

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Decision Made: 02 December 2011

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011

Issue for Decision

To consider the submission of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to the Secretary of State.

Decision Made

That the Annual Monitoring Report for 2010/11, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment, be approved for submission to the Secretary of State.

Reasons for Decision

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) covering the monitoring period 1st April to 31st March each year. Whilst the Localism Bill proposes the removal of this requirement, the duty to submit the AMR to the Secretary of State remains until the Bill is enacted. However, government guidance on local plan monitoring has been withdrawn, so local authorities have the freedom to choose which targets and indicators to include in their AMR. Nonetheless, local authorities should demonstrate the progress they have made towards meeting their targets as part of best practice.

With this in mind, the format of Maidstone's AMR focuses on monitoring those indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and those that are essential for the monitoring of policies in local development documents. Thus, the AMR comprises:

- An introduction to the Annual Monitoring Report;
- A Maidstone Profile, which demonstrates the wider demographic, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the borough;
- Key Monitoring Indicators that are set out in local development documents and which address local issues relating to housing, economic development and the built and natural heritage. In future, the AMR will include indicators set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy.
- A Glossary of Terms that assist the reader with the acronyms used throughout the document.

The AMR indicators assist in monitoring the policy targets set out in the Council's draft Core Strategy, which has recently been subject to public participation consultation (2 September to 14 October 2011). The representations received by the Council are currently being assessed and any resultant changes to the targets will be updated through next year's AMR or equivalent.

Population in the borough is forecast to increase by 15.2% within the plan period 2006 to 2026. The largest increase in population falls within the age group 85+, reflecting national trends of an ageing population. By comparison, the number of households is forecast to rise by 16.4% due to a continued increase in single person households. Crime offences have fallen, with the exception of dwelling burglaries that rose by 36%. Unemployment levels rose by 7.94% between 2010 and 2011 (an additional 172 people bringing the total unemployed to 2,338), although the percentage of resident unemployment in Maidstone remains lower than in Kent, the South East and England.

Maidstone resident earnings increased between 2009 and 2010. GCSE results improved, and show a greater achievement in gaining 5 or more subjects at grades A* to C. Areas of multiple deprivation remain unchanged throughout the borough but the Council has engaged with the community in Park Wood, which is within the 2% of most deprived areas in England, to prepare a Neighbourhood Action Plan to deliver agreed actions.

There has been a net loss of employment floorspace in the borough overall. Between 2006 and 2009 1,854 jobs (net) were provided towards the Council's target of 10,000 jobs over the plan period. 88% of employment floorspace and 79% of dwellings were completed on previously developed land, although these high levels will reduce as local development documents that allocate greenfield land for development are adopted as part of the LDF. Maidstone can demonstrate a minimum 5 year housing land supply (6.4 years actual), in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing.

Maidstone continues to make best use of its available land – 83% of dwellings were constructed at densities in excess of 30 units per hectare. Of all planning permissions granted in 2010/11, 42% of dwellings were affordable units.

The AMR has proved to be an invaluable tool, used to monitor local development document policies but also to record historic indicators that assist the public in understanding the profile and achievements of the borough. For example, gypsy and traveller pitch provision monitoring has informed the Council's decision to commission a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to re-assess the need for this type of accommodation in Maidstone.

Local Development Document Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel

The AMR was considered by the Local Development Document Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel on 15th November 2011. The Scrutiny Panel

recommended that I approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State.

The Scrutiny Panel raised some queries during its consideration of the document and, following further investigation, minor amendments have been made:

- Inclusion of the source for the unemployment data
- Inclusion of A Level results data
- Amendment of text to include Bearsted - 'River Len Corridor, Downswood and Bearsted'

Additionally, the AMR clarifies the base date of data used to produce the housing trajectory.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Although guidance on preparing Annual Monitoring Reports has been withdrawn by the government, the Council is still required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Secretary of State until such time as the Localism Bill, which will remove this requirement, is enacted.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 09 December 2011
