote the 5,000 home Heathlands garden community through the Local Plan Review, with a view to the project delivering new homes from the late 2020's. • Review of the Home Finder Scheme offer to landlords to increase the supply of stock at our disposal. 	(3 x 4) 12
<p>Major unforeseen emergency with national / international impact (e.g. new pandemic, environmental disaster)</p>	Alison Broom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong existing emergency planning framework • Active engagement with Local Resilience Forum • Flexible, committed and appropriately trained workforce • Quarterly oversight & monitoring through the Emergency Planning Group (EPG) • Some financial reserves • Good partnership working as demonstrated during Covid-19 pandemic • Continued update to Business Continuity Plans and arrangements • Ongoing considerations of financial reserves which have been increased 	(5 x 3) 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for dealing with different types of major emergencies, including water supply interruptions • Review and update of the Council's IT Disaster Recovery arrangements and Business Continuity Plans • Embedding arrangements over the quarterly review of emergency threats and risks through the EPG including horizon scanning and early warnings • Recovery and renewal funding allocated to strengthen work on community resilience 	(4 x 3) 12

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
<p>Security breach or system weakness leading to IT network failure results in wide-spread system unavailability, increased legal and financial liability and reputational damage.</p>	Georgia Hawkes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular backup programmes External testing of IT security by specialists –resulting findings and actions are implemented and tested ICT policies & staff training, including disaster recovery plan Mandatory cyber security training was rolled out and completed CLT monitoring of performance indicators, including ICT incidents Nessus scanning software reporting daily on system vulnerabilities New firewall tested and installed Ongoing programme of awareness raising through Cyber events, training, and tests Ongoing programme of IT campaigns including phishing IT Business Continuity Plan which prioritises the systems that need to be bought back online. Bulk messaging system to ensure adequate communication lines available. Gov.notify used and an awareness campaign run to encourage staff to sign up. 	(4 x 3) 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber Security Incident BC Exercise to be undertaken in November 2022 Business Impact Assessments are being reviewed and updated and will be used to update all BC Plans 	(3 x 3) 9
<p>Insufficient awareness / expertise leads to not fulfilling residential property responsibilities resulting in possible health & safety breaches.</p>	William Cornall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faithfull Farrell & Timms have been retained as a critical friend to allow the new housing management function to up skill. West Kent Housing Association (WKHA) engaged to provide an asset management service for the whole MBC residential portfolio. The whole MBC residential portfolio is now being managed by a single team within Housing & Communities, where previously it was split between Housing & Property. H&S KPIs are now recorded and reported through a permanent software solution. The H&S KPIs are reported monthly to Corporate Leadership Team. Good level of awareness from officers around H&S obligations and compliance Excellent levels of compliance being reported to the CLT monthly. 	(4 x 3) 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eventual goal of real time reporting in terms of gas safety Review of existing resources and skills underway to support the housing portfolio and management of properties. Policy & Resources Committee has approved a sizable re-investment in the Council owned Gypsy & Traveller site portfolio and works nearing completion Implementation of new specialist housing management software to support the growing portfolio. The current provider of asset management services to the MBC and MPH residential portfolios, West Kent Housing Association, has served notice to end the contract in Jan 2023, so officers are starting the procurement process for an alternative supplier/s. 	(3 x 3) 9

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
Failure of a major contractor: As a result of market pressures one of the Council's contractors goes into liquidation / administration or seeks to negotiate an increase in the cost of the contract. Leading to disruption and increased costs. <i>UPDATED</i>	Mark Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular contract monitoring and communication with contractors Procurement expertise made available through the Partnership with Tunbridge Wells Financial performance and sustainability embedded into the procurement process Contractor business continuity plans in place and alternative contractors may be available 'Exit plan' included as a requirement in the ITT document for all relevant contracts 	(4 x 3) 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing financial performance and resilience checks of our suppliers and contractors Risk register work being completed for each of the Council's strategic contracts Increased consideration of in-house provision or alternative commissioning routes 	(4 x 3) 12
Difficulties in recruiting and retaining the right skills and adapting to hybrid working leads to a loss of workforce cohesion and talent. This results in a loss of productivity.	Georgia Hawkes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce strategy monitoring & reporting Training & development programme (including hybrid working skills) Occupational health, employee support and HSE Stress Survey Recruitment process that includes ability to adjust pay and market supplement for hard to recruit jobs Rewards package reviewed regularly Commissioning specialist external support as required Online onboarding of new staff Use of ClearReview to encourage continuous conversations and clear objectives Hybrid Policy and service review of hybrid working arrangements Market Supplement Policy reviewed and updated 	(3 x 4) 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of paygrades underway Use of SmartPath to offer additional support to managers Appoint specialist consultant to advise on culture change Engagement survey for all staff the output from which will create an action plan for the Council Review potential for different approaches to recruitment Consider the use of personalised development plans, and offer this during recruitment 	(3 x 3) 9
Uncertainties relating to the Council's ability to access new funding and availability of PWLB loans. Increases difficulty securing and leveraging funding to help stabilise and support the delivery of our capital programme. <i>UPDATED</i>	Mark Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to professional networks to identify opportunities for funding Experienced officer capacity Good relationships with funding partners, e.g. Homes England Obtaining forward borrowing 	(3 x 4) 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment of one-off resources for putting together funding bids 	(3 x 3) 9

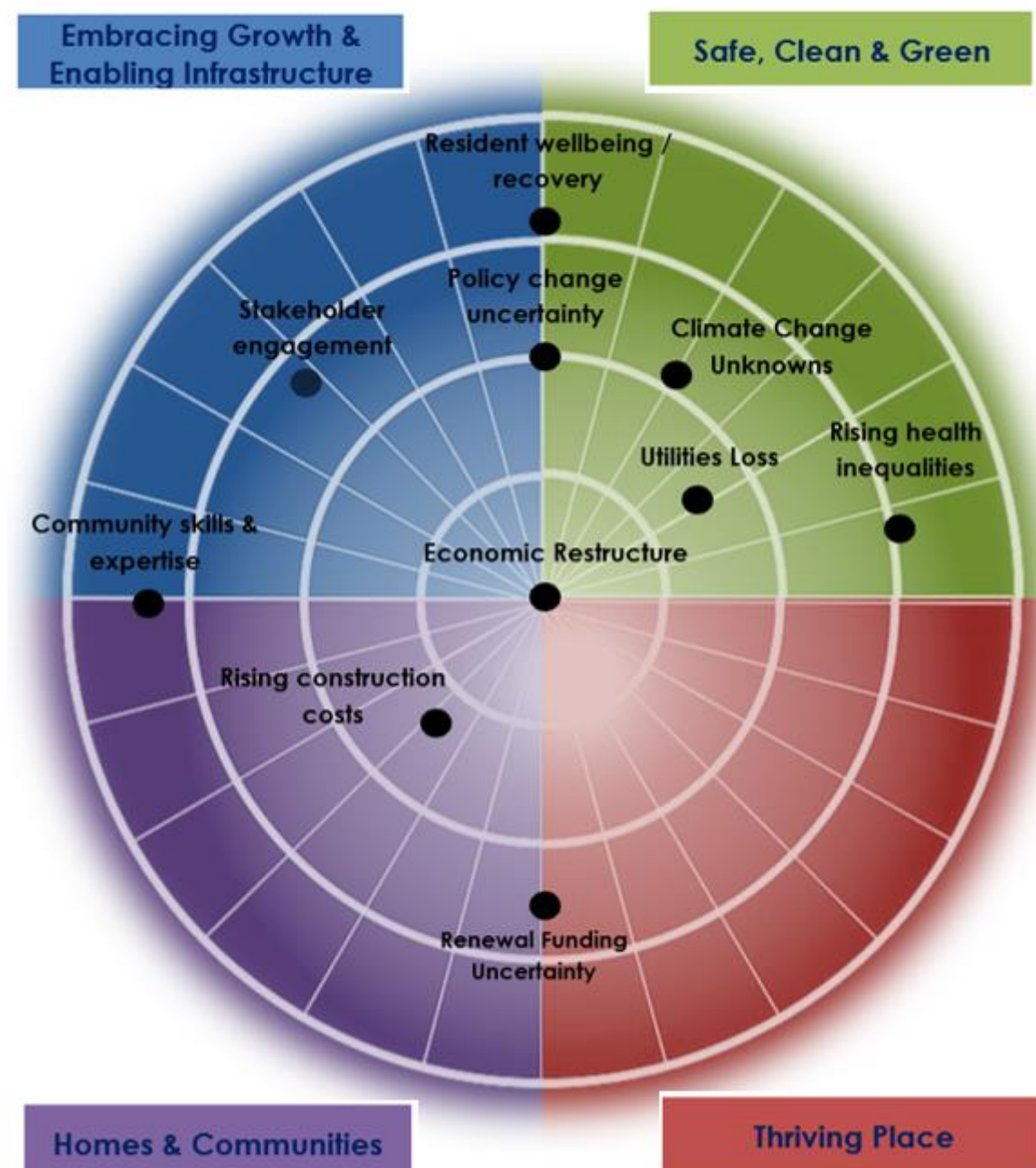
Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
<p>As a result of significant changes to the Councils' governance (including moving to executive model and the boundary review) sound governance processes may not be maintained during the change or poor processes may be introduced. Leading to delays in decision making, reputational damage or legal implications.</p>	Angela Woodhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer in place to oversee Council activities and provide advice Code of Conduct Timeline agreed for the Local Government Boundary Commission review and work overseen by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement Software to facilitate consultation on ward boundaries Templates and system for agendas and decision publication updated New constitution agreed and in place Training carried out with Officers and Members on the new governance arrangements 	(3 x 3) 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit two additional officers into Democratic Services to support the new model Review of the constitution by Democracy and General Purposes Committee, December 2022 Log of issues kept by Democratic Services – contributed to by the Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services and Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance 	(3 x 2) 6
<p>Reduced effectiveness of relationships with strategic partners Financial constraints and requirements from Government or regulators change the priorities or commitments of our strategic partners or their capacity to work with us. This causes a dislocation with our work and increases Member pressure to highlight concerns.</p>	Alison Broom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with Kent County Council via a variety of project teams including Town Centre Strategy The Community Safety Partnership with the Police and other key parties The West Kent Health and Care Partnership Board which includes Executive Board (officers) and Elected Members Forum with Participation in Kent One Public Estate Board Maidstone Health and Well-being Partnership Group Maidstone Inclusion Board Survey of all voluntary and community sector to understand changes in community need and demand for services Good integration with County-wide networks Anchor Institutions engaged in various projects including UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan Whole System event to review partnership working effectiveness – July 2022 	(3 x 3) 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen processes for continued horizon scanning with partners to understand changes in priorities and formulate an overview of all key partners Regular programme of Anchor Institutions stakeholder meetings planned from October 2022 Review of outputs from Whole System Event and significant actions to strengthen partnership working on key priorities 	(3 x 3) 9

Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Current rating (I x L)	Controls planned	Mitigated rating (I x L)
Resilience of the voluntary & community sector The pressures facing the voluntary and community sectors are unprecedented and increasing, threatening the resilience and stability of these support networks. This could result in increased financial pressures for residents of the Borough with knock-on effects for the Council.	Alison Broom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitments obtained to establish an architecture to support the voluntary and community sector and provide funding. Project to increase engagement in volunteering underway Networking session organised to advise VCS on increasing funding Investment has been made in Trinity Foyer and it has opened as a Community Hub Love Where You Live & Get Involved project has been launched and continues to be delivered Financial Inclusive Strategy has been agreed The Community resilience fund first round of funding has been distributed across a range of VCS groups across the borough Agreed part funding with the Citizens Advice Bureau for a Debt Management post Community Sector newsletter established VCS repository is live and under review to ensure it is kept up to date 	(3 x 3) 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch second round of community resilience fund bids Undertake further engagement with VCS to establish change in needs Establish a community sector forum Review Financial Inclusion Strategy in light of cost-of-living crisis 	(3 x 2) 6

External Threats (horizon scanning)

Our horizon scanning process identifies external threats over which we have no direct control or ability to manage the impact on delivery of our priorities. Our response to these threats will be an important factor in how we develop our strategies, policies and how we translate that into service delivery. As such, we can draw down any of these threats into our corporate risk register if (or when) the time is right.

For the time being, we will keep our eye on these threats and continue to provide updates as part of the quarterly monitoring report. The diagram summarises the external threats aligned to each of our priorities with those closest to the centre being those likely to happen soonest.



The following points provide some more detail on the threats outlined in the diagram above:

- **Economic Restructure** – uncertainty around employment rates, interest rates and inflation increases, and the affect this will have on the local economy, residents financial position and our operational and contractual costs and wage bill.
- **Climate change unknowns** – some of the implications of climate change are already captured within the corporate risk register. But this reflects the possibility of other as yet unknown implications from climate change.
- **Policy change uncertainty** – potential for changes in legislation and other central government policy changes.
- **Funding uncertainty** – ability of Maidstone BC to get funding which matches its aspirations and delivery goals.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – heightened sensitivity to Council plans leading to increased intolerance and complaints.
- **Resident Wellbeing and recovery** – potential for residents in the borough to not have long term improvements to their wellbeing
- **Rising health inequalities** – increasing inequality in access to health care provisions.
- **Rising construction costs** – unanticipated consequences from rising costs in the construction industry.
- **Community skills and expertise** – decline in diversity of skills and expertise within communities.
- **Utilities Loss** – loss of water, electricity or telecoms over a wide area in the Borough.

Appendix 3A Impact and Likelihood Definitions

Risks are assessed for impact and likelihood. So that we achieve a consistent level of understanding when assessing risks, the following definitions were agreed and have been used to inform the assessment of risks on the risk register.

RISK IMPACT

Level	Service	Reputation	H&S	Legal	Financial	Environment
Catastrophic (5)	Ongoing failure to provide an adequate service	Perceived as a failing authority requiring intervention	Responsible for death	Litigation almost certain and difficult to defend Breaches of law punishable by imprisonment	Uncontrollable financial loss or overspend over £500k	Permanent, major environmental or public health damage
Major (4)	Failure to deliver Council priorities Poor Service, 5+ days disruption	Significant adverse national publicity	Fails to prevent death, causes extensive permanent injuries or long term sick	Litigation expected and uncertain if defensible Breaches of law punishable by significant fines	Financial loss or overspend greater than £250k	Long term major public health or environmental incident (1+ yrs)
Moderate (3)	Unsatisfactory performance Service disrupted 3-5 days	Adverse national publicity of significant adverse local publicity	Fails to prevent extensive permanent injuries or long term sick	Litigation expected but defensible Breaches of law punishable by fines	Financial loss or overspend greater than £50k	Medium term major public health or environmental incident (up to 1 yr)
Minor (2)	Marginal reduction in performance Service disrupted 1-2 days	Minor adverse local publicity	Medical treatment required Long term injuries or sickness	Complaint or litigation possible Breaches of regulations or standards	Financial loss or overspend greater than £10k	Short term public health or environmental incident (weeks)
Minimal (1)	No performance reduction Service disruption up to 1 day	Unlikely to cause adverse publicity	First aid level injuries	Unlikely to cause complaint Breaches of local procedures	Financial loss or overspend under £10k	Environmental incident with no lasting detrimental effect

RISK LIKELIHOOD

Level	Probability	Description
Almost Certain (5)	90% +	Without action is likely to occur; frequent similar occurrences in local government / Council history
Probable (4)	60% - 90%	Strong possibility; similar occurrences known often in local government / Council history
Possible (3)	40% - 60%	Might occur; similar occurrences experienced in local government / Council history
Unlikely (2)	10% - 40%	Not expected; rare but no unheard of occurrence in local government / Council history
Rare (1)	0% - 10%	Very unlikely to occur; no recent similar instances in local government / Council history

One Page Process Summary

Step 1 – Identify Risks	Step 2 – Evaluate Risks	Step 3 – Risk Response	Step 4 – Monitor & Review																																													
<p>Best done in groups, by those responsible for delivery objectives.</p> <p>RISK is a <i>potential future</i> event that, if it materialises, has an <i>effect</i> on the achievement of our objectives.</p> <p>Consider both threats and opportunities.</p> <p>When to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Setting business aims and objectivesService planningTarget settingPartnerships & projectsOptions appraisal <p>Establish the risk owner.</p> <p>Document in the risk register.</p>	<p>Combination of the impact and likelihood of an event (the CURRENT RISK).</p> <p>Impact score is the highest from the different categories.</p> <p>Establish your key existing controls and whether they are managing the impact and/or likelihood of the risk.</p> <p>Scores can be depicted in the risk matrix:</p> <table><tr><td rowspan="5">Likelihood</td><td>5</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Impact</p>	Likelihood	5						4						3						2						1								1	2	3	4	5								<p>Black – Above our <i>tolerance</i>, immediate action and reporting to directors.</p> <p>Red – Outer limit of our <i>appetite</i>, immediate action.</p> <p>Amber – Medium risk, review existing controls.</p> <p>Green – Low risk, limited action, include in plans.</p> <p>Blue – Minimal risk, no action but annual review.</p> <p>Risk Response – 4Ts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Treat (i.e. apply controls)Tolerate (i.e. accept risk)Transfer (e.g. insurance / partnership)Terminate (i.e. stop activity) <p>After your response; where does the risk score now? (the MITIGATED RISK)</p>	<p>Completed risk registers returned to Mid Kent Audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Corporate Leadership Team monthly monitoring of black risks. Quarterly reporting of all high level (black and red) risks.6-monthly reporting to Wider Leadership Team.Risk registers sent quarterly to directors and heads of service.6-monthly monitoring at Policy & Resources Committee.Annual monitoring of process by Audit, Governance & Standards Committee. <p>Mid Kent Audit facilitate the review and update of risk actions (as per your risk register) during the year for and high-level (red / black) risks.</p>
Likelihood	5																																															
	4																																															
	3																																															
	2																																															
	1																																															
		1	2	3	4	5																																										

JCAD Roll Out

Director	Head of Service / Manager	Service	Status
Strategy, Insight & Governance	Julie Maddocks	Communications	
		Visitor Economy	Trained
	Louise Goodsell	Customer Services	
	Ryan O'Connell	Democratic & Electoral Services	
	Anna Collier	Insight, Communities & Governance	
Mid Kent Services	Bal Sandher	MKS HR	Trained
	Caroline Pieri	Mid Kent Planning Support	Trained
	Chris Woodward	MKS ICT	Trained
	Claudette Valmond	MKS Legal Services	Trained
	Zoe Kent	Mid Kent Revs & Bens	Trained
	<i>Head of Audit</i>	Mid Kent Audit	Trained
Finance, Resources & Business Improvement	Adrian Lovegrove	Finance	Trained
	<i>Head of Property & Leisure</i>	Leisure Services	Trained
		Property & Facilities	Trained
	Uche Olufemi	Emergency Planning	Trained
	Victoria Barlow	Museum	Trained
Regeneration & Place	Gary Hunter	Transformation & Digital Services	
	<i>Head of Capital Projects</i>	Capital Projects	
	<i>Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development</i>	Economic Development	
		Strategic Planning	
	Jen Stevens	Crematorium	
		Environment & Public Realm	Trained
		Parking Services Partnership	Trained
		Parks & Open Spaces	
	John Littlemore	Community & Strategic Partnerships	
		Housing	
	Rob Jarman	Development Management	
	Robert Wiseman	Building Control	
	Tracey Beattie	Mid Kent Environmental Health	Trained

Key

	Operational risks have been updated
Trained	Has completed training on how to use JCAD

Recovery and Renewal Progress Update

A Vibrant Economy						
Action	Agreed funding	Target Start	Target End	Expected Success	Progress at May 2022	Progress at August 2022
MidKent College Skills Hub	£60,000 Recovery Fund	Sep-21	TBC	Provision of a town centre venue to provide accessible training, careers advice, and employability support for all residents. Courses delivered to a range of participants including book-keeping and computerised accounting, skills development online courses, essential digital skills, certified work skills programmes, food hygiene and employability workshops and support. Courses delivered to a range of participants including bookkeeping and computerised accounting, skills development online courses, essential digital skills, certified work	Exploring barriers preventing the project progressing with the Mall. It is felt that the shop front in the Mall remains the right location for a Skills and Community Hub. The financial investment from MKC required to make the shop front serviceable far exceeded initial programme of works forecast. Negotiation is taking place regarding the refurbishment, rent, rates and insurance with the Mall. Once agreement is reached MBC will be provided with a breakdown of costs. The project will then move forward.	Regrettably, the college have not yet identified and agreed commercial terms on suitable premises. Discussions with them remain ongoing and it is hoped that the new facility will be delivered.

				skills programmes, food hygiene and employability workshop and support. With space for ten participants to be physically present in the hub it is envisaged that 208 people would be able to take advantage of the hub for courses and support over 26 weeks.		
Invest in industrial and warehouse premises to help de risk new employment sites coming forward	Capital Programme funding	Sep-21	N/A	Projects are identified to invest in and Maidstone is seen and delivers its promise of being open for business, businesses can expand and locate to the Borough.	Update delayed due to staffing changes.	<p>There are monies allocated in the Council's capital programme for such property acquisitions or developments but at the time of writing, none have yet been identified.</p> <p>This objective will now sit with the newly appointed Head of Property and Leisure that joins the Council in November.</p>
Vibrant Visitor Economy	£32,000 Business Rates Pool	Jul-21	Jul-23	Maidstone has an enhanced arts and culture offer with increased visitors to key attractions and an increase in footfall in the town centre.	Update delayed due to staffing changes.	<p>The money allocated towards this area has been used to host a calendar of 17 events throughout the summer months in Maidstone Town Centre including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fusion Festival • Brenchley Gardens Concerts

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art in the Park • Amphitheatre Workshops • Live theatre performances <p>In addition, an autumn event has been scheduled to engage with The Mall, Lockmeadow, Royal Star Arcade and Fremlin Walk introducing the first Scarecrow Trail in Maidstone.</p>
Capacity to develop projects and bids to take advantage of new funding opportunities	£45,000 Recovery Fund	Sep-21	Sep-25	Successful bids and projects completed that meet our priorities.	No action	No action
Transform the Town Centre through the development and delivery of a town centre strategy.	£175,680 Recovery Fund	Sep-21	TBC	Town Centre Strategy in place by 1 March 2023, projects may begin prior to this. Maidstone town centre becomes a centre of excellence for urban sustainability with a strong focus around arts, culture, leisure and visitor economy creating a place where people want to live, feel safe and which prides itself upon being a town centre which is relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report taken to Policy & Resource Committee in March to confirm scope and content of the strategy, and draft Engagement Strategy. • Draft Transport Brief has been prepared and is under discussion with KCC, pending discussion with members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior officer internal meetings have been held and discussions around scope of change. • Progression on access to smart data to create baseline indicators for Town Centre use. • Discussions ongoing around use and procurement of 3D modelling software • Early project briefs are being identified for

				to all of the Borough's residents and to which all of the borough's residents can relate.		discussions with Members
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Resilient Communities						
Action	Agreed funding	Target Start	Target End	Success	Progress at May 2022	Progress at August 2022
Establish Community Compact	n/a	May-21	n/a	Partnership in place between the community and voluntary sector and the council. Joint projects completed and greater resilience	MBC represented on KCC and District Council VCS Forum established in November 2021. MBC Consultation team supporting team on district mapping exercise of local forums and bodies to understand the offer across Kent.	No further update. Next Meeting of board – 23 Sept 2022
Support and Encourage Volunteering in the Borough.	£25,000 Recovery Fund	Jun-21	Oct-22	Increase in the number of volunteers, volunteering in the Borough and as a consequence more community initiatives delivered. Work with involve to develop an indicator	Working with KCC as part of Kent Volunteers pilot to promote and develop platform in Maidstone with VCS partners.	Further development to Voluntary and Community pages on website underway, to incorporate Kent Volunteers platform and resources to support individuals and organisations with volunteering. A Volunteering and Funding Support Event, organised by Funding for All in partnership with MBC is currently under development and will take place at the end of

						<p>November at the Council's new Community facilities at Trinity.</p> <p>The event will include guest speakers, offering experience and expertise in the sector. It will also include 1-1 mentoring and networking.</p>
Online Community Participation	£15,000 Recovery Fund	Sep-21		Online tool in place and used to successfully engage with the public on projects and initiatives.	Project to deliver new engagement platform underway. To be launched in July to deliver Resident Survey, facilitating wider public involvement and engagement in Council projects, initiatives and decision making.	<p>'Let's Talk Maidstone' was rolled out in July 2022, launching the Resident Survey. The response to the Resident Survey so far has eclipsed the response rate of previous years with 3341 responses to date (survey still open).</p> <p>The platform allows residents to engage in different ways such as quick polls or providing qualitative information via 'stories' and comment tools. Background information can be included on the 'project' page such as FAQs which help inform visitors to the platform on the purpose of the consultation.</p>

						To date, Let's Talk Maidstone has been used to engage the public on Operation Broc, an Arts project for Mote Park, a Business Hub has been created for Economic Development and a Planning Hub (to host local plan consultation) is due to be launched in September 2022.
Community Resilience Fund	£150,000 Recovery Fund	Oct-21	Oct-24	30 projects delivered by a variety of community and voluntary sector groups and organisations.	<p>20 organisations were funded from the 1st phase of the Community Resilience Fund amounting to £58,429.00.</p> <p>The funding will support a wide variety of activities from a diverse group of organisations including, Hi Kent, Maidstone Street Pastors, Fusion healthy living and Rubicon Cares. Organisations will be able to continue to provide or increase their ability to meet demand by providing activities and support ranging from counselling sessions and mental health support to outdoor activities to support wellbeing.</p>	There will be a second wave of funding available in Autumn/Winter 2022 for organisations in the VCS.

Equip Trinity Foyer to be a Community Hub	£30,000 Recovery Fund	Jun-21	Oct-21	New community hub delivered for all housing and related support services in Trinity.	<p>Equipment has been installed, and further resources being purchased, for digital inclusion for those using the Community Hub. This will include static laptops, audio visual training equipment and tablets for individuals to use.</p> <p>The handover of the refurbished building has been delayed – expect by end of June with activities and digital services going live to our community mid July 2022.</p>	The building is now open and fully operational.
Financial Inclusion Strategy and Actions	£34,320 Recovery Fund			The number and value of unclaimed benefits that residents are supported to claim A reduction in the number of households in financial crisis or at risk of moving into crisis Increased take up of debt advice services by households with problem debt A reduction in the number of households identified as being in a repeated pattern of Council Tax debt The number of low-income households supported with energy	<p>The Welfare Officer posts have now been in place since March 2022. A project was carried out in March 2022 to issue fuel vouchers in conjunction with KCC to those on pre-payment meters. Over 3,000 vouchers were issued in a month to 1,000 households.</p> <p>Using the Policy in Practice data pensioner households have been contacted who may be entitled to claim Pension Credit.</p>	<p>March/April fuel voucher offer: 1400 households, total vouchers issued 3184 – Total value of vouchers issued £65272</p> <p>CTS pilot scheme: 150 MBC residents contacted – 18 confirmed they would apply (data outstanding re results) 150 TWBC residents contacted – 23 confirmed they would apply (Data outstanding re results)</p> <p>CTS UC applications – 410 MBC residents contacted –</p>

				<p>efficiency measures The number of low-income households supported to access a more appropriate tariff</p>	<p>Postcards are being sent out to those who live in deprived areas who are not claiming Council Tax Support who are likely to be entitled. This will be rolled out across the Borough by area.</p> <p>The Welfare Officers will help customers who are contacted to complete applications, or they will signpost to charities or the DWP for support. Support will be provided if these customers are in rent arrears, not claiming disability benefits that they may be entitled to or unable to provide the necessary support for their families</p>	<p>110 applied – yearly award of £66153.88</p> <p>-</p> <p>262 TWBC residents contacted – 103 applied – yearly award of £52847.96</p> <p>PC take up – MBC 146 residents contacted – 72 applications submitted – due to Pension Credit backlog only 19 have been completed by DWP, total value of yearly award £45284.20. 53 Claims still waiting to be assessed by DWP.</p> <p>TWBC – 119 residents contacted – 55 applications submitted – due to Pension Credit backlog only 13 have been completed by DWP, 12 accepted and 1 declined – total value of yearly award £31034.64- 43 claims still waiting to be assessed by DWP.</p> <p>Household support fund – fuel voucher – approx. 1277 vouchers to issue valued at £49.00 each. Have issued 587 to date and remainder to be issued by end of September. Households impacted – 431</p>
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Love Where You Live and Get Involved.	£35,000 Recovery Fund	Sep-21	Sep-22	8 community environmental projects delivered. Civic Pride increased as measured by the Resident's Survey. Baseline the number of participants in the project.	<p>The 1s community Environmental project has started with a location in Tovil being identified as suitable and meeting the required criteria. Existing local volunteer groups, new volunteers, relevant members and Tovil Parish Council have all been updated and a dedicated Working group will be created in the coming months.</p> <p>A slight delay has been created due to complications removing a dilapidated building but with MBC's Building Control and Legal assisting in the removal of this building, the matter is due to be resolved within the next 2 months. Once the matter of the building is resolved with timelines, work will start.</p>	Tovil project in progress. Further projects to be revaluated based on community appetite.

Action	Agreed funding	Target Start	Target End	Success	Progress at May 2022	Progress at August 2022
Increase HR capacity to facilitate agile working and new ways of working	£50,000 Recovery Fund	Oct-21	Oct-22	Better understanding from staff on impact of changes to organisation culture Actions taken to meet future workforce requirements.	All 3 work streams of the culture change project have progressed over the last few months. The first work stream involves holding listening sessions which started at the Chief Executive level and will run through all the way to managers so that everyone has the chance to participate in these sessions in order to support the desired culture for the organisation. The second activity reviews the whole council system and this will involve staff, partners and service users to help us to understand how we are perceived and what we need to adapt or change to achieve continuous improvement in our approach to service design and delivery. This event will be taking place in July. The final work stream looks at identifying, recognising and building on the positive activities that are already taking	Listening sessions at WLT and manager level have continued across the organisation. The feedback from the manager sessions will be reviewed by the HOS to see what changes/improvements need to be made based on the feedback. The WLT had an away day on 25 July where they reviewed all the feedback from the listening sessions to identify key messages and current issues from the discussions held at team level. The WLT also explored what things they would want to hear in the future from staff and how as a group they going to make the organisation feel different to achieve this. There will be further discussions at WLT on the actions discussed at the away day. The Whole Systems event with internal staff and external partners took place on 8 July. There were a number of topic areas discussed at this meeting and the outputs have been

					place at the council and encouraging others to participate in these events. This was presented to staff in the all staff webinar in April where everyone participated in the event by providing ideas on all the different activities staff have been involved with and new ones that could be set up to increase staff engagement.	shared with the relevant individuals. The key messages from the different themes will also be shared with the WLT. We are working on creating a Teams page to encourage staff to be involved in events/activities that they are interested in as part of the community building work stream of the culture change project. At the next all staff webinar in September an update will be provided to all staff on the work that has been done on the project and things we have delivered and looking to implement on our culture change journey.
Embedding new ways of working and ensuring the office is fit for purpose	£50,000 Recovery Fund £40,000 Capital Programme	Oct-23		Flexible office space that supports the new ways of working with the right technology and facilities.	£45k funding required to provide specialist M365 consultancy and to backfill support for long-term covid sickness. £15k per partners (3) partners beginning April 2022.	Backfill support post has now ended. Learning and knowledge gained has been shared within the ICT team. Support enabled ICT to move the entire email service to the cloud and build the foundations on which the partnership will move documents to the cloud, and support new and modern ways of working through the use of workflow and automation, collaboration (internally and with external partners) and Enterprise Social Media tools

						to improve internal communications.
Ensure staff have the right equipment (office and home) to enable new ways of working	Capital Programme	Oct-21		Staff able to effectively work anywhere	£30k spent on specialist consultancy between April 22 and end of June 22. The period prior to this was funded out of existing ICT pooled budgets). The balance (£10k) is accounted for in the expense of providing additional hardware (laptops, conferencing tools etc and licences to support lockdown measures and increased homeworking 2020/21.	Conference room facilities ("HP Slice" device for "Teams in a room") are in place across the partnership. Specialist consultancy has provided the foundation to improve and secure remote access as we move more services to the cloud.

Responding to Increased Demands arising from COVID-19						
Action	Agreed funding	Target Start	Target End	Success	Progress at May 2022	Progress at August 2022
Planning Development Control fixed term post	£35,000 Recovery Fund	ASAP		Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	This has been achieved	Complete
Planning Enforcement fixed term post	£35,000 Recovery Fund	ASAP	Mar-22	Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	This has been achieved	Complete

Increased capacity in Heritage and Landscape	£70,000 Recovery Fund	ASAP		Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	This has been achieved with the fixed term appointment of a principal conservation officer	Complete
Increased capacity within Data Analytics to provide support for recovery and renewal projects	£50,000 Recovery Fund	Jul-22	Jul-23	18 dashboards in place by 2023	<p>Existing fixed term post within the Information and Analytics team will be extended later this year. Ten dashboards have already been developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management • Planning Enforcement • Community Protection • Customer Services • Waste Crime • Street Cleansing • Data Protection • Revenues • HR • Property • Compliance <p>Four more dashboards are currently in various stages of development. Meaning the team are well on target to achieve 18 by summer 2023. The team are now focusing on improving the information held on the website and making dashboards publicly</p>	<p>There are now seven more dashboards currently in various stages of development, with a current focus on the service areas within Revenues and Benefits. The team remain on target to achieve 18 by summer 2023.</p> <p>The team continue to improve the information held on the website and dashboards are publicly accessible here</p>

					available where relevant and possible	
Business Grant Distribution	£30,000 New Burdens Funding	ongoing		Maidstone continues to be the business capital of Kent	No update.	Grant distribution complete.
Revenues and Benefits – Citizens Advice Maidstone Post	£18,000 Contain Outbreak Management Fund	Aug-21		Residents with debt problems are assisted to maximise income, reduce debt by claiming the benefits they are entitled to	A service level agreement has been entered with the Citizens Advice Bureau who pro-actively contact 40 low-income households who are experiencing with debt issues.	Inline with the monitoring requirements of the SLA, data detailing contacts and outcomes is reported to the Inclusion Board.

Housing Benefit Overpayment Write Off

Appendix 5

Claimant / Debtor					
name	Address	Financial Yea	O/S Debt	Total to be Writt	Reason
WK	Property X, Marden	2010/11	£5,158.19	£34,124.00	Mr K died in January 2021. Up to that point in time we had recovered £3740.08 from the debts created in 2010/11. Solicitors have confirmed that they were initially contacted but never formally engaged and searches have turned up no probate records. Mr K's wife has recently been in contact and stated that there were no funds. Given his age and known financial and housing status [tenant] it is unlikely that there were any significant monies in the estate.
		2011/12	£19,352.44		
		2011/12	£9,613.37		

Agenda Item 21

Executive

26 October 2022

Proposed Change to Maidstone AQMA and Request to Consult on New Air Quality Action Plan

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
CHE PAC	11 October 2022
Executive	26 October 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Stuart Maxwell, Senior Scientific Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All Wards but particularly High Street Ward

Executive Summary

Air Quality in Maidstone has improved significantly in recent years to the extent that most of the Borough is now in compliance with all air quality objectives. The only area in which any objective is exceeded is Upper Stone Street. The current Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) will shortly need to be updated. It is proposed that, prior to updating the AQAP, the current Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) be revoked and a new AQMA should be declared which more closely reflects the current area of exceedance. The new AQMA would cover Upper Stone Street from Wrens Cross to Old Tovil Road. The new AQAP could then be more focussed on the Upper Stone Street Area. This report includes a draft list of potential actions for inclusion in the new AQAP. We are requesting permission to hold a public consultation on these actions.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Executive: That

1. The revocation of the old AQMA in Maidstone which will require an Air Quality Management Area Revocation Order to be issued, be agreed.
 2. The declaration of the proposed new AQMA in Maidstone, covering Upper Stone Street, as described in the report, which will require a new Air Quality Management Area Order to be issued, be agreed.
 3. Permission be granted to hold a public consultation on the proposed actions given in the report to be included in a new Air Quality Action Plan.
-

Proposed Change to Maidstone AQMA and Request to Consult on New Air Quality Action Plan

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>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve Safe, Clean and Green.</p>	Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health 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>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability cross cutting objectives by ensuring that the council is focussing its resources on the improvement of the worst areas of air quality for those people that live there and improving the environment by improving air quality through lower emissions.</p>	Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section – refer to section 5 of the report	Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health Manager
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager

Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Legal	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under The Environment Act 1995. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of Environment Act 1995	Robin Harris, Team Leader, Contentious and Corporate Governance, August 2022
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Stuart Maxwell, Senior Scientific Officer
Equalities	An EqIA will be completed as part of the project to consider the impact of the changes to the AQMA	Nicola Toulson Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals. In accepting the recommendations the Council would be fulfilling the requirements of the Health Inequalities Plan	Jolanda Gjoni, Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The proposal will have no impact on Crime and Disorder	Tracey Beattie, Mid Kent Environmental Health
Procurement	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for any individual actions that require procurement. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and Theme 1 to 4 of the LES have been used as a basis to frame aspects off the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, namely with actions 1.1 to 1.12 and therefore the recommendations of this report align with the Sustainable	James Wilderspin, Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	Transport theme of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Maidstone first declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2008. The AQMA encompassed the whole of the Maidstone conurbation, including a number of areas of exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean objective. These so called 'hotspots' included the High Street, Upper Stone Street, Well Road, the Junction of Tonbridge Road and Fountain Lane, and the Wheatsheaf Junction. However, the AQMA also included many areas where there were no exceedances of any air quality objectives.
- 2.2 In 2018, the 2008 AQMA was replaced with a newer, smaller AQMA, more closely aligned to the actual areas of exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean objective, which followed the carriageways of the main roads through the district. The modelling on which the new AQMA was based was done in 2016, and based on the data from 2014, which was the most up to date available at the time.
- 2.3 Air quality in Maidstone has improved considerably in the last five or six years. This local trend reflects a national trend of improvement in air quality. The primary drivers of this trend of improvement are the introduction of Euro VI engines, particularly in HGVs, the increased uptake of electric and hybrid vehicles, and a decrease in the popularity of diesel passenger cars. At the same time, large numbers of the oldest most polluting vehicles are being taken out of the vehicle fleet as they reach the end of their service lives.
- 2.4 The result of these improvements over several years is that most of the areas of Maidstone which were previously recognised as air quality hotspots, have now come into compliance with all air quality objectives.
- 2.5 The remaining area of concern is Upper Stone Street. Upper Stone Street has also seen a trend of decreasing pollution levels, however, levels there were particularly high, and there is still an exceedance of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide. As part of our 'review and assessment' function, under the Environment Act, 1995, monitoring in Upper Stone Street includes continuous automatic monitoring of NO₂, as well as six diffusion tube sites. PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are also monitored but the objectives are not exceeded.
- 2.6 Our Air Quality Action Plan, (which is currently called the 'Low Emission Strategy') is due to be updated. The drafting of the Low Emission Strategy coincided with the end of the Council's 2008 to 2015 Carbon Management Plan, and thus included a few actions related to 'Carbon Management' in addition to the air quality actions. It was therefore called the Low Emission Strategy to distinguish it from the usual Air Quality Action Plan. The Council now has a Climate Change Strategy, agreed in October 2020, therefore the new action plan, which will not attempt to duplicate actions being undertaken in the Climate Change Strategy, will only contain actions

directed specifically at local air quality, and will simply be called the Air Quality Action Plan.

- 2.7 MBC has commissioned Air Quality Consultants (AQC) Ltd to review the current AQMA and previously used AQC to undertake air quality modelling in 2018.
- 2.8 AQC's report has confirmed that the majority of the current AQMA could now be revoked, with the only remaining area of exceedance being in Upper Stone Street, between Wrens Cross and Old Tovil Road.
- 2.9 The annual mean objective for NO₂ applies primarily at residential property. A different objective applies to people outside, eg pedestrians, shoppers etc, and this objective is not exceeded anywhere in the Borough.
- 2.10 It has been estimated that the current AQMA contains about 1400 residential properties. AQC's report suggests that there are only 53 residential properties in Upper Stone Street in an exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean and these properties would need to remain in an AQMA when the existing AQMA is revoked.
- 2.11 The annual mean objective for NO₂ is 40µgm⁻³. Of the 53 residential receptors exceeding this objective, 44 are in the range 40 to 60µgm⁻³ and a further 9 are at a level of over 60µgm⁻³.
- 2.12 AQC then went on to consider the effect of improvements to the bus fleet on air quality in Upper Stone Street. An ANPR camera survey was undertaken in order to establish baseline fleet composition and used this to model a baseline year of 2022.
- 2.13 Owing to the ongoing trend of improving air quality, the modelling predicted a reduction in the number of residential receptors in an exceedance of the annual mean objective for NO₂ from 53 to 30. This would occur in the absence of any additional interventions. Of these 30, 27 will be in the range 40 to 60µgm⁻³ and the remaining 3 will be at a level in excess of 60µgm⁻³.
- 2.14 If the buses operating on Upper Stone Street were restricted to Euro VI only, the 30 residential receptors in an exceedance would be cut to only 18, of which 15 would be in the range 40 to 60µgm⁻³ and the remaining 3 would be at a level in excess of 60µgm⁻³. The modelling suggested that allowing only electric buses to operate in Upper Stone Street would not currently bring about an additional reduction in the number of receptors in the area of exceedance, however, logically it would offer additional air quality benefits which would help to bring forward compliance with the objectives.
- 2.15 AQC's conclusions are primarily based on consideration on data from 2019, which was the last year unaffected by the impact of the COVID pandemic. Data from 2020 and 2021 are lower than 2019, mainly as a result of COVID restrictions, however, owing to the long-term trend of improvements in air quality, we would have expected somewhat lower levels even without the COVID restrictions.

- 2.16 MBC has already considered, in some depth, potential actions for improving air quality in Upper Stone Street in 2019, when a range of options was investigated by consultants Arcadis and ITP. A long list of measures which had the potential to improve air quality in Upper Stone Street was evaluated by the consultants and nearly all of them were rejected because they were either impractical, too expensive, or likely to simply displace the problems to a different location. One option previously considered and rejected by Members as part of this project was a Clean Air Zone. Our consultants demonstrated that the Clean Air Zone would actually only have a marginal benefit, and therefore it is assumed that this is still an option that Members would still not wish to pursue.
- 2.17 However, as a result of the above investigations, MBC has recently tightened parking restrictions in Upper Stone Street. Single yellow lines have been replaced with double yellow lines, and loading restrictions were also increased (no loading between 7:00am to 8:00pm). MBC also worked with KCC to ensure that new trees being planted in the area were optimised for air quality in terms of species and spacing.
- 2.18 It is proposed that the Air Quality Action Plan should primarily be focussed on the main problem area, and therefore, following the recommendations of AQC Ltd, the boundaries of the AQMA should now be changed to reflect more accurately where the problem area currently is, namely, Upper Stone Street.
- 2.19 The actions below are proposed to be included in the Action Plan. We are requesting authorisation to hold a public consultation on these actions, which will be developed in the light of consultation responses. Note that some actions are continuations of actions which have been successfully worked on previously.
- 2.20 Where possible, actions will be focussed on addressing the specific air quality issue in the new AQMA. Some actions, however, will necessarily be more generally applied, eg the Clean Air For Schools programme, which should result in Borough wide air quality improvements.
- 2.21 Delivery of these actions will require MBC to work with other stakeholders, of which the main one will be KCC. Others will include DEFRA, local bus companies, and local schools.
- 2.22 Following the declaration of the AQMA, DEFRA guidance states that the Air Quality Action Plan should ideally produced within 12 months.
- 2.23 Actions to be included in the consultation are:-
- **Improvement to bus fleet in Maidstone, with special emphasis on services operating Upper Stone Street.** The report from AQC estimates that approximately 16.4% of the NO_x pollution on Upper Stone Street originates from buses. Maidstone's bus fleet is very old. Approximately 72% of the pollution from buses on Upper Stone Street arises from Euro II, Euro III and Euro IV buses. KCC has identified Maidstone as a priority corridor for electric bus upgrades, but this is

dependent upon the award of government funding. In the meantime, we would like to see the best available buses operating on Upper Stone Street. Legal advice has suggested that no improvements to the bus fleet could be achieved without the involvement of KCC, other than via informal arrangements with the local bus companies.

- **Review of Air Quality Planning Guidance to reflect updated air quality information** The current Air Quality Planning Guidance is out of date and needs to be updated to reflect current best practice and take account of the new Future Homes Standard. This may include increasing the requirement for AQ mitigation in and around the new AQMA, but we will need to ensure that the requirements are appropriate for the current air quality situation. The guidance must aim to prevent development having a negative impact on the AQMA, for example, by use of developer contributions to fund air quality improvement schemes (eg car club, bike hire schemes, travel plans etc, or similar). This review will need to take account of the status and content of the new Local Plan at the time it's undertaken.
- **Review of Taxi Policy** to include consideration of whether any agreed improvements to vehicle standards could be brought forward, and investigation of what support might be available to facilitate these improvements.
- **Information campaign to residents of the new AQMA?** A grant has been applied for from DEFRA to fund this action and we are waiting to hear whether the funding has been approved.
- **Extension to the Clean Air For Schools (CAFS) programme.** Officers are currently developing a digital air quality resource, with funding from a DEFRA air quality grant awarded in 2021. This will start to be rolled out to schools in 2022.
- **A campaign of anti-idling signage across the Borough, focussing on schools and other known or identified problem areas.** Officers are currently working to identify suitable locations for anti-idling signage and some signs have already been deployed.
- **Consider discount on resident's parking for EV vehicles.** It is anticipated that it should be possible to offer this in the next 3 to 5 years (and conversely, perhaps an increased tariff for the most polluting vehicles) Environmental Health will continue to liaise with parking to influence future reviews of Parking Strategy.
- **Review provision of EV parking in Council car parks.** Whilst data currently shows that the current provision of 18 EV charging points is underutilised, this will be closely monitored and expanded to meet demand over time.
- **Continuation of MBC sponsorship of the Walk on Wednesday Scheme.** MBC currently supports the Kent Messenger Walk on Wednesday scheme, which encourages schoolchildren to walk to school.

- 2.24 Across the Mid Kent Environmental Health Service, other actions are being considered, which might be adapted to have relevance in Upper Stone Street. These include, promotion of the Kent Revs e-van loan scheme, e-bike hire schemes, car clubs, increased use of travel plans, live information bus stops, and signage to notify drivers that they are in an AQMA.
- 2.25 Consideration has also been given to the possible introduction of a 20mph speed limit in Upper Stone Street (and adjoining side streets). AQC's report includes an assessment of this idea, based on relevant literature, and concludes that the impact of a 20mph speed limit on air quality in Upper Stone Street is likely to be very small, but beneficial. The report also notes that 20mph speed limits can offer other benefits apart from their impact on air quality, e.g. reduced noise and improved safety. However, due to uncertainty about the implementation and enforcement of such a scheme, we have not added it to the list of measures to be consulted on.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1** is to do nothing, however, unless the Action Plan is updated, the Council will fail to comply with its statutory duties on Local Air Quality Management.
- 3.2 **Option 2** is to leave the boundary of the AQMA unchanged and just update the action plan. However, there is not really any advantage in having a larger than necessary AQMA. In the view of officers, updating the AQMA to reflect changing pollution levels is good practice.
- 3.3 **Option 3** is to revise the boundary of the AQMA in line with AQC's recommendations. The Action Plan can then be updated with a particular emphasis on addressing the air quality issues specific to the new AQMA. Members request Environmental Health to undertake a public consultation on the measures listed in the report.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is option 3, which is the option which best complies with the current statutory guidance. As part of the process of revoking the old AQMA and declaring the new AQMA, MBC is required to consult with DEFRA, which has been done through MBC's Annual Status Report to DEFRA which DEFRA has accepted. The smaller AQMA will more accurately reflect the true air quality picture in Maidstone, as compared to the current AQMA. It will also help to keep the new Air Quality Action Plan focussed on the relevant area.
-

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. The only risk would be associated with taking no action, which would mean that the Council could no longer demonstrate compliance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
- 5.2 We note that if the recommendation is approved, the next stage is to consult on the proposed measures. This will provide an additional opportunity to identify any risk associated with the proposed changes before they are implemented.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 This issue was considered by the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee on 11 October 2022, and the Committee supported the recommendations of this report.
- 6.2 Changes to the AQMA and the preparation of an AQAP require consultation. DEFRA is the key statutory consultee in both cases. Other consultees are
- The Environment Agency.
 - Highways England.
 - The County Council.
 - Neighbouring Authorities.
 - Bodies representing local businesses.
 - The public.
- 6.3 Officers from Mid Kent Environmental Health and MBC's Policy Team will organise the consultation, following approval of the recommendation in this report.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following the consultation on the Action Plan actions, described in Section 6, the consultation responses will be evaluated, and any additional actions arising from the consultation will be included in the final AQAP, if appropriate. The final Action Plan will come back to the Executive for approval.
- 7.2 Details of the final AQMA and AQAP are required to be submitted to DEFRA. They will also be made available on the Council's website.
- 7.3 In order for the old AQMA to be formally revoked, an AQMA revocation order will need to be produced, which will need to be signed and sealed.
- 7.4 In order for the new AQMA to be formally declared, an AQMA order will need to be produced, which will need to be signed and sealed. A draft of the AQMA order is appended to this report.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- **Appendix A:** Draft AQMA Order for Proposed AQMA
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Air Quality Consultants - AQMA Review Maidstone – December 2021
(Appendix F of MBC's Annual Status Report to DEFRA, 2022)

[MBC Annual Status Report 2022](#)

APPENDIX A

Draft AQMA Order for Proposed AQMA

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE UPPER STONE STREET AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA (AQMA) ORDER 2022

ENVIRONMENT ACT 1995 PART IV – SECTION 83(1)

Whereas Maidstone Borough Council ("The Council") is satisfied that as a result of its air quality review and the Detailed Assessment report dated December 2021 the air quality objective for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) (annual mean) may not be achieved by the relevant date prescribed by the Air Quality (England) (Wales) Regulations 2000 in some parts of the area described below.

The Council, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 83(1) of the Environment Act 1995 HEREBY ORDER THAT:-

1. The area of Upper Stone Street, between Wrens Cross and Old Tovil Road as shaded in red on the attached map shall be designated as an Air Quality Management Area, to be known as the Upper Stone Street Air Quality Management Area.
2. The Air Quality Management Area will be an air quality management area in relation to Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) only.
3. The order shall be cited as The Upper Stone Street Air Quality Management Area Order (2022).
4. The order shall come into force on 1st December 2022 and shall remain in force until varied or revoked by subsequent order.

**THE COMMON SEAL OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL WAS HERE
UNTO AFFIXED ON THE 1st DAY OF DECEMBER 2022 AND SIGNED IN THE
PRESENCE OF
Solicitor – Authorised Signatory**



Proposed Upper Stone Street AQMA

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Executive

26 October 2022

Town Centre Strategy – Procurement of Professional Team

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee	4 October 2022
Executive	26 October 2022

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Executive
Lead Head of Service	Chief Executive
Lead Officer and Report Author	Alison Broom
Classification	<p>Public with Exempt Appendix</p> <p>Appendix B Exempt – The information contained within the Exempt Appendix is considered exempt under the following paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:</p> <p>3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)</p> <p>Public Interest Test: The public interest in non-disclosure of the information contained within the Exempt Appendix outweighs the public interest in disclosure of the information. Disclosure of the information contained within the Exempt Appendix would compromise the Council's position in the procurement process.</p>
Wards affected	All with particular impact for High Street, East, Fant and North wards

Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to secure agreement to the allocation of funding for a professional team to support the Council in the preparation of our Maidstone Town Centre Strategy and authority for the appointment of the preferred supplier. It sets out the background to the decision that a Town Centre Strategy should be produced, summarises decisions made by the former Policy and Resources Committee and the scope of expertise to be secured to complement that of the Council's policy and engagement, economic development, spatial planning, development management and property teams.

The issue was considered by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee on 4 October 2022 and the Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. That the existing resources contained in Exempt Appendix B be allocated for funding professional expertise needed for development of the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy.
2. That, following the procurement evaluation process, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive for appointment of the professional team in consultation with the Leader (who is the Lead Member with responsibility for Economic Development).
3. That delegated authority is given to the Head of the Mid-Kent Shared Legal Service to enter into a contract with the preferred supplier.

Town Centre Strategy – Procurement of Professional Team

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve corporate priorities for embracing growth and enabling infrastructure, Maidstone being a thriving place, safe clean and green and homes and communities.	Chief Executive
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>The report recommendations support the achievement of cross cutting objectives heritage is respected and biodiversity and environmental sustainability is respected.</p>	Chief Executive
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section at paragraph 5.	Chief Executive
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendations are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The purpose of this report is to allocate funding from an already agreed budget to secure extra expertise to deliver the Maidstone Town Centre Strategy.	Chief Executive
Legal	The Council must follow its internal procurement rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015. When the consultant is selected, Legal can draft a suitable contract that protects the Council's interests.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning, MKLS
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team

Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an Equalities Impact Assessment. The Town Centre Strategy once produced may impact on service delivery and a judgement will be made about the need for an Equalities Impact Assessment when consideration is given to adopting the Strategy.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations may ultimately have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals as the Council endeavours to incorporate health improvement in all its strategies and policies.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	We recognise that the recommendations may ultimately have a positive impact on community safety as the Council endeavours to incorporate a reduction in crime and disorder in all relevant strategies and policies.	Head of Service or Manager
Procurement	The Council is undertaking a procurement exercise to put a professional team in place to complement internal expertise and capacity and thereby enable the Town Centre Strategy to be produced. The recommendations in this report would enable resources to be allocated from an already agreed budget and delegations for appointment to be made within agreed parameters.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered; there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change however the Town Centre Strategy will ultimately address these issues.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reports concerning the Town Centre Strategy were presented to the Policy and Resources Committee in September and October 2021 and March 2022. These led to discussions around the principle and scope of an ambitious Town Centre Strategy for Maidstone designed to establish and provide clarity on the Council's long-term vision for the town centre to 2050, complemented by a comprehensive delivery plan to achieve this. Following engagement with the service committees in the late part of 2021, the scope and workstreams of the proposed Strategy were amended. In March 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed the scope and workstreams for the Town Centre Strategy, the governance structure, and principles for engagement with the public and key stakeholders.
- 2.2 Delivery of the Strategy needs a wide range of expertise and significant capacity. To put this in place the Council has established a project team with expertise from policy and engagement, economic development, spatial planning, development management and property teams. Our experience with other projects has demonstrated the benefits of complementing the internal team with external professional expertise to provide specialist knowledge, skills and capacity.
- 2.3 Informal engagement with the Executive and market engagement has taken place to inform, amongst other things, the scope of the brief for external professional advice and strategy production and information requirements. The brief has been established and is set out in Appendix A. The brief includes greening and lighting as identified in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan with a financial contribution from this source of £20,000. It is envisaged that this work will take approximately 12-14 months commencing in December 2022 and spanning the financial years 2022/3 and 2023/4.
- 2.4 Market engagement has provided a range in the cost of expertise and capacity to produce the Strategy and a delivery plan which varies quite widely dependent on a number of factors including the extent of public and stakeholder engagement, the amount of additional information (beyond that already held by the Council) needed and the range/depth of options appraisals e.g. for opportunity sites and elements of the spatial framework that is needed – with all these dependent on feedback including from members generally and decision makers. The former Policy and Resources Committee made financial provision for the Town Centre Strategy on two occasions. In October 2021 the Committee agreed to allocate £175,680 from the Covid Recovery and Renewal Fund for year 1 costs to develop the Town Centre Strategy. In February 2022 the Committee and subsequently Full Council agreed that the first £1 million of 2022/23 New Homes Bonus be allocated for strategic policy and plan making. This includes work on the Town Centre Strategy.
- 2.5 As part of this process, the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee was asked to consider and recommend the allocation of funding as set out in Exempt Appendix B for the engagement of an external professional team.

- 2.6 Procurement services at this scale require the Council to apply the “Find a Tender Service” methodology; this has replaced the OJEU/TED methodology from 31 December 2020 as a result of Brexit. The cost quality ratio of this process is key to securing a professional team of the best calibre that the Council can achieve within its allocated budget. It is requested that, following the procurement evaluation process, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive for appointment of the professional team in consultation with the Leader (who is the Lead Member with responsibility for Economic Development) and that delegated authority is given to the Head of the Mid-Kent Shared Legal Service to enter into a contract with the preferred supplier.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 – that the Executive considers the recommendations set out in this report and supports them; the merit of this option is that the Town Centre Strategy can be progressed quickly, drawing on expertise and capacity that the Council would otherwise not have access to, whilst equally ensuring a good quality Strategy.
- 3.2 Option 2 – that the Executive considers the recommendations set out in the report and agrees an alternative approach.
- 3.3 Option 3 – that the Executive considers the recommendations set out in the report and agrees not to continue with the process of securing external expertise to support the creation of a Town Centre Strategy; the impact of this would be the opposite of Option 1 including potential adverse consequences for the quality of the work and pace at which the Strategy is progressed.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1. The allocation of funding and engagement of a professional team to support delivery of the Town Centre Strategy will positively contribute to the Council’s aspiration to create a town centre which responds to current and future challenges. This is a key pillar in the Council’s Economic Development Strategy, to delivering the policies in the Local Plan and for the quality of life for the town centre community.
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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 – see below. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council’s risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
- 5.2 The creation of a Town Centre Strategy is a key mitigation action for several corporate risks relating to restructuring of the economy and particularly

changes to town centres and high street retail, as well as to the delivery of housing in the town centre particularly at opportunity sites and in articulating how further housing can be accommodated in this broad location.

- 5.3 The risks in terms of the procurement of a professional team relate to ensuring the quality of expertise and value for money of the tendered offers. These risks have been mitigated by undertaking a market engagement stage in the procurement process. This produced a significant response, from 15 consultancy companies with a range of useful feedback which has been considered in preparing the brief and as background to this report in terms of factors such as financial provision. Subject to decisions on allocating funding, the subsequent procurement process evaluations will emphasise quality as part of the value for money assessment.
- 5.4 There are risks to the Council of not having sufficient expertise in all areas and capacity to develop the Town Centre Strategy. In addition to compromising the mitigation to corporate risks for the economy and housing supply, there would also be a reputational risk, should the Council be perceived as not investing sufficiently or strategically enough to mitigate these.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The former Policy and Resources Committee has considered and agreed both the need for, scope of and the workstreams of a Town Centre Strategy, and in doing so considered the input from the three service committees in place until May 2022.
- 6.2 Engagement with stakeholders and anchor institutions to inform the Strategy took place on 26 September 2022; engagement and consultation is a key element of the production of the Strategy.
- 6.3 Market engagement has been undertaken as part of the preparation for procurement of a professional team.
- 6.4 The issue was considered by the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee on 4 October 2022 and the Committee supported the recommendations set out in the report.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If the recommendations are agreed, the procurement process will progress to source the professional expertise needed for development of the Town Centre Strategy.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A: Brief – Town Centre Strategy Professional Team Procurement

Exempt Appendix B – Recommended financial provision for Town Centre Strategy Professional Team Procurement

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix A

Brief – Town Centre Strategy Professional Team Procurement

Maidstone Council is producing a town centre strategy the purpose of which is to establish and provide clarity on the long-term vision for the town centre, complemented by a comprehensive delivery plan to achieve this and an inward investment plan to enable the council to engage with current land and property owners and potential new investors.

This work will be underpinned by a set of core principles which reflect

- the vision for the county town at the heart of Kent
- a borough with vibrant and prosperous urban and rural communities
- the appetite of the council's decision makers and stakeholders for change

The aim is for the strategy to

- Strengthen the economic base of the town centre
- Bring about the re-invention and renaissance of Maidstone town centre as an exemplar of sustainability and design
- Have a strong focus around heritage, arts, culture, leisure, and the visitor economy including the evening economy
- Create a place where people want to live and feel safe including in the public realm
- Have an equal emphasis upon the town centre as the County Town including as a district/regional destination for those visiting it from within the borough and beyond and its role as a local centre for those who live in the town centre or in the surrounding area.

It will

- Guide regeneration, investment (including directly by MBC) and development
- Guide infrastructure provision
- In the short / medium term enable the provision of support to town centre communities and businesses in continuing to recover from, and respond to, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a post-Brexit economy
- Enable proactive management of potential change resulting from the relaxation of planning rules
- Be complemented in the short term by investment of resources via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (around £1m) and Safer Streets Fund (£.56m)

The strategy will be used to

- Complement the current Local Plan (at examination in September 2022) and inform the next plan potentially being developed into a Development Plan Document
- Deliver actions of the Economic Development strategy (adopted 2021) particularly Priority 5 “Destination Maidstone Town Centre”.
- Inform actions and projects undertaken to achieve the future vision
- Inform future bids for funding including through Levelling Up
- Promote inward investment into the town centre

Infrastructure that will need to be assessed and tested includes

- Improved access to Lockmeadow area
- Improved access to Archbishop’s Palace and the associated heritage quarter
- Simplification of transport circulation arrangements on the north side of the town centre to enable opportunity site at Haynes garage to be achieved
- Improvements for public transport interchange at Maidstone East
- Improved connectivity to riverside activities
- Public realm improvements including at Earl Street, in the vicinity of Sessions House/Maidstone East
- Smart technology throughout the town centre
- Improvements to lighting
- Improvements to open space and green infrastructure

To achieve this MBC is looking to engage a professional team which will work collaboratively with the council’s project team and assist in producing

- A “masterplan” of what goes where, connectivity within the town centre and of the town centre to surrounding residential areas and transport systems
- Urban design principles for the town centre including for exemplar quality public realm, environmental sustainability and smart connectivity
- An infrastructure plan to include identification and assessment of transport and public realm improvements
- A community infrastructure plan to include identification of facilities for the residential community in consultation with providers including health, education, and community leaders
- Review of current development guidelines for 3 opportunity sites (nb the council produced guidelines for 5 opportunity sites of which 2 have progressed to planning application/development stages)

- Production of development policy guidelines for additional opportunity sites identified through the vision and master plan work
- Specific proposals relating to lighting including short- and longer-term improvements
- Specific proposals with respect to green and blue infrastructure including short- and longer-term improvements

How the spaces in the town centre are used and business support are outside the scope of the commission.

Agenda Item 23

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted