



**REPORTS FOR DECISION BY THE
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Date Issued: **5 August 2010**

	Page Nos.
1. Report of the Head of Spatial Planning - Maidstone Town Centre and Green and Blue Infrastructure	1 - 10
2. Report of the Head of Communications - Maidstone Borough Council's Annual Report 2009-10	11 - 21

A Record of Decision will be issued following the conclusion of 5 clear working days from the date of issue of the Report

The Reports listed above can be made available in alternative formats for the visually impaired. For further information about this service, or if you have any queries regarding the above items please contact Karen Luck on 01622 602743.

Agenda Item 1

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF HEAD OF SPATIAL PLANNING

Report prepared by Sarah Anderton

Date Issued: 5 August 2010

1. MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE AND GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

- 1.1.1 With reference to Maidstone Town Centre: Policy Directions for the Core Strategy, to consider the preparation of a mini planning brief for the Haynes site as an adjunct to the town centre study
- 1.1.2 With reference to Maidstone Town Centre: Policy Directions for the Core Strategy, to consider the identification of a 'village quarter'.
- 1.1.3 With reference to the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy for Maidstone Borough, to consider the inclusion of an additional aim relating to high quality agricultural land.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Spatial Planning

- 1.2.1 With reference to Maidstone Town Centre: Policy Directions for the Core Strategy, that the Leader agree the preparation of a mini planning brief for the Haynes site as an adjunct to the Town Centre Study
- 1.2.2 With reference to Maidstone Town Centre: Policy Directions for the Core Strategy, that the Leader consider the identification of a village quarter covering areas E1, E2 and E3 shown on Appendix 1 .
- 1.2.3 With reference to the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy for Maidstone Borough under draft policy CS15, that the Leader agree the inclusion of a further aim as follows:-

m) Recognition of the important role played by high quality agricultural land to food production

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

Maidstone Town Centre

1.3.1 At the LDDAG meeting on 24th February 2010, the Group unanimously agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration that in response to the quarters shown on the plan appended to the report, consideration should be given to include a village quarter in the area of Albion Place, Union Street and the A20 as an area for regeneration. The area is shown in Appendix 1 and comprises the area to the north of King Street, Albion Place, the area occupied by Haynes and office buildings in the middle of the gyratory.

1.3.2 This matter was raised in the subsequent report to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration dated 1st April. The report highlighted that identification of quarters draws on an analysis of different localities' character and function as well as an assessment of their future potential role. In respect to the consideration of the proposed village quarter, the relevant part of the officers' report is reproduced below:

Much of E1 (area north of King Street) is residential and falls within the Holy Trinity Conservation Area. E2 (Albion Place) is an established area of offices with the large number of landowners meaning that comprehensive redevelopment is unlikely. The form of development is of a much lower density within E3 (Haynes garage) and the site may be a longer term development opportunity. The cohesiveness of the area is severed by transport barriers and linear blocks of urban form (E2) at the centre. It is considered that the whole area does not have a sufficiently cohesive character or uniform development potential to merit their definition as a single quarter, indeed, different planning approaches are likely to be appropriate for each of the areas. For these reasons, there is no merit in a comprehensive designation as a 'village quarter' in spatial planning terms.

1.3.3 In his decision, the Cabinet Member did not identify the village quarter. He did resolve to extend the boundary of the town centre to include areas E2 and E3 and that these areas should form part of the 'urban enterprise' quarter where there would be a focus on regeneration of the existing office stock and public realm improvements .

1.3.4 At its meeting on 26th June, LDDAG resolved to recommend that the specific issue of the proposed village quarter be further considered by the Leader as the portfolio holder for the LDF. The Group had highlighted the significant regeneration potential of this locality and that its identification as a single quarter would enable it to be planned

in a comprehensive way, enabling the inter-relationship between the three composite areas (E1, 2 and 3) to be recognised and exploited. In particular it is understood that there is a desire for some of the key characteristics of the E1 area to influence the form of any redevelopment proposals in the wider area.

- 1.3.5 In taking this forward, there are two aspects which the Leader is invited to consider.
- 1.3.6 Firstly, it is noted that the Town Centre Study is a source of evidence for the future planning of the town centre. Section 11 of this Study includes a series of mini development briefs for those sites in the town centre identified as having redevelopment potential. In the light of the change to the town centre boundary agreed by the Cabinet Member, a mini brief for the Haynes site could usefully be prepared an adjunct to the Study. This mini brief would be informative at this stage, ahead of specific proposals coming forward as policy in the Area Action Plan. To mirror the Town Centre Study's format the mini brief would cover the following aspects and thereby help to respond to the specific points made by members of LDDAG;
- Role of the site in wider town centre proposals
 - Land use strategy
 - Design principles
 - Movement and parking
 - Delivery and phasing
 - Capacity
- 1.3.7 Secondly, LDDAG has specifically asked the Leader to consider the definition of quarters in this locality.
- 1.3.8 The village quarter recommended by LDDAG is shown in Appendix 2.
- 1.3.9 The alternative approach, agreed by the Cabinet Member, is illustrated in Appendix 3. Areas E2 and E3 would fall within an extended urban enterprise quarter.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 1.3.10 At the LDDAG meeting on 26th June, the Group resolved to recommend that the Recommendation previously made to the Cabinet Member regarding the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Maidstone Borough, be amended to include the following aim under draft policy CS15:-

"m) Notwithstanding national guidance, the Group stressed the importance of the preservation of high quality agricultural land."

- 1.3.11 The classification system used to determine agricultural land quality is known as the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). It was developed in the 1960s and subsequently revised in 1988. It provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical and chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use.
- 1.3.12 The ALC provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system. It helps underpin the principles of sustainable development.
- 1.3.13 ALC gradings do not necessarily reflect the economic value of the land or land uses; ranges of crops; suitability for specific crops; or level of yield. In addition the gradings do not reflect the use of any particular agricultural production technique or technology.
- 1.3.14 Maidstone Borough has a relatively high proportion of high quality agricultural land when compared to other boroughs, particularly in the vicinity of Maidstone itself. The way in which this land has been farmed and managed has seen some drastic changes and these changes continue apace as technologies evolve and market forces respond to different drivers.
- 1.3.15 Complete protection of land with high agricultural land quality from any form of development would not necessarily represent the most constructive way to achieve a sustainable future. High quality agricultural land is a valuable finite resource but it represents only one element of a sustainable rural economy. Other elements include a more diverse rural economy, and an efficient and flexible farming industry.
- 1.3.16 A more positive way of approaching land management is to consider function. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy considers the potential of land and water to deliver a number of functions (its multi-functionality). A primary function is that of food production. It is therefore suggested the wording put forward by LDDAG for draft policy CS15 is itself amended to read:-

"m) Recognition of the important role played by high quality agricultural land to food production.'

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 LDDAG specified that these matters should be reported to the Leader and an alternative approach is therefore not identified.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The issues in this report modestly impact on the Council's strategic themes of economy and prosperity and environmental excellence and climate change.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no specific risks arising from this report.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	x
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

1.7.2 The proposal in this report incorporates a sustainable approach to planning for future change in the town centre and to the borough's green infrastructure.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix 1 – plan showing the areas LDDAG recommend for inclusion in the village quarter

Appendix 2 – plan showing the town centre quarters including the village quarter

Appendix 3 – plan showing the town centre quarters including the extended urban enterprise quarter

1.8.2 Background Documents

None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

☐

No

☒

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:

.....

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr Christopher Garland

Leader of the Council

Telephone: 01622 602683

E-mail: christophergarland@maidstone.gov.uk

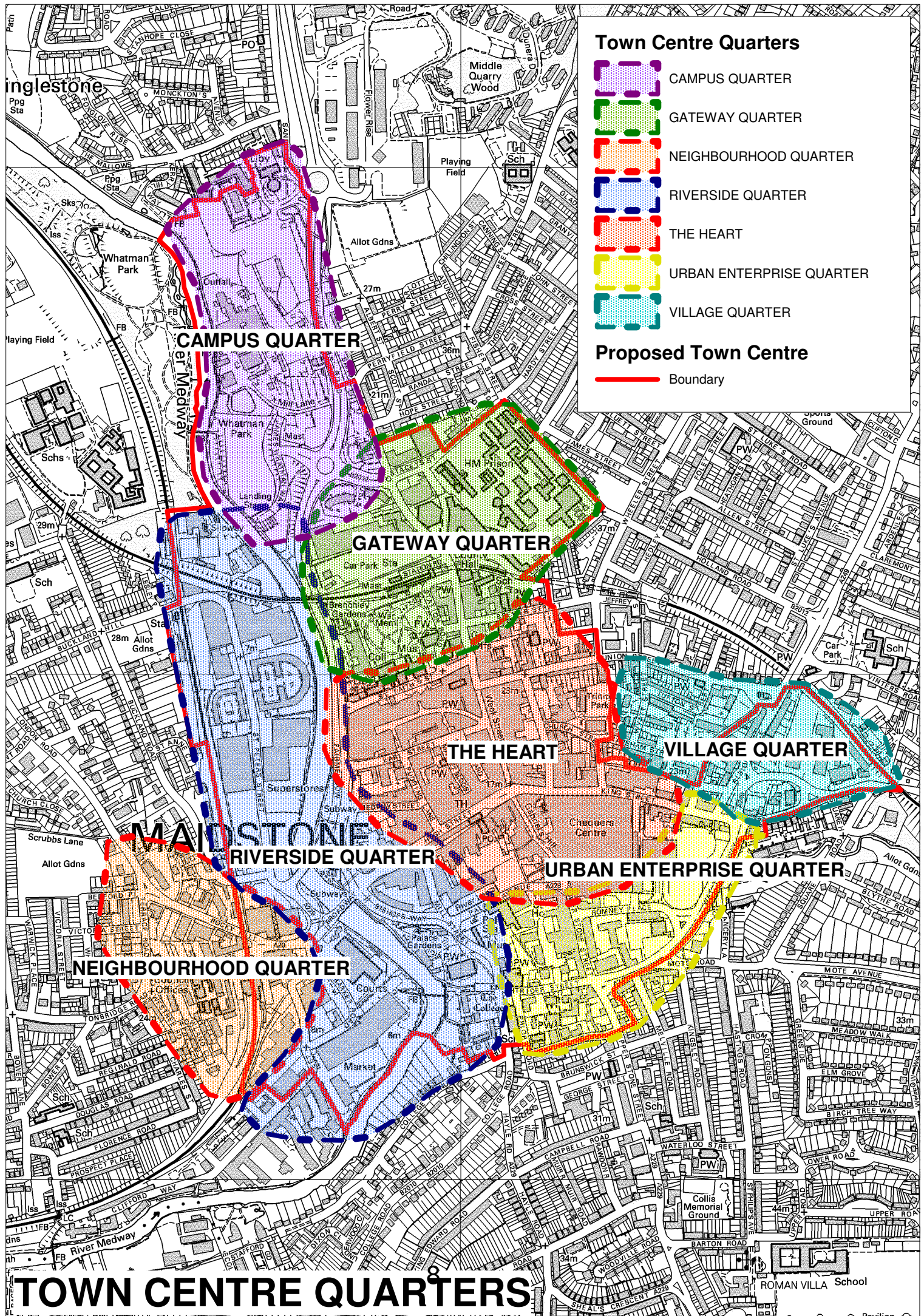
Sarah Anderton

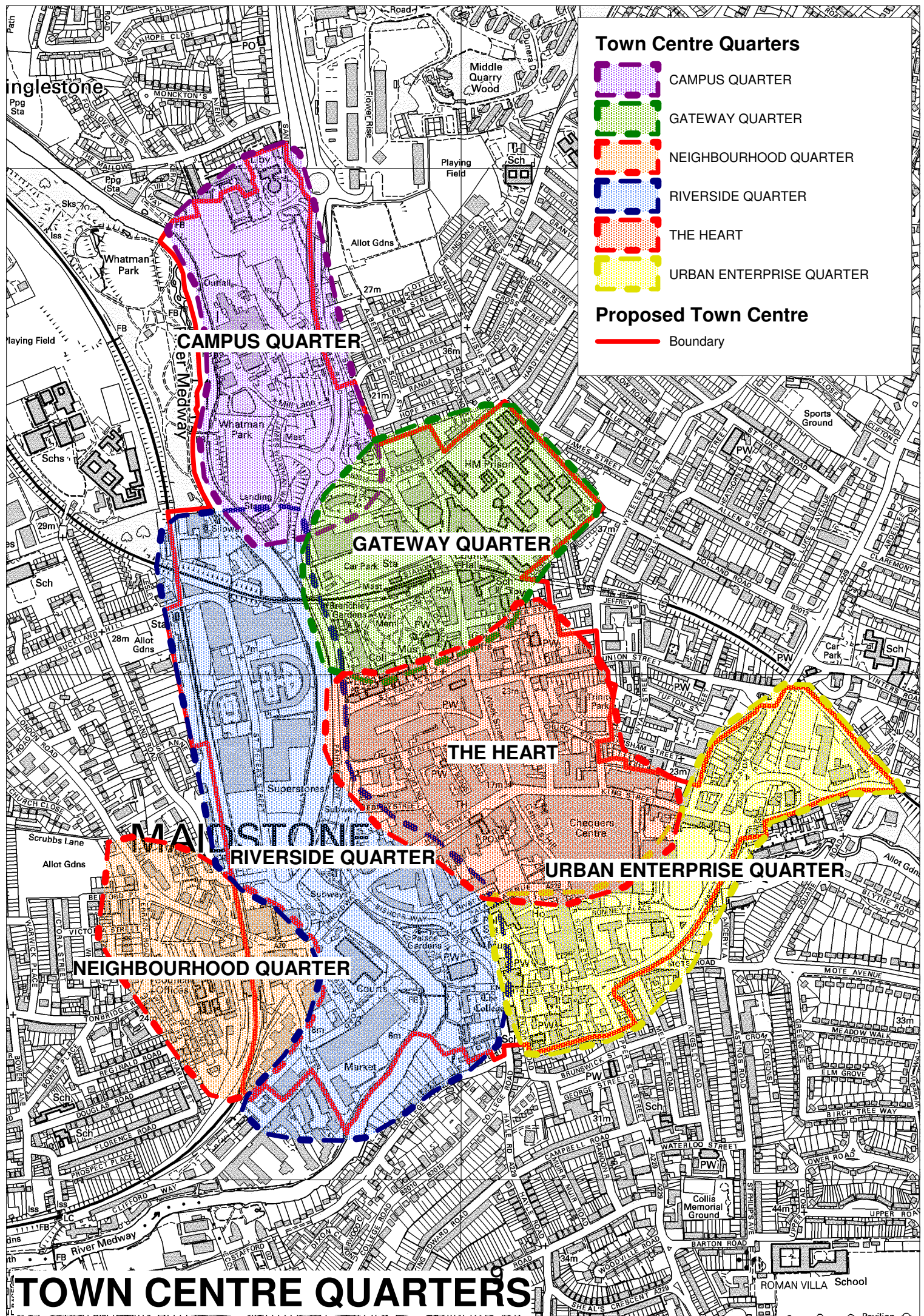
Principal Planning Officer (Spatial Policy)

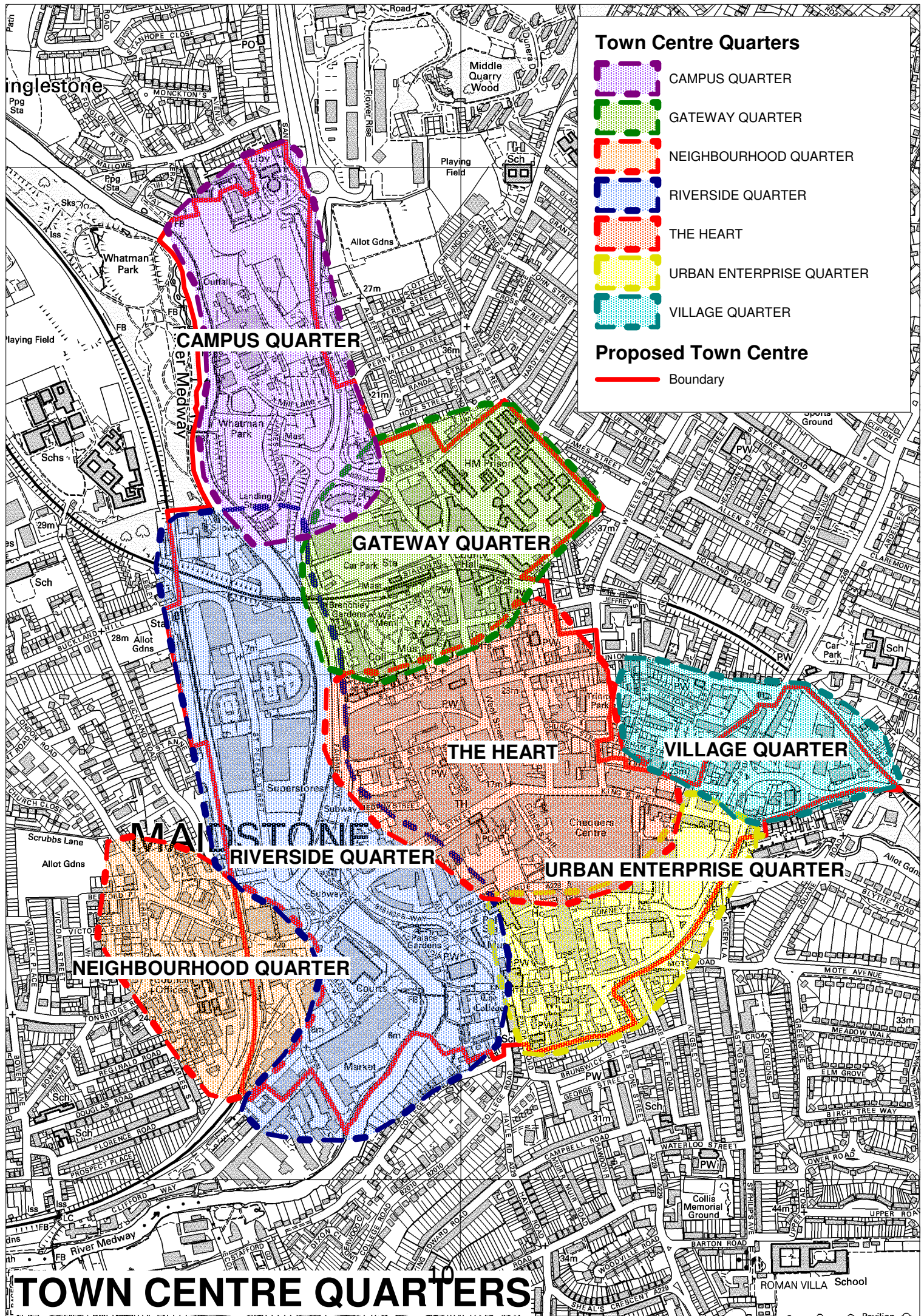
Telephone: 01622 602223

E-mail: sarahanderton@maidstone.gov.uk









Agenda Item 2

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

Report prepared by Vronni Ward

Date Issued: 5 August 2010

1. Maidstone Borough Council's Annual Report 2009-10

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To approve the council's annual report for 2009-10.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Communications

1.2.1 That the Leader of the Council approves the annual report 2009-10.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 To publish information to the public on our performance and achievements over the last municipal year.

1.3.2 The Annual Report will be designed, placed on our website, published within Borough Update in the Downsmail and distributed to stakeholders.

1.3.3 A copy of the Annual Report can be found in Appendix A.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 It is important that we provide the public with information about how well we perform, not to do so would go against our wish to inform and engage the public.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 No direct impact on corporate objectives besides publicising them.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 Failure to publish our performance could result in a risk to our reputation.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

X

1.7.2 The design costs are £270. Besides putting it in Borough Update, we will not be publishing a hard copy this year but making it available to view on the council website.

1.8 Conclusions

1.8.1 The Leader needs to consider whether he is happy with the content of the Annual Report 2009-10.

1.9 Relevant Documents

1.9.1 Appendix A Annual Report 2009-10

1.9.2 Background Documents - None.

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

☐

No

☒

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:

.....

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr Chris Garland

Leader of the Council

Telephone: 602683

E-mail: chrisgarland@maidstone.gov.uk

Roger Adley

Head of Communications

Telephone: 602758

E-mail: rogeradley@maidstone.gov.uk

Appendix A

Maidstone Borough Council's report 2009-10

Make it Maidstone... Make it Prosperous

Over the last 12 months we have been tackling the challenge of providing top class services in a very difficult economic climate. There have been significant shifts in demand for services such as benefit and homelessness applications – and the council has concentrated resources to help those most in need. Our priority has been to fight the effects of the recession and bring prosperity to the borough. We have supported the Federation of Small Businesses, helped launch 'Make it Maidstone' and provided funding to assist small businesses.

We made significant progress in reducing costs and improving services by working with neighbouring councils – Ashford, Sevenoaks, Swale, Tunbridge Wells and Kent County Council. We progressed our three flagship regeneration schemes to improve Mote Park, Maidstone Museum East Wing extension and Maidstone High Street. We have improved our doorstep recycling service so that people can recycle paper, card, tins, cans and plastics. We have invested almost £3million to provide grants for 226 affordable homes.

The Audit Commission the government's spending and performance watchdog has rated us in the top 18 performing councils in the country. This is an excellent result but we will still try to do better.

We can achieve more by working together with others. The Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership brings together a range of organizations including the Police, the Primary Care Trust, the voluntary sector and local businesses. In this way we are tackling waste reduction, health, education, employment, climate change and crime much more effectively than if we work alone.

The next few years are likely to be increasingly difficult as we try to manage with fewer resources. However, we are confident that by achieving greater value for money, working in partnership with others and by taking the lead in the community, we will be able to deliver the services that local residents need. Our top priorities until 2015 are:

- Attracting, helping and developing local business so that we can increase the number of good quality jobs in the borough;
- Increasing recycling levels to 50%;
- Making sure that the right homes are available at the right price in the right area;

- Improving outcomes in priority areas such as Park Wood, the High Street and in Shepway; and,
- Ensuring that all our services are of a high quality.

Achievements

Economy and Prosperity

- Helped boost the local economy by working with partners to assist 36 independent businesses with subsidised advertising;
- Launched the High Street Regeneration Project and consultation the public on the scheme;
- Signed a memorandum of understanding with Business Support Kent to work more closely with businesses;
- Used, 'Growing Concern', a not-for-profit organisation for people with learning disabilities, to tidy up the heritage area around the Archbishops Palace; and
- Launched the Community Toilet Scheme, closing three poorly used council toilets and opening 16 toilets in retail premises to the public.

Sustainable and Integrated Transport

- Provided Park & Sail at Christmas to reduce traffic and congestion in the town and provide an excellent service for shoppers;
- Listened to you and reintroduced the Park & Ride bus link between London Road and Sittingbourne Road;
- Rejected the plans for a Kent International Gateway at junction 7 of the M20 and led the fight against the appeal;
- Lobbied Network Rail, supported better rail links to Maidstone and responded to Kent County Council's 20 year integrated transport strategy; and
- Held 'Fit for the Road' to raise awareness of road accidents. Worked with partners to give safety advice to 1,273 schoolchildren at our Safety in Action event 2009.

Crime, Confidence and Safety

- Helped reduce crime by 9.5% (there were 9,447 crimes recorded in 2009-10 compared to 10,438 in 2008-9) and made 237 anti-social behaviour interventions;

- Ran Operation Cubit, targeting graffiti and abandoned cars - removing 30 illegal vehicles;
- Worked with the Police on 'Operation Safer Summer' to provide a reassuring Police presence in our parks;
- Installed CCTV in our Park & Ride car parks and introduced regular warden patrols;
- Set up a new multi-agency Community Safety Unit with Kent Police to improve our response to anti-social behaviour; and
- Delivered a Community Safety booklet to 40,000 households.

Health and Older People

- Supported the Urban Blue Bus which travels around the borough promoting healthy living including, stopping smoking and weight management;
- Provided health advice in the town centre and Shepway including a Wellpoint machine in the Gateway;
- Assessed the health issues within the Air Quality Management Area which encompasses the urban area, the M20 and major roads; and
- Opposed the NHS decision to remove maternity delivery services from Maidstone Hospital.

Children, Young People and Families

- Funded 66 places on the Hotfoot play scheme and with Kent County Council provided 110 places to vulnerable children on our play schemes;
- Worked with partners to deliver the Maidstone Skills studio – to help 14-16 year olds gain vocational skills in an out of school setting;
- Worked to help long-term unemployed young people into apprenticeships and work experience programmes; and
- Invested £153,000 in improving play facilities at Giddyhorn Lane, Maidstone and worked with partners to open a new play area at Bellshaw, Park Wood.

Homes and Communities

- Ensured that developers provided 403 new affordable homes – the highest number in any district local authority in Kent;

- Prevented 533 families from becoming homeless;
- Brought 83 empty homes back into use;
- Awarded grants to 109 people to help them continue to live in their own homes;
- Teamed up with Heatseekers to undertake thermographic surveys of all homes in the borough by 2012 and assisted local people to improve energy efficiency in their homes;
- Created a partnership that has secured almost £1m of new funding for 18 affordable homes in Broomfield and Kingswood;
- Empowered local people in Park Wood to have a greater say in improving their neighbourhood over the next five years; and
- Opened the Social Housing Fraud line to target illegal sub-letting of social housing – we were one of the first authorities in Kent to do this.

Sport, Creativity and Culture

- Launched a £4.5m refurbishment of Maidstone Leisure Centre to create one of the best centres in the South East;
- Celebrated the Hazlitt Arts Centre first birthday with the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate local artist Tony Hart and launched the StARTLe Art Prize;
- Expanded Maidstone Mela to become a two day event celebrating music, dance and food in Mote Park that attracted around 12,000 visitors;
- Thanked 108 volunteers during National Volunteers Week for their 3,915 unpaid hours working for Sports Development and Maidstone Museum;
- Launched Maidstone's Dream to create a sporting legacy and support young people to compete in the 2012 Olympics; and
- Completed a purpose built athletics facility and running track with our partners at Sutton Valence.

Environmental Excellence and Climate Change

- Increased recycling rates to 30% and reduced general rubbish by 12% per household. Launched the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign asking people to stop wasting food and money;

- Restored Brenchley Gardens to its Victorian glory by making it more open and spacious, and providing an excellent Summer Band Season in the bandstand;
- Launched a campaign on littering and introduced our Gum Campaign with a fine of £75 per offence;
- Satisfaction with street cleansing increased from 60 to 64%;
- Retained the prestigious Green Flag for Clare Park, Maidstone – making it one of the best open spaces in the country;
- Installed two new incinerators in Vinters Park Crematorium that comply with the new environmental standard for mercury emissions;
- Supported Town Centre Management by providing ideas and information to the public on greener living initiatives such as coming to town without your car; and
- Worked with a local building company to build a new, environmentally friendly depot complete with solar hot water panels and intelligent lighting as well as rain water harvesting and recycling.

Cut off slip:

YOUR VIEWS... We want to know whether you've found our annual report informative and what information you'd like to see in next year's report. Please send your comments and ideas to: The Communications Team, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ email: pr@maidstone.gov.uk

Financial Report

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2010

<i>What the Council owns and is owed</i>	£000
Property, Vehicles & Equipment	91,065
Investments	8,681
Money owed to the Council	17,097
Money owed by the Council	(88,538)
	28,305
Financed by:	
Distributable Reserves (Cash)	10,217
Non-Distributable Reserves (Non-cash)	18,088
	28,305
Distributable Reserves made up of:	
Capital Receipts from the sale of assets	1,955

Revenue Balances	8,262
	10,217

Non-Distributable Reserves are non-cash reserves that the Council is required to maintain by law. These relate mainly to the revaluation of fixed assets and the expenditure on them.

Revenue balances represent sums set-aside by the Council over the years from revenue activities, either as a contingency against future unexpected events, or for specific purposes. It is considered good financial management to maintain a healthy revenue balance.

The Cost of Council Services for the year ended 31 March 2010

	£000
Leader of the Council	(1,879)
Corporate Services	4,246
Community Services	1,440
Environment	9,662
Regeneration	7,642
Leisure & Culture	5,083
Net Cost of Services	26,194
Payments to Parishes	905
Investment Income	(742)
Capital Accounting & Pensions Adjustments	2,208

Amount to be met from Government Grants & Local Tax Payers

	28,565
Council Tax	13,720
General Government Grants	1,895
Business Rates	7,689
Total	23,304
Net Deficit	(5,261)

Capital accounting and pensions adjustments represent non-cash adjustments that the Council are required to make to show the true net cost of its services. These are then reversed out so there is no impact upon the level of Council Tax.

Cash Flow

£000

Cash Resources at 31 March 2009

Cash In - Capital	6,113
Cash In - Revenue	125,458
Cash In - Investments Repaid	215,004
	346,575
Cash Out - Capital	(13,043)
Cash Out - Revenue	(127,904)
Cash Out - Investments Made	(204,755)
	(345,702)
Cash Resources at 31 March 2010	873

This statement represents the total value of cash transactions that the Council undertook during the course of the financial year.

Capital Expenditure 2009/10

	£000
Office Accommodation	399
CCTV	42
Grants to Parished Areas	13
Corporate Property	228
Vehicle & Equipment Purchases	179
Fremfins CPO Payments	224
IT Projects	235
Corporate Projects	33
Park & Ride Sites CCTV	55
Car Park Improvements	22
Land Drainage	26
Recycling	793
Athletics Track	295
Playground Improvements	574
Crematorium Refurbishment	846
Leisure Centre	324
Museum Improvements	238
Parks & Open Spaces	191
Improvements to Leisure Facilities	57
Renovation Grants	1,893
New Depot Construction Works	2,917
Support for Social Housing	2,997
High Street Regeneration	344
Other Minor Regeneration Works	32
Total Capital Expenditure	12,957

Funded by:

Revenue Support	480
Use of Capital Receipts	6,704
Grants & Contributions	5,773
	12,957

These are sums the council has spent on acquisitions and enhancements to its fixed assets such as property, vehicles and equipment. It also includes grants made towards the building of new social housing units and the renovation of existing properties.

Please note that this financial statement is subject to audit, if you wish to view the full unaudited accounts they are available on the council website.

At the bottom in 14 point: This report can be made available in other community languages and formats upon request such as large print, Braille or audio. Please call our Communications Team on 01622 602351. Minicom number 01622 602224

www.maidstone.gov.uk customercare@maidstone.gov.uk

01622 602000

Insert four 'You Said, We Did' examples and pictures:

You said you wanted more recycling...

We have rolled out a new kerbside collection service across the borough. We were recycling 27% of rubbish, now we are recycling 30% and it's increasing.

You said you wanted more affordable housing...

In the last three years we have secured more than £43m and invested a further £11m of your own money to provide more than 900 new affordable homes.

You said you wanted better leisure facilities...

We are investing more than £4m to rejuvenate Maidstone Leisure Centre with new and improved gym and swimming facilities.

You said you were concerned about flytipping...

Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Police work together to track down offenders who can be issued with up to a £50,000 fine or even imprisonment.