

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ACTING AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday 6 October 2022

Time: 7.30 pm or at the conclusion of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting, whichever is the later.

Venue: Town Hall, High Street Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors English (Chairman), Cannon (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Cleator, Conyard, Garten, Hastie, Hinder, Jeffery, Knatchbull, McKenna and T Wilkinson

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

AGENDA

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information
8. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
9. Question and Answer session from Local Residents (if any)
10. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
11. Briefing on Safety in the Town Centre

1 - 20

Issued on 28 September 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Tuesday 4 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.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Tuesday 4 October 2022). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

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

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

Overview and Scrutiny Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee – Member Briefing on Safety in the Town Centre.

Briefing Note

At the 6 October 2022 meeting of the Committee (acting as the Crime & Disorder Committee), a briefing will be provided that will outline the measures taken to improve safety in the town centre.

The briefing will be provided by Martyn Jaynes, Community & Strategic Partnerships Manager and supported by Kent Police, Youth Services and One Maidstone. John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services will also be in attendance.

As the relevant Lead Member on the Executive for the review's subject matter, Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid will also be invited to attend.

Topics to be covered (subject to amendment depending on the latest information available)

- Town Centre Task Force
- Statistics on crime in the Town Centre
- Areas of Focus
- Partners
- Safeguarding

Next Steps – 18 October 2022 Meeting

Based on the feedback received and questions asked from the Member briefing, questions will be formulated for the external stakeholders that will be invited to attend the 18 October 2022 meeting.

Additional Information

The following information has been included with this briefing note:

1. Extract from the Community Safety Plan
2. Extracts relating to Safety in the Town Centre from the 'Town Centre Strategy Data Pack' (as the area defined within the proposed Town Centre strategy)
3. Review Scope



Provide a Safe Town Centre

PROVIDE A SAFE TOWN CENTRE: *A Space to Feel Safe*

Why is this important?

Maidstone is the County Town of Kent hosting one of the largest retail centres in the southeast. It has excellent rail and road networks to London and the County. Many of our residents utilise the town for retail, leisure and work. As a transportation hub the Town Centre also welcomes large numbers of commuters and children travelling to and from school. It also hosts a large night-time economy that brings its own challenges and rewards. The town benefits from a Business Improvement District, One Maidstone, which provides the MaidSafe radio network and works in partnership with the police, local authorities and local businesses to reduce crime, increase trade and make Maidstone a safer environment for its staff, customers and visitors.

Recent surveys highlight that both adults and young people feel the Town Centre at times is unsafe. A minority of isolated but unacceptable incidents have further tarnished the Town's reputation. Analysis shows that there are hotspots within the Town Centre where violent crime and ASB is most prevalent.

We must remain realistic to the fact that the Town Centre attracts a variety of people and as a result, there will be occasional incidents.

What is the SMP's Objective?

The SMP will work to restore the reputation of the town as a place where people feel safe and are safe.

What is our focus?

SMP Partners will:

- develop a multi-agency task force to address concerns, such as:
 - anti-social behaviour
 - violence, particularly in the night-time economy
 - substance misuse and illegal supply of drugs and alcohol, particularly to children
 - vulnerable people who live in the town, including domestic abuse
- ensure businesses develop a culture in the town that keeps people safe in both day-time and night-time economies
- protect young people by challenging behaviour and ensuring safeguarding opportunities are provided for those in need of support
- work to improve the reputation of the town by sharing successes and publicising initiatives that make people feel safe when in the town

What will we do?

The SMP will bring together statutory and non-statutory partners to form a dedicated Town Centre Task Force to develop a new multi-agency strategy.

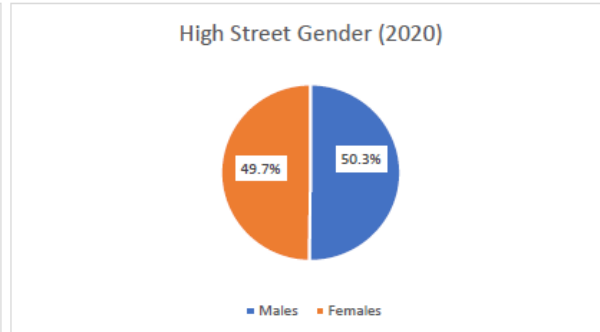
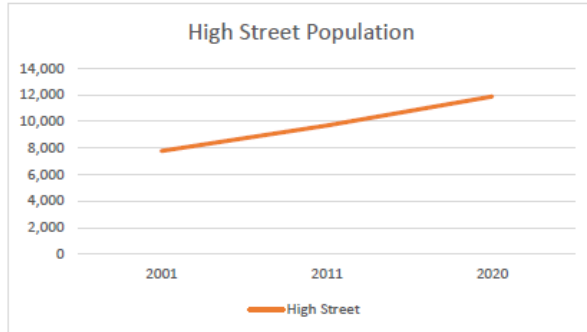
Extracts relating to Safety in the Town Centre from the 'Town Centre Strategy Data Pack'.

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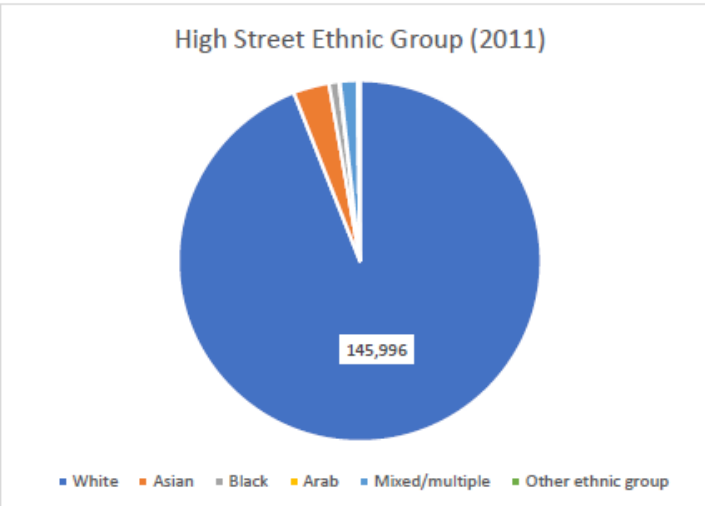


High Street Population

Area	2001	2011	2020	Population Density /km ² [2020]	Annual Population Change % [2011 → 2020]
Maidstone	138,948	155,143	173,132	440.2	1.2
High Street	7,773	9,690	11,852	6157	2.2

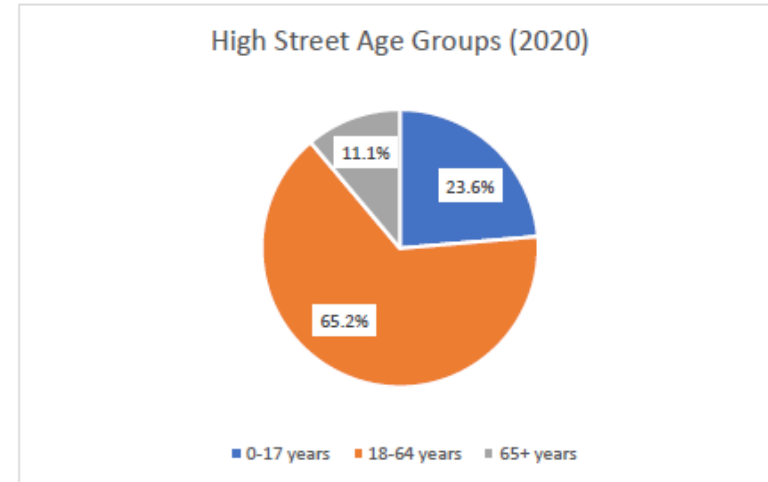


Ethnic Group	Count
White	145,996
Asian	4,943
Black	1,380
Arab	140
Mixed/multiple	2,345
Other ethnic group	339



Age Group	Count
0-17 years	2,802
18-64 years	7,731
65+ years	1,319

Age Distribution	Count
0-9 years	1,694
10-19 years	1,339
20-29 years	1,916
30-39 years	2,229
40-49 years	1,601
50-59 years	1,317
60-69 years	799
70-79 years	554
80+ years	404



Results from the Resident Survey 2022

I want Maidstone town centre to be...

We received 77 comments from events and 214 were received through the Council's engagement platform, a total of 291 comments. The top twelve themes are listed in the table below and examples of comments are shown.

Theme	Total
Crime & Safety	112
Shops	107
Lovely, Nice & Thriving	55
Cleanliness	51
Leisure Services	36
Parking	23
Active Travel	20
Roads & Traffic	17
River Medway	16
Other	13
County Town	11
Planning & Development	9

a town centre which is clean, bright and welcoming. I want it to have a better variety of shops, less mobile shops, less e-cigarette shops

Free parking to encourage visitor to town - move market to Town Centre

An enjoyable shopping experience. There are too many empty shops.

Much, much more beautiful. We are in a very special location on the river, with some lovely old buildings and a few nice new ones (the Millennium Bridge), but there are a lot of supremely ugly things that really ruin it.

A safe place for leisure, culture and shopping with more arts facilities and easy access for all ages

In answer to 'I want Maidstone Town Centre to be.....'

more green orientated, with a few trees to sit under and relax. Less eating facilities.

Brought into the 21st Century with a clear central area, perhaps a water feature instead of the decrepit queens monument, modern shops, properly pedestrianised Earl Street and above all to feel safe and clean and welcoming with better control over ant-social groups

Worthy of being the county town. At present Maidstone is not a town you would go to willingly . Shops are closed down, the whole town has a run down air . Police presence is non existent and the area around Brenchley gardens is definitely a no go area.

Greener, it would be great to have better access for walking and cycling. I would like more independent shops and restaurants. I would like it to have bio diverse planting and be somewhere that leads in becoming climate neutral.

Clean and safe, and a pleasure to walk around. I would love there to be unique shops. A place to amble around rather than rush in and out of.

Clean, safe and enjoyable to wander round. Residents and visitors to have a sense of responsibility to their surroundings and other people. No litter, scooters (including mobility scooters) travelling at more than walking pace. In a nutshell, a place for residents to have pride in.

A safe place to go at night

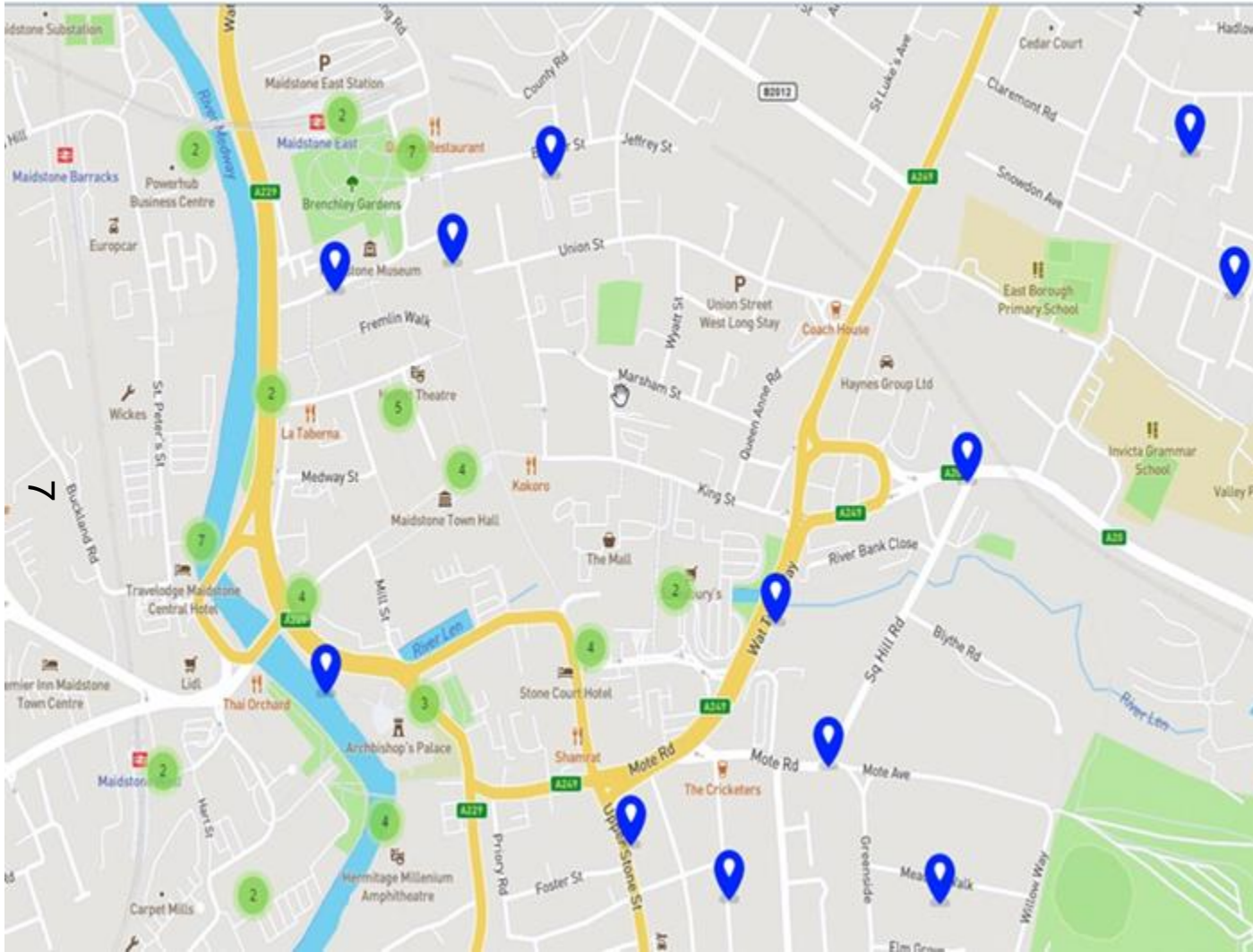
A place where communities come together to celebrate events safely.

a place that sets a good example for dealing with climate change and biodiversity issues by investing in nature and understanding that it is important for human health
Stop over mowing verges and green spaces and let the flowers grow!

A safe place for leisure, culture and shopping with more arts facilities and easy access for all ages

A place which creates a unique offering of shopping, lifestyle, housing and a destination where people want to gather in a safe, clean and vibrant environment which builds on the borough's eclectic mix of public artworks.

Where do you want to see change



There are in total 63 pins on the map, located in Maidstone urban area.

Most comments are found by the riverside as well the high street.

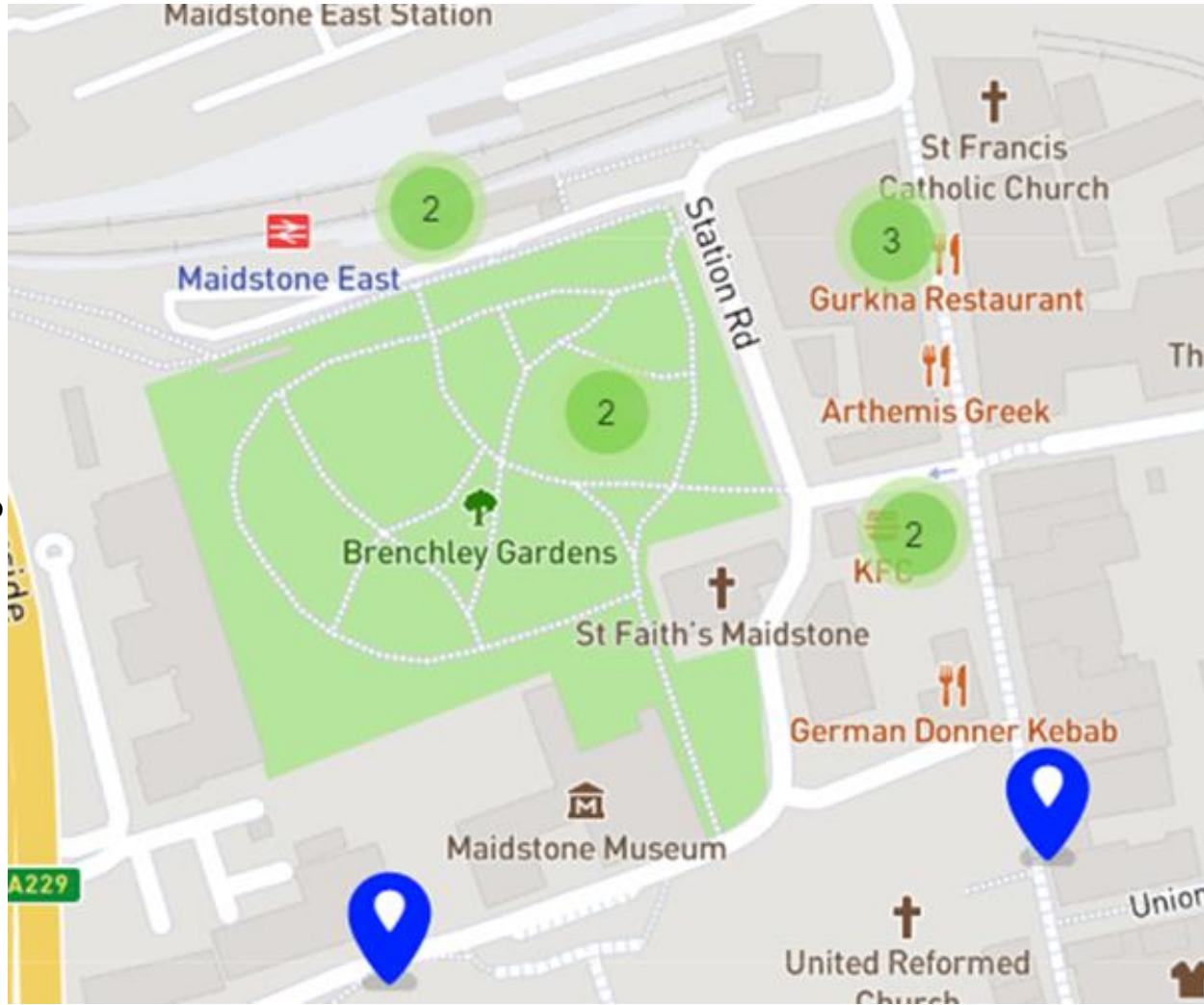
The next slides will be zooming in on key locations and addressing the main themes.

The Riverside



- In total there are 11 comments from residents related to the River Medway.
- Main points that were addressed:
- increasing the number of cafes, theatres and bars nearby. Also, introducing activities near the river, such as kayaking, row boats and paddleboarding.
- Enhance street scenery by the river- 3 comments stated that more attractive buildings should be placed by the river, rather than the Travel Lodge.
- Also increase access to the river – by adding in a secure footbridge to cross the A229 from Fremlin Walk to the other side.
- 1 comment suggested adding barriers near the river for safety purposes.

Brenchley Gardens and Maidstone East



In total, there are 3 comments related to Maidstone East.

Main themes include:

making trains more reliable and affordable.

Delivering faster trains to London, particularly the finance areas such as cannon street and London Bridge to attract businesses.

Increasing the safety of the path between Maidstone Barracks and Maidstone East.

In total, there are 3 comments related to Brenchley Gardens.

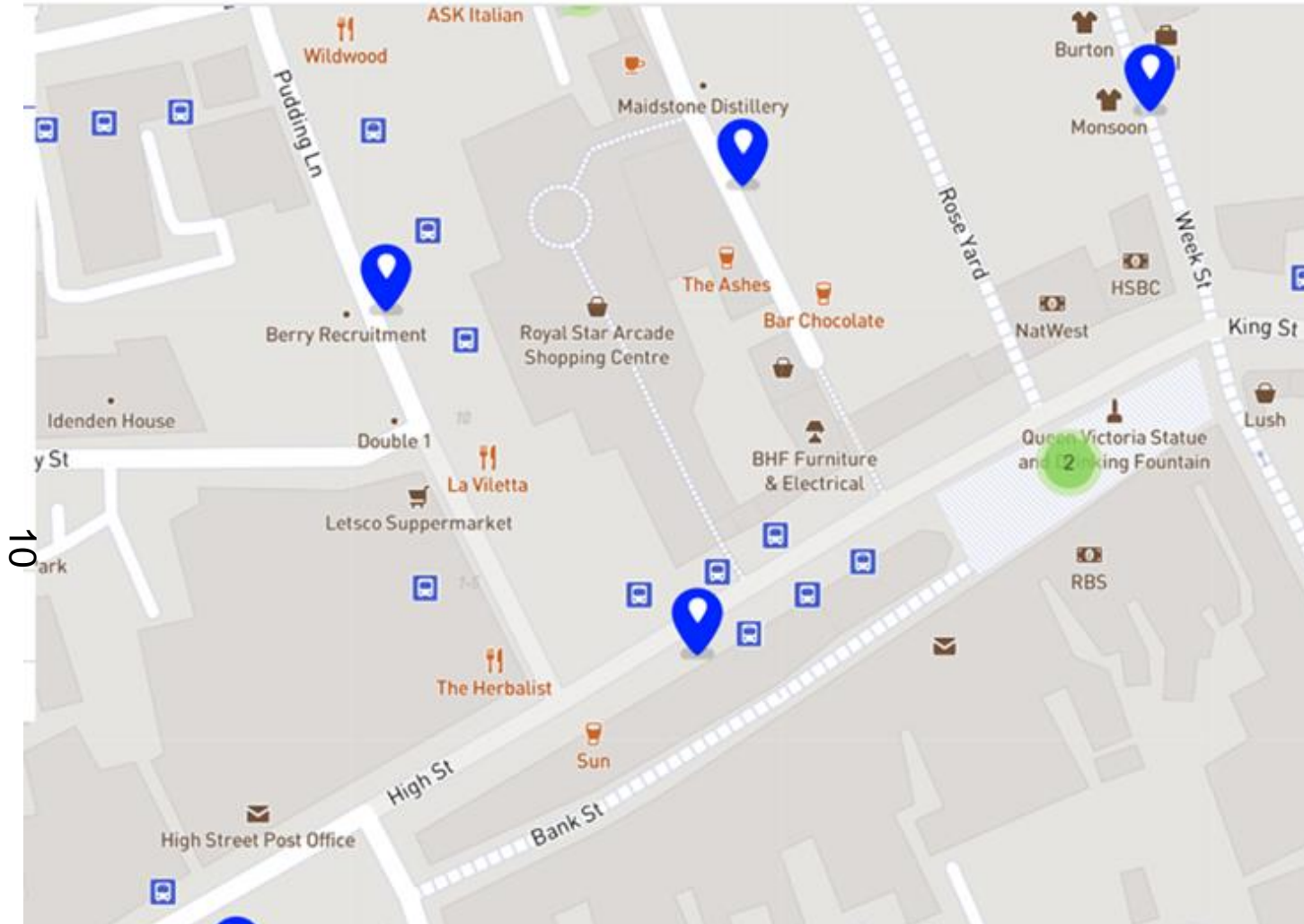
Main themes include:

Increasing safety

Making it a more pleasant place to visit.

Opening the area up, making it more friendly to children.

The High Street and Week Street



In total there are 12 comments-
main themes include:

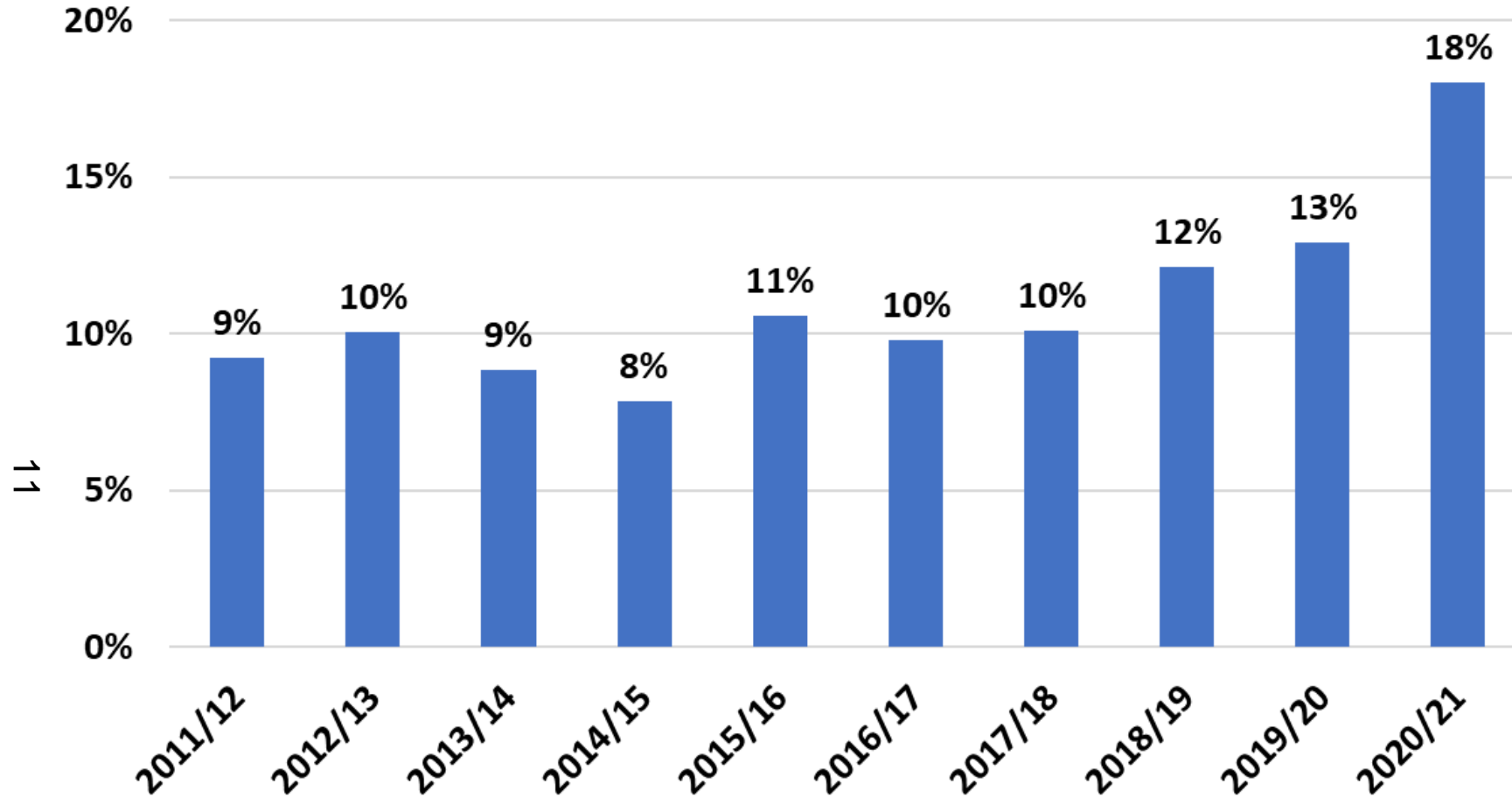
Support local restaurants, rather
than bringing in more fast food
chains.

Cleaner buildings to make it more
attractive.

Restricting cars driving through.

Increasing the safety of the high
street.

Vacant Retail Units



- Between 2016- 2021 the percentage of vacant retail units in the town centre has increased year on year.
- The 2020/21 figure of 18% is the highest it has been since we began recording this data.
- Jan- July 2022 the figure improved to 16%
- In 2019 there were 4 vacant units in Lockmeadow, there is currently only 1

Community Safety Survey 2021:

Location	Count
Town centre	371
Brenchley Gardens	74
Week Street	65
High Street/Bank Street	49
Shepway	42
Lower Stone Street/ Knightrider Street	37
Train Stations	34
Parkwood	32
Tovil	25
Mote Park & Surrounding roads	21
Staplehurst	18

Unsafe Places

Survey respondents were provided with a free text box and were asked to tell us about any areas in the borough where they feel unsafe.

The most common place where respondents said they felt unsafe was the town centre. The top twelve response are shown.

There were 638 comments that gave a location (many respondents mentioned more than one location).

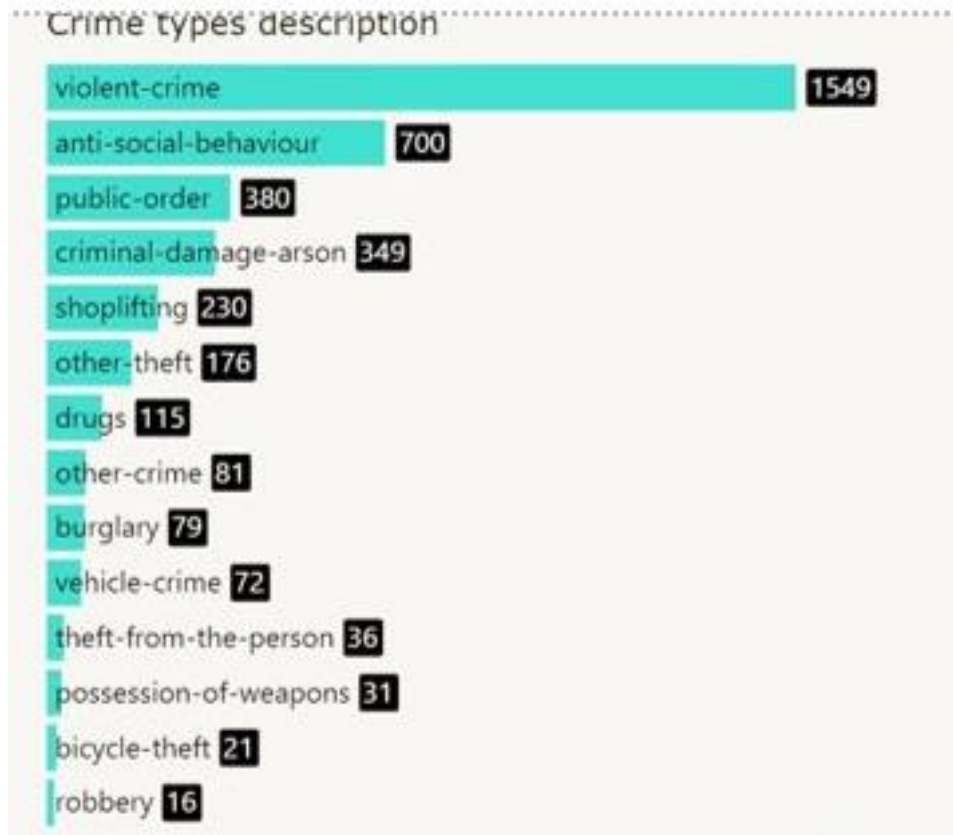
Overall, **almost three in five respondents to this question mentioned the town centre as a place in Maidstone that they feel unsafe.**

Maidstone: High Street Ward crime between 2018- 2021:

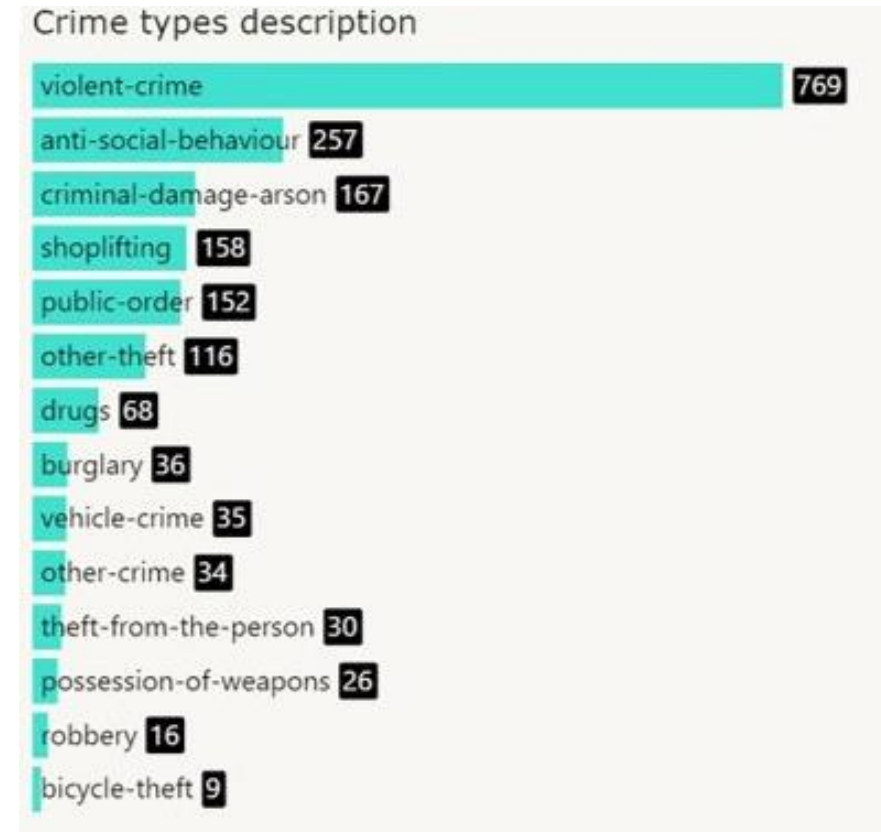
Maidstone High Street Ward					
	2018	2019	2020	2021*	Total
VAP	1490	1537	1419	840	5286
- Homicide	0	2	0	0	2
- Stalking & Harassment	252	275	370	257	1154
- With Injury	480	508	381	231	1600
- Without Injury	758	752	668	352	2530
Criminal Damage	325	308	311	190	1134
- Vehicle	101	105	76	52	334
- Dwelling/residential	50	74	83	34	241
- Other building/business	59	35	45	36	175
- Other	99	86	104	65	354
- Arson	16	8	3	3	30
Public Order	495	349	329	173	1346
ASB	682	690	945	458	2775
- COVID19	0	0	167	96	263
* Jan-Jul 2021 Only					

Incidents of Crime in the High Street

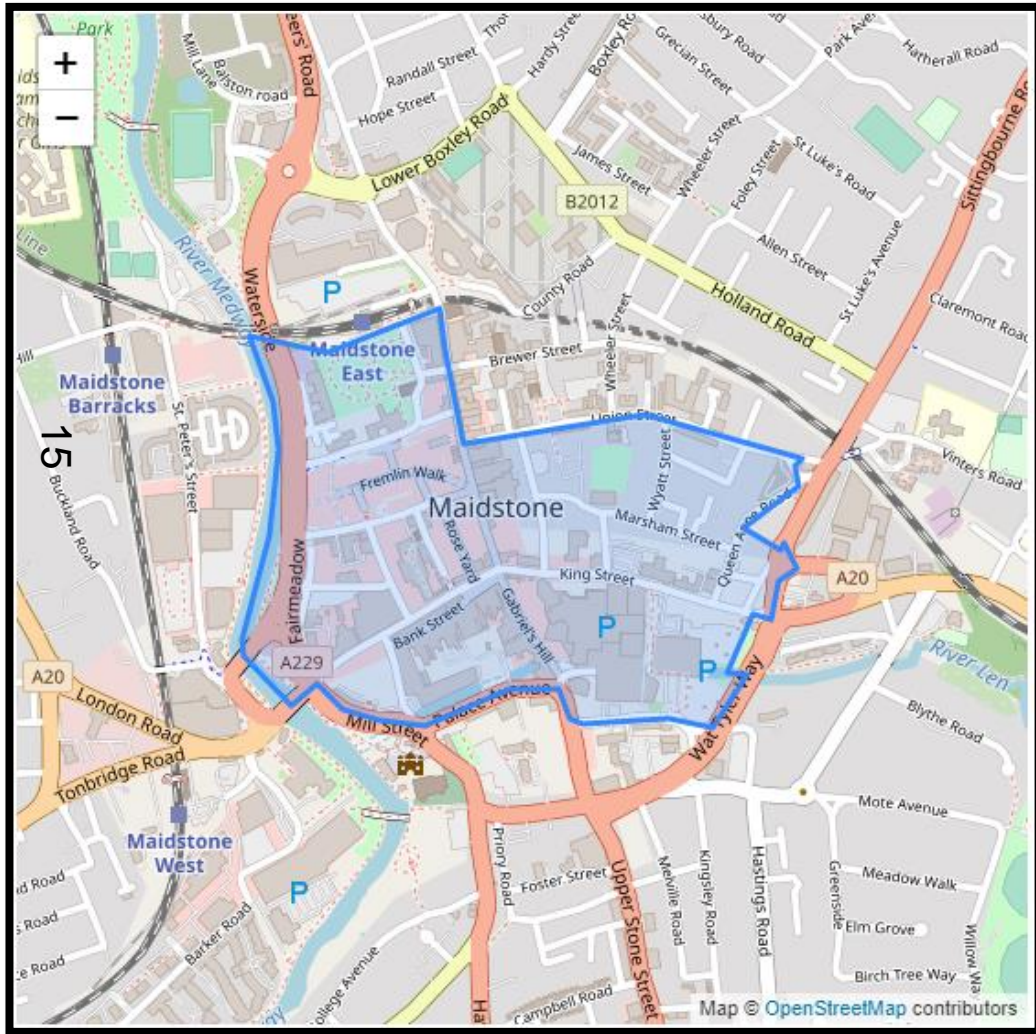
January- December 2021:



January – June 2022:



LSOA 004F sits in Maidstone's High Street Ward:



- Crime (VAWG, Neighbourhood and NTE) accounts for 14% (2017-19) and 10% (2021) of the borough's crimes in these categories. It also accounts for 15% (2017-19) and 11% (2021) of the boroughs ASB.

Offences for 2017 to 2021 (excluding 2020):				
Type	VAWG	Neighbourhood	NTE	ASB Incidents
No.	675	2238	2128	1874
Ranking	1 st	3 rd	1 st	3 rd

- In 2021, a Youth Safety Survey and a Community Safety Survey both highlighted the Town Centre as an area where fear of crime is very prevalent, with Brenchley Gardens and the area of Week Street by KFC and McDonalds, both within 004F highlighted as “no go areas” due to the behaviour and criminality associated with them. 78% of respondents to the Community Safety Survey feel that the Town Centre is unsafe or very unsafe at night.

Comments from Town Centre PSPO 2020 about visiting the Town Centre

The town should be improved for all people. It has a feeling of withering on the vine.

I hardly go up to Maidstone town centre any more due to the cost of parking and the constant traffic congestion, If we do need to go to shops we generally go up to Blue Water where it's free parking and everything is under cover

Jubilee Square has become the place the drug addicts and drunks frequent, this area is intimidating when children are present

I live almost half way between Ashford and Maidstone (even though under MBC. Would rather visit and do use High Street and facilities there rather than use Ashford!

Getting expensive to park considering shop are closing in the town centre, Not making the most out of the medway river walks or markets. Used to love to go to the markets in Maidstone, not now, it's a shame.

Every aspect of the town centre continues to deteriorate. It is designed to attract the worst kind of people and little policing to prevent trouble. Many opportunities missed to build an environment around the river to attract decent people from the town of all ages.

Generally, I have seen an improvement in street cleanliness and general behaviour in the town.

I actively avoid the town centre in the hours of darkness and at weekends. At times it can be intimidating

always had a positive experience in Maidstone town centre.

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Town Centre Task Force

Launched in June 2022, below lists the focus areas:

- Protecting people from harm and improving the culture within DTE and NTE
- Identifying vulnerability and providing protection/support where necessary
- Identifying and tackling crime hot spots and trends
- Building resilience through participation, empowerment and partnership with Town Centre stakeholders

Safer Streets 4- Bid Highlights

- Repurposing of Brenchley Gardens Toilet Block – Youth Outreach/Mini Police Station
- VAWG Safety: Alarms, Cup Covers, Hollie Guard, Self Defence Seminar and classes
- Youth Workers for the lost hours
- Bystander Training
- New Night Time Economy – Culture Setting Initiative (Best Bar None)
- Safer Maidstone Media Campaign
- CCTV for Brewer Street Cemetery and Trinity Gardens
- Funding for NTE Volunteers and equipment

<p><u>Proposed Topic</u></p> <p>Safety and Enforcement.</p> <p>Safety aspect to be looked at first, followed by enforcement (two separate but related reviews) and take place at formal Committee Meetings.</p>
<p><u>Description and Reason for Review</u></p> <p>Description</p> <p>Review into safety and Council's provision of enforcement services, to identify actions and/or policies for implementation to improve these services.</p> <p>Reason for Review</p> <p>At its previous meeting the committee agreed to conduct a review into the topics, with the aspects of safety relating to the town centre and the night-time economy.</p> <p>A suggestion to review enforcement was also put forward by the Executive, with the Lead Member for Environmental Services in attendance indicating Committee input into the resourcing of enforcement would be welcomed.</p>
<p><u>Link to Priorities</u></p> <p>Strategic Priorities: Safe Clean and Green A Thriving Place</p> <p>Executive Priorities: Maintaining a tough stance on crime and anti-social behaviour, working closely with the Police and utilising the Council's own powers and resources.</p> <p>Other: Aligns with Executive proposal to review enforcement alongside support expressed at the meeting by the Lead Member for Environmental Services.</p>
<p><u>Safety Review (Primary Review)</u></p> <p>Review to be carried out at Committee.</p> <p>To include safety in the town centre and the night-time economy; review of existing measure to identify any required changes (lines of enquiry).</p> <p><u>Approach:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Overview and Scrutiny Member Briefing – 6 October 2022 (briefing note to be provided)2. Evidence Collection: Town Centre Safety

Overview and Scrutiny acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee
Safety Review Scope

18 October 2022 meeting – External Stakeholder Evidence Collection

- Mid-Kent College
- The Mall
- Housing Providers
- Youth Forum

22 November 2022 meeting – Internal Stakeholders

- Communications Team
- Economic Development Team
- Chairman of the CHE PAC
- Lead Member for Communities and Engagement
- Evidence from previous resident surveys.

From December 2022: Night-time Economy

Evidence Collection

(as above)

- Kent Police, including Licensing Officer
- Community and Strategic Partnerships Manager
- Licensing Officers (MBC)
- Chairman and Vice-Chair of Licensing Committee
- Other groups associated with night-time economy
- Consider results from previous resident surveys
- Night-Time economy forum (One Maidstone)
- Street pastors & Urban Blue

Virtual attendance provided to consultees.

NOTE: The proposed timescales and stakeholders to be consulted may be subject to change as the review progresses. This may be due to overlap between safety and the night-time economy.