

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Date: Wednesday 24 July 2013

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors English (The Mayor), Ash, Barned, Beerling, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Brindle, Burton, Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Cuming, Daley, Garland, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, Mrs Mannering, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty, B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford, Naghi, Nelson-Gracie, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Ross, Sams, Springett, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard, Warner, Watson, de Wiggondene, J.A. Wilson, Mrs Wilson and Yates

Continued Over/:

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**Issued on 16 July 2013**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEBBIE SNOOK on 01622 602030**. To find out more about the work of the Council, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)

*Alison Broom*

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ**

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## **AGENDA**

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1. Prayers
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Dispensations (if any)
4. Disclosures by Members and Officers
5. Disclosures of Lobbying
6. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
7. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Borough Council held on 15 May 2013 1 - 6
8. Mayor's Announcements
9. Petitions
10. Question and Answer Session for Members of the Public
11. Questions from Members of the Council to the
  - (a) Leader of the Council
  - (b) Cabinet Members
  - (c) Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees
  - (d) Chairmen of other Committees
12. Current Issues - Report of the Leader of the Council, Response of the Group Leaders and Questions from Council Members
13. Report of the Cabinet held on 15 May 2013 - Refreshing the Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-20:Maidstone Community Strategy 7 - 25
14. Report of the Audit Committee held on 15 July 2013 - Audit Committee - Annual Report to Council 2012/13 26 - 40
15. Oral Report of the General Purposes Group to be held on 19 July 2013 - Appointment of Independent Person
16. Report of the Head of Policy and Communications - Members' Broadband Allowance 41 - 44
17. Report of the Head of Policy and Communications - Committee Membership 45 - 46

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 15 MAY 2013**

**Present:** Councillor Nelson-Gracie (The Mayor) and Councillors Ash, Barned, Beerling, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Brindle, Burton, Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Cuming, English, Garland, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty, B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford, Naghi, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Ross, Sams, Springett, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard, Warner, Watson, de Wiggondene, J A Wilson, Mrs Wilson and Yates

1. PRAYERS

Prayers were said by the Reverend Canon Chris Morgan-Jones.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Daley and Mrs Mannering.

3. DISPENSATIONS

There were no applications for dispensations.

4. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

5. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

6. ELECTION OF MAYOR

It was moved by Councillor Chittenden, seconded by Councillor Paine, supported by Councillor Mrs Gooch and

**RESOLVED:** That Clive Andrew English, a Councillor of the Borough, be duly elected Mayor of the Borough of Maidstone until the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2014.

Councillor English then made the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was duly witnessed in accordance with Section 83(3)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**\*\*THE MAYOR (COUNCILLOR ENGLISH) IN THE CHAIR\*\***

7. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MAYOR

The Mayor received congratulations on his election from scholars representing schools as follows:-

Harry Davies	Bower Grove School
Freddie Barker	Maidstone Grammar School
Hugo VanMol	Maidstone Grammar School
Molly Willet	Maidstone Grammar School for Girls

8. THE RETIRING MAYOR

It was moved by Councillor Lusty, seconded by Councillor Warner, supported by Councillor Mrs Gooch and

RESOLVED: That the hearty thanks of this Council be given to Councillor Nelson-Gracie and Mrs Nelson-Gracie for the admirable discharge of their duties as Mayor and Mayoress during the past year, and for their courteous approach to all sections of the community.

9. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 24 APRIL 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 24 April 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

11. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor Mrs Joy, supported by Councillor Mrs Gooch and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ian Richard Thick be duly appointed Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Maidstone until the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2014.

Councillor Thick then made the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was duly witnessed in accordance with Section 83(3)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

12. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that Councillor Hotson was the Chairman Elect of Kent County Council for 2013/14, and he wished him well for the coming year.

13. APPOINTMENTS TO THE CABINET

The Leader of the Council reported that his appointments to the Cabinet were as follows:-

Community and Leisure Services	Councillor J A Wilson
Corporate Services	Councillor Moss
Economic and Commercial Development	Councillor Greer
Environment	Councillor Mrs Ring
Planning, Transport and Development	Councillor Paine

The Leader of the Council then reported that he had appointed Councillor Greer as his Deputy.

14. DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

The Leader of the Council reported that an amended version of the Scheme of Delegation of Executive Functions had been circulated for the Council's information.

15. ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

In accordance with Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council considered the allocation of seats to each Political Group in relation to its various Committees.

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor Hotson:-

1. That the Standards Committee be composed of nine Councillors, politically balanced (5 Conservatives, 3 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent for 2013/14), and that the Constitution be amended accordingly.
2. That the allocation of seats on Committees be as set out in amended Appendix A to the report of the Head of Democratic Services with the following adjustments:-

General Purposes Group	1 seat from Independent to Labour
Member and Employment and Development Panel	1 seat from Independent to Labour

RESOLVED:

1. That the Standards Committee be composed of nine Councillors, politically balanced (5 Conservatives, 3 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent for 2013/14), and that the Constitution be amended accordingly.
2. That the allocation of seats on Committees be as set out in amended Appendix A to the report of the Head of Democratic Services with the following adjustments:-

General Purposes Group	1 seat from Independent to Labour
Member and Employment and Development Panel	1 seat from Independent to Labour

(A copy of the amended allocation of seats on Committees is attached as Appendix A to these Minutes).

16. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

In accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council considered the appointments to its Committees and Substitutes.

The Leader of the Conservative Group indicated that he wished to make the following adjustment to the lists circulated:-

Planning Committee – Add Councillor Mrs Stockell as a Substitute Member of the Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor Moss, that the wishes of the Group Leaders with regard to the appointments to Committees and Substitutes be accepted.

RESOLVED: That the wishes of the Group Leaders with regard to the appointments to Committees and Substitutes be accepted.

17. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor Mrs Ring, that Councillor J A Wilson be appointed as the Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

RESOLVED: That Councillor J A Wilson be appointed as the Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

18. SCHEME OF DELEGATION FOR NON-EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor Greer, that the Scheme of Delegation for Non-Executive Functions be agreed.

RESOLVED: That the Scheme of Delegation for Non-Executive Functions be agreed.

19. DURATION OF MEETING

11.15 a.m. to 12.35 p.m.

**APPENDIX A**

**ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES**

Overview & Scrutiny Committees		Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services	Economic and Commercial Development	Planning, Transport and Development	Community Leisure Services and Environment	Planning Committee	Licensing Committee	Licensing Act 2003 Committee	Member and Employment and Development Panel	Joint Transportation Board	General Purposes Group	Standards Committee	Planning Referrals Committee	Audit Committee	Overall entitlement
Con		<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>63</b>
Lib Dem		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>
Ind		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
Lab		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
		<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>115</b>

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 15 MAY 2013**

#### **REFRESHING THE MAIDSTONE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-20: MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

##### **Issue for Decision**

To consider the Refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020.

##### **Recommendation Made**

That the refreshed Strategy: Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority for 2009-20 (as attached at Appendix A) be adopted.

##### **Reasons for Recommendation**

At the meeting on 15 May 2013, Cabinet made the following decision:-

1. That Council be recommended to adopt the refreshed Strategy: Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority for 2009-20.
2. That the Head of Housing and Community Services be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Maidstone Community Strategy as a result of consultation including Overview and Scrutiny and key partners from voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough, before being recommended to Council.

Local authorities have a statutory requirement to prepare and publish a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for their area. In Maidstone, our strategy is called Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority.

Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance on preparing a SCS states "the purpose of the SCS is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area - typically 10 to 20 years - in a way that contributes to sustainable development in the UK."

The guidance recommends that a SCS should contain the following elements:

- the long-term vision based firmly on local needs - this will be underpinned by a shared evidence base informed by community aspirations; and
- key priorities for the local area, based upon this vision which may realistically be achieved in the medium term.

From time to time a local authority may modify their sustainable community strategy, and in preparing or modifying their sustainable community strategy, a local authority must consult and seek the participation of each partner authority and such other persons considered appropriate, and must have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State.

The preparation and publication of a SCS has generally been undertaken through Local Strategic Partnerships, and therefore was the responsibility of the Maidstone Locality Board.

An SCS has value as a vehicle for consulting with local people and with key partners on the long-term priorities for an area.

Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) approved the current sustainable community strategy in 2009. The Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership previously agreed that the Borough Council's Community Partnerships Unit be tasked to take the operational lead on the refresh and revision of key strategies including the Sustainable Communities Strategy and any Maidstone contribution to the Vision for Kent.

Continuing to produce a strategic document that highlights the priorities for Maidstone fitted with the Locality Board's remit to oversee and shape local delivery of the Kent Recommitment and to draw together local public services for greater effectiveness and efficiency. The purpose and priorities of the document remain relevant whilst the position of the Locality Board is clarified.

The refresh has taken account of:-

- economic changes and the financial context of our partners;
- identified improvements and declines (e.g. health inequalities, youth unemployment etc.) associated with the priority areas of the current Sustainable Community Strategy;
- reviewed priorities agreed by the Maidstone Locality Board in 2011, which reduced the overarching priorities from 7 down to 3;
- needs analysis work, including consultation, undertaken in the preparation of other recent partnership strategies;
- priorities in the Borough Council's updated Strategic Plan;
- the emerging emphasis on community engagement and responsibility and;
- the need to introduce and monitor locally agreed measures and targets.

#### Consultation Undertaken

The individual organisations/agencies on the Maidstone Locality Board were consulted on the refresh of the Strategy's priorities in December 2012. Feedback was originally sought from Maidstone's residents in the 2009 public consultation and has been taken into account as well as feedback from the Council's Residents Survey 2012. Further consultation

has been undertaken with key partners including voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough.

#### Changes made following further consultation

No additional changes have been required following the further consultation period.

However, with the recent disbandment of the Maidstone Locality Board, the Strategy has been updated to reflect this change. The Borough Council and its partners will continue to oversee and steer the delivery of this Strategy.

#### **Alternatives considered and why not recommended**

The Council could choose not to refresh the Sustainable Community Strategy. However, if the strategy is not refreshed there is a risk that the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the borough will not be sufficiently articulated and coordinated, and the needs of the borough's communities not met in a coordinated way.

#### **Background Papers**

None

**Maidstone Community Strategy  
2009 – 2020**

*Your community, our priority*

**Refreshed July 2013**

**1. Foreword by Councillor Chris Garland, Leader of Maidstone Borough Council**



Welcome to Maidstone's Community Strategy. This strategy draws on the aspirations of residents, businesses, the community, faith and voluntary sectors. It addresses the biggest challenges and opportunities facing us.

The aim of this strategy is to improve the quality of life for everyone. This strategy sets out our ambitions for the borough and what we want Maidstone to be like in 2020. It is important that people feel proud about where they live and that they have a sense of belonging and responsibility for the area. It also identifies how we will tackle the wider economic, environmental and social issues associated with worklessness to achieve a thriving and prosperous borough.

Maidstone is a great place in which to live, work, visit and do business. We want to make it even better. Our community is at the heart of everything we do. We have excellent community relations in Maidstone and we will work to extend this and build an even more cohesive community that shares and enjoys all that Maidstone has to offer.

Our central focus is to enable sustainable economic growth, in order to create new opportunities for Maidstone's communities thereby reducing the number of people not in work. We recognise this will be more challenging given the recent economic downturn. However, we are passionate in our belief that worklessness is a major barrier to success and a key factor in poverty and exclusion. There is a clear link between worklessness, poor health and education standards, low aspirations, higher crime and communities which are less integrated. Tackling worklessness therefore is our key focus and together we can and will steer the borough in a positive direction.

I am confident that our refreshed strategy creates the opportunities for sharing good ideas, support and resources helping to make stronger communities. I look forward to working with you all to ensure that Maidstone becomes even better over the next decade.

**Councillor Chris Garland**

Leader of Maidstone Borough Council

July 2013

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1 Duty of the council to produce a sustainable community strategy**

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on every local authority to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The purpose of the Strategy is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area – typically 10-20 years – in a way that contributes to sustainable development in the UK. It tells the ‘story of the place’ – the distinctive vision and ambition of the area, being based on the priorities identified in the plans and strategies of all the partner organisations working within the area. In Maidstone, our strategy is called Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority.

### **2.2 What is a sustainable community?**

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the needs of existing and future generations, are environmentally sensitive and contribute to a high quality of life. A sustainable community is one which allows people to have a say in the way their own neighbourhood is run. They are also safe and inclusive, well planned and offer equal opportunities and good services for all.

### **2.3 How we developed this strategy**

At the start of the process to develop the original strategy we embarked upon a consultation process. These views, together with the considerations of local partners and your elected council representatives, coupled with what we know about Maidstone, are set out in the rest of this document under the three priorities. At the end of the document you can learn more about how we will measure our progress and achievements.

### **2.4 What matters to Maidstone residents**

The Council carried out extensive consultation when developing the original Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone 2009-2020. Residents were asked to identify what was good and bad about living in the Borough as well as their dream for Maidstone. The top three positive comments related to Maidstone included shopping, parks and the river. Other positive comments related to cleanliness, the countryside and nightlife. The top three negative comments related to traffic congestion, public transport and the quality of roads. The top three dreams for Maidstone residents related to resolving transport issues, improving the river and an improved theatre/concert facility.

2.5 A residents’ survey was undertaken in 2011. This was the first survey the Council had undertaken since the Place Survey in 2008 and showed improved satisfaction in a number of areas including providing value for money, keeping residents informed and the way the council runs its services. It also showed some areas that need improvement, such as people from different background getting on well together and satisfaction

with the local area. The Borough Council will work with residents to find ways to increase satisfaction across the borough.

- 2.6 During the 2012-13 refresh of Maidstone's Strategic Plan, residents were consulted on the budget to identify what matters to them in respect of council services. This exercise was factored into the Cabinet's prioritisation of spending and services. More detail is provided in the prioritisation section of the plan. The importance of the rural transport network, cleanliness of our town centre and supporting and encouraging a range of business development were identified during a resident focus group reviewing our priorities.
- 2.7 **How the Maidstone Community Strategy links with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan**  
The Maidstone Borough Local Plan will be the strategic, spatial representation of this Strategy. Maidstone Borough Council has a clear understanding of the important contribution that partners make to the achievement of the Local Plan's objectives.
- 2.8 **Refreshing the Maidstone Community Strategy**  
Maidstone's Community Strategy was originally launched in 2009. This revised Strategy puts forward a number of new and revised partnership objectives, framed within new strategic priorities. The overall vision of Maidstone's Community Strategy and thematic outcomes which were originally agreed through engagement with residents and analysis of local needs and intelligence, remain and are only slightly altered, through refreshed narrative and expression.

### **3. The local context and governance**

#### **Local context: Maidstone the place**

- 3.1 Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough with a number of parks, the largest of which is Mote Park, which is Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and home to thriving rugby and cricket clubs. There are numerous smaller parks and squares within the town and villages which have benefited from a major playground and sports facility investment programme in recent years. We recognise the importance of maintaining a quality environment for residents including our heritage and conservation areas. The attractive countryside offers high quality landscape and biodiversity and a wide range of informal recreation opportunities.
- 3.2 Maidstone Borough is considered a good place to live and work with high rates of employment, relatively low levels of adults claiming incapacity benefits and a higher proportion of residents who have a degree than the South East average.
- 3.3 Larger numbers of people commute into than out of the Borough. The Borough has a very mixed business sector with large numbers of small

and medium size businesses with particular strengths in professional services (law and accountancy) and construction. There is a growing media industry led by Maidstone Studios and the Kent Messenger Group. Maidstone has an extensive further education campus (Mid Kent College) and a higher education offer with both the University for the Creative Arts and Mid Kent College seeking to increase their range of courses and facilities. Mid Kent College is widening the range of courses and facilities it provides as part of a £23 million redevelopment of Maidstone' Oakwood Park Campus. This major project commenced in 2012/13 and the College is one of just a handful of UK further education colleges currently investing in a major capital scheme. Over the next three years the University for Creative Arts will be expanding the broadcast media courses being delivered at Maidstone Studios.

- 3.4 Residents living in the Borough have relatively high wages (although many higher earners commute out of the Borough to achieve these). Maidstone came out as the top destination for business in the 2010 study of locations for business in Kent.
- 3.5 "Transport links are generally good, with rail journey times to London are around an hour or just under for some of our villages (Staplehurst, Headcorn and Marden) but over an hour from Maidstone Town itself. The international high speed railway stations at Ebbsfleet (30 mins) and Ashford (25 mins) are also extremely accessible and the Council is pleased that an extension to the Thameslink network is being proposed to provide a direct link to London from Maidstone. 2011 saw the introduction of High Speed services from the Maidstone west to St. Pancras. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges. Road safety is a concern for Maidstone, with the poorest record in Kent. Following a scrutiny review of road safety, the Council will be supporting the Safer Maidstone Partnership in taking initiatives forward to address this issue."
- 3.6 A report commissioned in 2010 to look at how public money is spent locally identified that £602 million public funding was spent in Maidstone in 2010 by various bodies including Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and the local Primary Care Trust. Just over 35% of the money was spent on health and social wellbeing, nearly 17% was spent on education and 15% on housing.

### **Governance**

- 3.7 This strategy takes its strategic direction from the Kent Recommitment, developed at county level and overseen by the Kent Council Leaders (KCL) group, which takes overall responsibility for co-ordinating and agreeing

shared priorities and progress, encouraging community leadership and supporting new initiatives across the county.

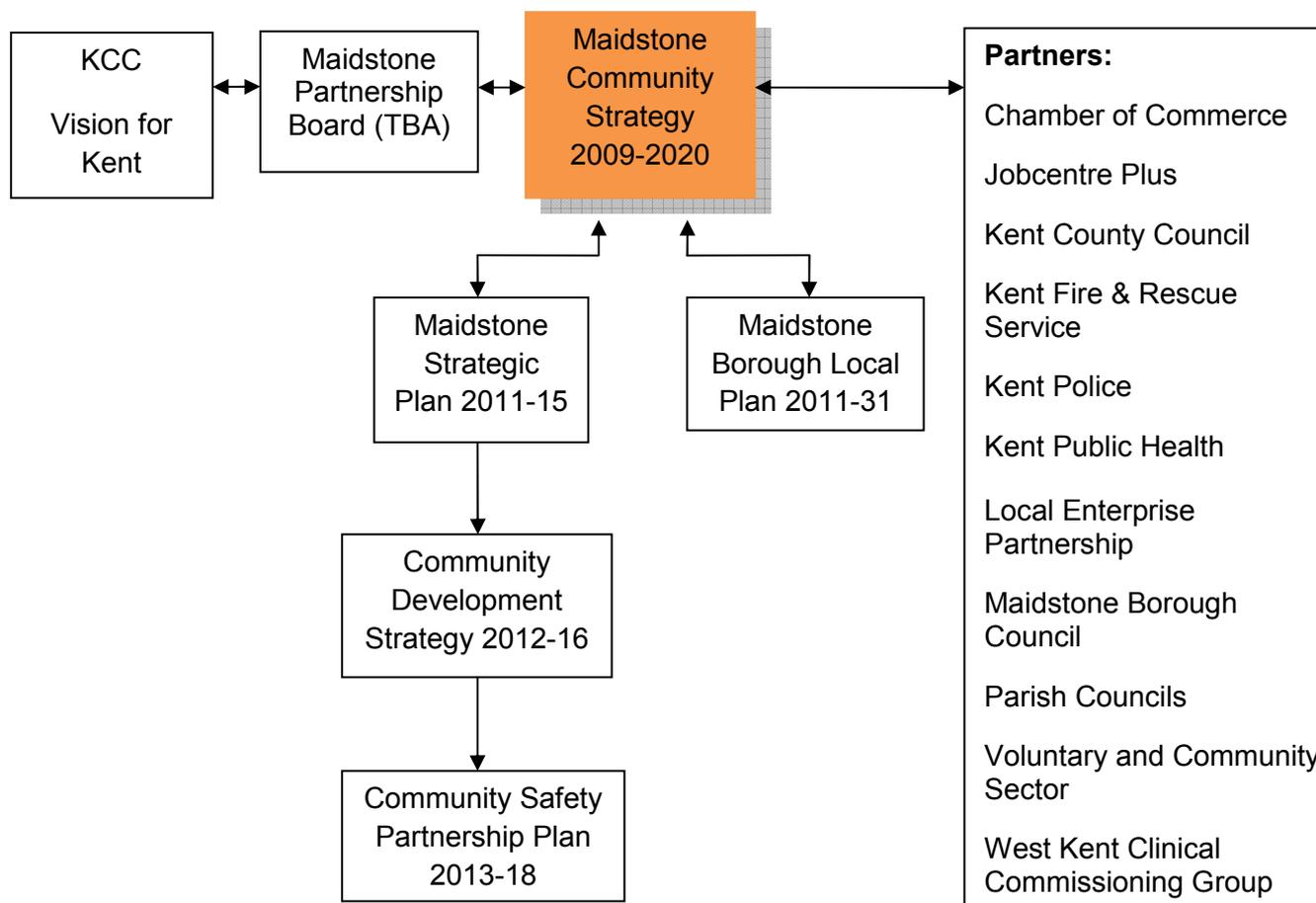
3.8 The KCL group oversees and are responsible for the delivery of the three Countywide Ambitions across Kent, which are;

- **to grow the economy** - for Kent to be 'open for business' with a growing and successful economy and jobs for all
- **to tackle disadvantage** - for Kent to be a county of opportunity, where aspiration rather than dependency is supported and quality of life is high for everyone
- **to put citizens in control** - for power and influence to be in the hands of local people so they are able to take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities

3.9 Maidstone Borough Council has identified the following three priorities and seven outcomes to deliver the vision for Maidstone:

<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
1. For Maidstone to have a growing economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A transport network that supports the local economy</li> <li>• A growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy</li> </ul>
2. For Maidstone to be a decent place to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures</li> <li>• Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit to Borough</li> <li>• Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced</li> </ul>
3. Corporate and Customer Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services are customer focused and residents are satisfied with them</li> <li>• Effective, cost efficient services are delivered across the borough</li> </ul>

3.10 The Maidstone Community Strategy links with other plans, strategies and partners as set out below:



#### **4. Maidstone Community Strategy: Our Vision and Priorities**

- 4.1 We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, quality environment with education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to help people realise their aspiration.
- 4.2 Maidstone’s Community Strategy sets out the long-term vision and ambitions for the borough. It is the overarching strategy for local partnerships based on the things residents told us matters to them and what we know about Maidstone. It takes account of the key challenges and opportunities facing the borough.
- 4.3 The original strategy contained eight priorities to support the vision. Working with the original Strategy and listening to the views people have shared during further consultation with the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership and more recently, the Maidstone Locality Board, the priorities have been reduced in the new strategy to three. The new priorities will

enable greater cross working by partners across the range of issues that are faced by the borough and enhance further partnership working by developing a greater shared agenda. The priorities are:

- **Troubled Families (Community Budgets)**
- **Tackling worklessness and poverty**
- **Local environmental improvements**

## **5. Why are these priorities important to Maidstone?**

- 5.1 Unemployment is a national issue and a particular issue for Maidstone to tackle with partners. The Government has set up programmes to work with troubled families in a number of areas and the Borough Council has adopted the approach as a tool to tackling six wards of Maidstone which have unemployment rates almost twice as high as the Kent average. The Troubled Families programme seeks to improve the lives of those households who present most problems for members of their own family as well as the communities in which they live. Often characterised by long term unemployment these households account for less than 1% of the population but can cost central and local agencies up to £330,000 per family a year.
- 5.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Troubled Families programme aims to transform the lives of 120,000 families nationally by 2015, with a specific focus on families experiencing issues of truancy/exclusion from school, youth offending, antisocial behaviour and worklessness. Kent County Council has identified that it will work with 2,560 families across the county over 3 years, working directly with 1,082 in Year 1. This is worth £2.89 million in an upfront attachment fee grant funding, with up to a further £0.63 million in Payments by Results funding if successful against the performance criteria. In Maidstone, the number of families meeting DCLG's Troubled Families Criteria 1 (exclusions and absences) is 896. The number of families meeting both Criteria 1 and Criteria 2 (YOS, crime and ASB) is approximately 80.
- 5.3 Maidstone has the largest economy of all Kent Districts and Boroughs. More people commute into the Borough each day than commute out. The Borough is an economic hub providing employment for a large part of Kent. However, despite its natural location advantages, Maidstone's growth rate was the 4th lowest in Kent between 1998 and 2008 and behind the South East and Great Britain averages. It is a diverse economy with reliance on town services, 30% of businesses are located in the rural area. Moreover much of this employment growth has been public sector employment. Whilst around 10,000 jobs were created in the service sector during this period, the Borough lost over 3,000 jobs in manufacturing. Neighbouring areas have been able to provide a greater choice and range of employment sites in both quality and quantum and in some cases at more competitive prices.

- 5.4 If the planned cuts in public sector expenditure of 30% result in jobs losses in the sector in the same proportion, nearly 6,000 people who work in Maidstone could lose their jobs. Maidstone also has a low wage local economy and the national changes to education and skills development will impact on our residents and employment.
- 5.5 Maidstone is perceived as an affluent rural area within commuting distance from London but this affluent backdrop tends to mask the socially excluded who often suffer low pay, lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, poor health and relative poverty. Poverty in Maidstone is not confined to urban areas and significant numbers of people in rural areas also experience hardship, with limited access to advice and advocacy appropriate to needs.
- 5.6 National policies on welfare reform and public sector budget cuts will have an impact for our deprived areas and our most vulnerable residents. This will not be an easy area to address as 11% of Maidstone's population live in areas considered to be in the 20% most deprived in the country. Our rural areas also contain households experiencing deprivation. These areas have lower standards of health and lower life expectancy than average. The disadvantaged wards have the highest numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and significantly higher numbers of young offenders.
- 5.7 Maidstone's ageing population also needs strategies and services to provide facilities which identify and promote independence and reduce isolation. The theme of local accessibility needs to be addressed for members of the community who are vulnerable or isolated due to old age, illness or disability, supporting people to live independent and active lives. As the population in the borough ages the pressure to support people will also increase. People are now living longer and this will add to the pressures faced by our health, social care and housing services.
- 5.8 The health of people in Maidstone is mixed compared to the England average. Deprivation is lower than average, however 4,455 children live in poverty. Life expectancy for men is higher than the England average. However, life expectancy is 7.2 years lower for men and 5.9 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Maidstone than in the least deprived areas (based on the Slope Index of Inequality published in January 2012).
- 5.9 The Maidstone Borough Health Profile 2012 provides an overview of the health of residents in the borough and sets out the current health priorities for Maidstone, highlighting sexual health, obesity, self-harm and smoking as key issues. Reducing health inequalities, also addresses the link between worklessness and the broader determinants of health such as housing, environment, access to good quality services and health care.
- 5.10 Reducing mental illness and promoting mental health is a key priority in the borough. Without access to good quality employment the barriers to

escape poverty are much higher for those with mental health, ill health or learning disabilities.

- 5.11 The challenge is to ensure the borough and its communities continue to prosper, whilst maintaining the health of our environment, which itself contributes to that prosperity and which is now clearly recognised as being essential to our own wellbeing. We want Maidstone to be a place where people enjoy living and a key part of this will be having access to affordable and decent housing. We understand that good housing promotes educational attainment, better health outcomes and employment opportunities. The provision of choice and affordability in housing for the citizens of Maidstone, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations are addressed within this outcome. Decent means housing that meets residents' needs in terms of availability and size as well as meeting the national decent homes standard.
- 5.12 In terms of affordable housing, we are referring to a range of tenure that includes socially rented, intermediate or affordable rent and a variety of shared ownership products. We also have a role to play in improving the quality of private housing through grants for improvements to insulation and heating. Maidstone Borough Council has completed a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to help us build the right kind of homes in the right places.
- 5.13 Housing in Maidstone town has traditionally been considered relatively affordable compared to the south east average, but this is not the case in rural Maidstone and for those on average or low incomes. The recent recession has resulted in an increase in home repossession and homelessness generally has risen across the UK. Whilst Maidstone has seen a rise in the numbers of households requiring temporary accommodation provided under the homelessness legislation this remains comparably low compared to the other Boroughs in Kent and a significantly lower level than the worst affected areas in England. Maidstone continues to perform above targets for homelessness prevention and is seeking to find new ways of encouraging people to seek housing advice at an earlier stage rather than when the crisis point of homelessness is reached.
- 5.14 We are committed to increasing social responsibility to ensure that new development is of high quality and the Borough's varied and valued landscape and heritage assets are respected and the environment remains clean and attractive.

## **6. Three priorities; seven outcomes**

6.1 This strategy's overarching priorities are;

- **Troubled Families (Community Budgets)**
- **Tackling worklessness and poverty**
- **Local environmental improvements**

Underpinning the three agreed priorities, there are seven long-term outcomes that the Borough Council aspires to achieve through a partnership approach in Maidstone:

**6.2 Maidstone is a great place to do business with higher levels of investment and business growth**

Through business support services, planning and skills development by 2020, we will have made Maidstone an attractive borough to establish a business. We will have supported economic growth and encouraged development and regeneration of sites across the borough. This will provide the safe, welcoming and attractive environment that businesses need to thrive. We will have increased the overall employment rate with a significant number of new jobs created across a range of industries and commercial sectors and in a wide variety of locations.

**6.3 Greater wellbeing for households through higher numbers of residents in employment**

In 2020 Maidstone will have a much higher employment rate. This will be achieved by ensuring all our communities have access to seamless education/training opportunities, which will in turn provide Maidstone residents with the right skills to gain employment. Further, this increase in employment will also help to lift vulnerable people out of poverty and enable them to play an active role in their community.

**6.4 Even more children and young people are on the path to success through the provision of good quality education, training and jobs which reduces the risk of exclusion and offending**

More of our children in 2020 will be on the path to success. We will ensure this is the case by helping them to be happy, healthy and safe. Services for children will be seamless and responsive to their needs. Early intervention and effective partnership working will ensure the safety and welfare of children. Attainment, skills and qualifications will continue to improve with more of our young people having the right qualifications to succeed in adulthood. Services for children and young people will increasingly be co-designed with more effective engagement of children, young people and families – particularly those from vulnerable and seldom heard groups.

**6.5 Safe and cohesive places where people are empowered and have the confidence to play active roles in their communities**

In 2020 Maidstone will be an even more desirable place to live. Our diverse communities in Maidstone will be safer and stronger. In addition, our communities will continue to be highly cohesive, with people getting on well with one another. People in Maidstone will also play an active role in their local area through a variety of means such as volunteering and neighbourhood action planning.

**6.6 Improved health and wellbeing of people which enables them to live active and independent lives**

By 2020 we will have facilitated the creation of active, healthy and independent communities where the gap in health inequalities within the borough have been reduced. In addition, health services within Maidstone will be equally accessible to all members of the community. Health and social care services will be based around enabling independence, providing choice and promoting control. This will be achieved through increased personalisation of social care services and greater patient choice around the health care services they receive.

**6.7 Lower levels of poverty and social exclusion in Maidstone by helping more of our socially excluded adults into employment, education and training**

In 2020 Maidstone will have lower levels of poverty and social exclusion by tackling the barriers which stop people actively participating in society. This will ensure all our communities have equal access to services and opportunities. The most vulnerable members of our community will receive tailored support services that help them access informative advice, guidance, training, education, employment opportunities and the welfare benefits they are entitled to.

**6.8 Mixed and sustainable communities with an increased supply of new homes, improved existing dwellings and a high quality physical environment**

We will have helped more people to access affordable high quality housing and reduced the number of people living in temporary accommodation. In addition, the quality of our environment will be improved with cleaner streets and high quality green spaces. Further, the Borough Council and its partners will play an active role in neighbourhood action planning helping to address local issues and improve the quality of life for residents by developing a common understanding of issues within areas of high need, including environmental improvements, but other crossing cutting issues such as health inequalities, low levels of educational attainment, skills and qualifications, high unemployment and low economic activity.

6.9 These outcomes will drive the development of performance measures for the three priorities. The vision of building and maintaining strong communities presides over the priorities and outcomes contained in this strategy and is a common thread throughout the document. Community strength flows from the characteristics and actions of people, equipped and enabled to influence decisions that affect their lives within their neighbourhood, town centre or borough. Meeting the outcomes under each priority of the Maidstone Community Strategy will improve the quality of life for all in the borough, through more people having their needs met appropriately. Our priorities will be reviewed over time, at least every four years, to make sure that we are flexible, build on our success and respond to changing needs.

**7. Action Plan – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes**

**7.1 Priority 1: Troubled Families**

<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Performance measures</b>
Set up a sub-group to oversee Troubled Families programme for Maidstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% of unauthorised absences in the last 3 school terms</li> <li>• 60% reduction in ASB across the family in the last 6 months</li> <li>• Offending rate by all minors in the family reduce by at least 33% in the last 6 months</li> <li>• One adult in the family has either volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the ESF provision in the last 6 months</li> <li>• Additional measures to monitor reductions in incidents of domestic abuse and increased referrals to substance misuse support services</li> </ul>
Engage service providers, commissioners, professionals to be part of the local operational group	
Meet with partners to discuss the identified families and consequently select an agreed number of families who are in the most need and best position to receive help and services from the agencies’ pooled funding and collaboration	
Develop an understanding of the identified families and their needs	
Deliver a training programme for initial family contact organisations to ensure consistency and embed a process for best practice and results	
Agree lead person to make initial contact with families to sign up to the Troubled Families programme	
Agree for each FIP worker to work with 5-10 families at a time, building up to 30 families on a planned rolling basis	
Use a customer journey mapping exercise to inform frontline service delivery and inform further service change	
Undertake a costing analysis with partners on the high contact families to evidence cost reductions	
Explore opportunities for match funding with schools, partners grant generating bodies and non traditional funding sources, including the third sector and local businesses	
Develop opportunities of joint working between Kent Probation, Youth Offending Service and other partners for holistic offender support	
Identify an appropriate partner to act as lead for a defined period to contact and support the families to identify issues that have a negative impact and achieve sustainable long term solutions	

**7.2 Priority 2: Tackling Worklessness and Poverty**

<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Performance measures</b>
Set up a sub-group to oversee the Tackling Worklessness and Poverty priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers of young people NEET aged 16-18 reduced</li> <li>• Numbers of young people claiming JSA aged 18-24 reduced</li> <li>• Increased number of work experience placements created</li> <li>• Increased number of apprenticeships created</li> <li>• Additional number of businesses engaging in work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring and jobs for young people</li> </ul>
Invite Jobcentre Plus, CXK and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to join the Sub Group	
Focus on unemployed young people, specifically 18-24 year olds	
Tackle the barriers to work especially, transport, adult literacy and childcare identifying initiatives to address the barriers	
Continue to support and expand work experience opportunities amongst local partners	
Encourage businesses to get involved in mentoring, and providing Apprenticeships, work experience and jobs for young people	
Create a Skills Hub Exchange in the Maidstone travel to work area	

**7.3 Priority 3: Local Environmental Improvements**

<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Performance measures</b>
Roll out Neighbourhood Action Planning into the wards of Shepway North and South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of crime offences (burglary – dwellings, robbery offences, theft offences, violence against the person, road traffic collisions)</li> <li>• Percentage waste recycled/composted</li> <li>• Carbon emissions per capita</li> <li>• Number of Housing starts and Housing completions</li> <li>• Homelessness - those in temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Section 106 and CIL agreements - monies received</li> <li>• Additional number of businesses engaging in work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring and jobs for young people</li> </ul>
Deliver Operation Civic (multi-agency neighbourhood action operation) into the wards of Shepway North, Shepway South and Park Wood with a focus on Community Policing, Housing and Benefits advice	
Pilot a local environmental improvements programme in Park Wood industrial estate to attract and retain businesses	
Support a Borough wide recycling campaign – targeting residential, street recycling, and business waste	
Undertake a review street furniture provision in urban areas	
Support the implementation of the Green Deal/Retrofit programme in Maidstone	
Improve service delivery at Allington site to support a household waste and recycling centre	
Ensure future S106 and CIL allocations reflect community infrastructure needs	
Design-in recycling for new residential and commercial developments through the	

Planning application stage	
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**8. Implementation and monitoring arrangements**

- 8.1 The Maidstone Community Strategy has a clear vision for the future of Maidstone borough. We envisage Maidstone as a thriving borough that maximises all its strengths and tackles the root causes of the social, economic and environmental challenges which hold some of the borough and its residents back.
- 8.2 This strategy will drive the changes we need to make within the borough by providing a clear direction of travel for Maidstone. In addition, we have ensured our long-term outcomes are underpinned by clear areas of focus and targets. The work to achieve this will be challenging and will require the public, private, voluntary and community and faith sectors to work together even more closely than before. We are clear that it is only by moving forward together, as one partnership, that we will be able to deliver on these promises.
- 8.3 The Maidstone Community Strategy operates within a performance management system which is structured around effective political and managerial leadership, a clear vision, action centred service planning, regular performance reporting and constructive challenge. To ensure that the Strategy is delivered, the Council will review and monitor the Action Plan through various methods:
- The strategy's action plan has been developed by Maidstone Borough Council and its partners and the delivery of the action plan will be shared by the partners. Maidstone Borough Council will take responsibility for driving this work and for monitoring delivery. We will publish annual performance information - enabling members of the public to see the progress we are making throughout the year and year on year.
  - We will present an annual report and commentary on progress to achieve the vision and deliver the strategy's action plan, using this as an opportunity to challenge partners, to renew commitment to the plan and to update and increase the ambition of the plan when opportunities arise. The report will enable partner organisations, Councillors and members of the public to see the progress we have made and challenge organisations on the work they have undertaken.
  - Clear and effective communication with wider audiences who would be the future partners and stakeholders for delivery will increase the strategy's prospects for success. The strategy is a bold statement of intent and the foundation of a cohesive, partnership approach towards community development in the borough. The action plan links directly to the Borough Council's overarching Communications and Engagement Plan, providing common ground on which to build

partnerships and will help all contributors to broker discussions with new partners.

- 8.4 Publishing this strategy is not an end in itself; rather it is the start of our new journey forward. Maidstone Borough Council is confident that the time we have taken to work with the public, partner organisations, Councillors and central government has ensured that the direction we are taking to make improvements in quality of life is the right one.
- 8.5 To prepare the Maidstone Community Strategy, we talked to local people in many different ways. Local people completed surveys, attended meetings and forums, made comments on a leaflet and submitted their views online. We used information from earlier consultations, where hundreds of people took the chance to tell us what they thought, to make sure that our Maidstone Community Strategy reflects the views of as many people as possible.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 Maidstone Borough Council believes everyone should be treated fairly and with respect. The Partnership recognises that diversity issues will impact on planning and delivery of services and we are committed to ensuring that our work has a positive impact for everyone in the Borough, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief. We welcome the positive contribution that an increasingly diverse population will make to the future prosperity of Maidstone. Discrimination is a reality for some people in the Borough. Because of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and other factors, people are denied opportunities, have difficulty accessing services, and suffer inequalities. In order to deliver our vision of a better Maidstone borough for everyone, we want to create an inclusive and supportive environment that offers equal opportunities for everyone.
- 9.2 Maidstone Borough Council will assess and monitor the relevance and effect of the Maidstone Community Strategy on equalities through its programme of Equality Impact Assessments. Our commitment to equality and diversity includes a commitment to promoting social inclusion for people who are disadvantaged by life circumstances or conditions, including the problems that can be associated with living within areas of deprivation, and with experiencing periods of unemployment, homelessness or other such difficulties.

If you can access the Internet, you can learn more about the Maidstone Community Strategy for Maidstone at [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk) If you prefer, you can send your comments, questions or suggestions to our address:

Community Partnerships, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

# Agenda Item 14

## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COUNCIL

24 JULY 2013

#### REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 JULY 2013

##### **AUDIT COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL 2012/13**

In line with the recommendations of the Peer review of the Audit Committee and best practice, the Committee's Annual Report 2012/13 is attached as an Appendix to this report.

**RECOMMENDED: That the Audit Committee's Annual Report 2012/13, which demonstrates how the Committee has discharged its duties during 2012/13, provides assurance to the Council that important governance issues are being monitored and addressed by the Committee, and provides evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement, be noted.**

# Audit Committee Annual Report 2012/13



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**Maidstone Borough Council  
Audit Committee Annual Report – 2012-13**



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I am pleased to introduce the annual report of the Audit Committee, covering the year to 31 March 2013.

The Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing the Council's governance arrangements (both financial and non financial) and seeks to obtain appropriate assurances in these areas.

This is the second Annual Report of the Audit Committee and I am pleased to report that the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Councillor Butler, has continued to build on its strength and effectiveness over the past year.

As outlined in the body of this report, the Committee has been actively engaged with the Council's financial managers, internal auditors and external auditors (Grant Thornton). The Committee has provided oversight and challenge to the Council's operations and internal control environment and provided robust scrutiny and challenge of the Authority's financial and project performance. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Committee has continued to follow best practice and to become increasingly challenging of officers whilst always supporting them in their governance priorities.

I would like to thank all members who served on the Committee during 2012-13 and for the continued support of members during the year ahead. My thanks also go to the Council officers who have supported the work of the Committee.

In looking forward to 2013 - 14 and beyond, and given the continued financial pressures facing the Council, the importance of an effective Audit Committee remains critical. Along with my fellow members I look forward to meeting those challenges which lie ahead.

Councillor Rodd Nelson-Gracie  
Chairman

## 1. Introduction

Whilst there is no statutory obligation to have an Audit Committee, Maidstone Borough Council understands and supports the value of the Committee as an essential component of effective governance. In recent years there has been a significant amount of regulation and guidance issued on governance arrangements for private and public sector bodies, with the common feature of effective governance arrangements being the existence of an independent Audit Committee.

The key purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment; independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment; and to oversee the financial reporting process and approve the Annual Statement of Accounts. The Committee is independent from the Council's Executive and Scrutiny functions and has clear reporting lines and rights of access in order to deliver on its responsibilities. Meetings are held in public, and all Members of the Council as well as members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meetings are available as a web-cast.[http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/web-casting.aspx](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/web-casting.aspx)

Members of the Committee have a broad range of skills, interests and level of knowledge in financial and risk management, accounting concepts and standards and the regulatory regime. They are also required to demonstrate an independent and unbiased approach and be able to challenge the Executive and senior officers of the Council when required.

Regular attendees at Audit Committee meetings include the Director of Regeneration and Communities (with S151 responsibility), the Head of Finance and Customer Services, the Head of Audit Partnership, the Audit Manager and senior representatives from the external auditor. The Committee also has the ability to call any other officers or agencies of the Council as required.

The role of the Audit Committee differs from that of the Council's Scrutiny Committees in that the role of scrutiny is to review policy and challenge whether the Executive (Cabinet) has made the right decisions to deliver policy goals. The Audit Committee, however, provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and affects the control environment, and oversight of the financial reporting process.

The Committee is not a substitute for the Executive function in the management of internal or external audit, risk management, corporate governance, stewardship reporting, internal control or any other review or assurance function. It is the Committee's role to examine these functions, and to offer opinions or recommendations on the way the management of these functions is conducted.

There are many benefits to be gained from an effective Audit Committee. In fulfilling its role the Committee will:

- Raise greater awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations;
- Increase public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- Reinforce the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process (for example, providing a view on the Annual Governance Statement); and

- Provide additional assurance to the Authority and its stakeholders through the results of its work.

## **2. Terms of Reference and Responsibilities**

The Committee's detailed terms of reference are set out in Article 6A of the Council's Constitution and are based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) model. [http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Constitution\\_January%202012.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Constitution_January%202012.pdf)

However, in summary, the core functions of the Committee are to:

1. Consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.
2. Seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors.
3. Be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it.
4. Approve (but not direct) internal audit's strategy, plan and monitor performance.
5. Review summary internal audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary.
6. Receive the annual report of the Head of Audit Partnership.
7. Consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies.
8. Ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.
9. Review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.
10. Approve the Annual Statement of Accounts

### 3. Membership 2012/13

The Audit Committee comprises five Members of the Council and has a quorum of three. The Committee supports the Executive and Scrutiny Committees in fulfilling the Council's oversight and governance responsibilities through its consideration and approval of the Council's financial statements and financial reporting process, the system of internal controls and risk management and the internal and external audit process. The Committee met on six occasions in 2012/13. Committee agenda papers and minutes are available on the Council's website:

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=147&Year=2012>

**Cllr Derek Butler**  
**Chairman**



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**Cllr Mervyn Warner**  
**Vice-Chairman**



**Cllr Alistair Black**



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**Cllr David Burton**



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**Cllr Fran Wilson**



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#### 4. Committee Attendance 2012/13

The Committee has been well supported throughout the year by both Members and Officers, and attendance records are set out in the table below.

Member/Officer	11/06/12	16/07/12	17/09/12	26/11/12	14/01/13	25/03/13
<b><u>Audit Committee Members</u></b>						
Councillor Derek Butler (Chairman)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Councillor Mervyn Warner (Vice-Chairman)	A	A	Y	Y	Y	A
Councillor Alistair Black	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y
Councillor David Burton	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Councillor Fran Wilson	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b><u>Substitute Members</u></b>						
Councillor Dan Daley		Y				
<b><u>Visiting Members</u></b>						
Councillor Clive English					Y	
<b><u>Officers</u></b>						
Director of Regeneration and Communities	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Assistant Dir of Regeneration and Cultural Services	N/A	Y	A	Y	N/A	Y
Head of Finance and Customer Services	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Senior Accountant (Client)	N/A	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A
Head of Audit Partnership	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
Audit Manager	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
Head of Revenues and Benefits	Y	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b><u>External Audit</u></b>						
Ellie Dunnet		Y	Y			
Steve Golding		Y	Y	Y		Y
Darren Wells			Y	Y		
<b><u>Democratic Services</u></b>						
Debbie Snook	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Janet Barnes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y

Key: Y = Attendance, A = Apologies Received, N/A = Not Applicable

## 5. The Committee considered the following reports during 2012/13

Function/Issue	Lead Officer/ Body	11/06/12	16/07/12	17/09/12	26/11/12	14/01/13	25/03/13
<b><u>INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY</u></b>							
Audit Committee Annual Report 2011/12	AM			Y			
Internal Audit Annual Report 2011/12	HAP	Y					
Internal Audit – Six Month Interim Report	HAP				Y		
Internal Audit Operational Plan 2013/14	HAP						Y
Risk Management Update	HAP			Y			
Draft Strategic Risk Register	HAP					Y	
Internal Audit Partnership Update	HAP				Y		
Public Sector Internal Audit Standards	HAP						Y
<b><u>EXTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY</u></b>							
Audit Commission – Progress Report	EA	Y					Y
Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2011/12	EA				Y		
Certification of Financial Claims and Returns	EA						Y
External Audit Fees 2012/13	EA				Y		
<b><u>REGULARITY FRAMEWORK / INTERNAL CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS</u></b>							
Benefit Fraud Annual Report 2011/12	HRB	Y					
Annual Governance Statement 2011/12	HFCS	Y					
Treasury Management Annual Report 2011/12	HFCS	Y					
Maidstone Museum East Wing Project Review - Update	ADRCS		Y	Y	Y		Y
Update on Proposed Single Fraud Investigation Service	HRB			Y			
Review of Audit Committee	HAP			Y			
Audit Committee Meetings Schedule	HAP			Y			
Audit Committee Frequency of Meetings	HAP				Y		
Audit Committee – Appointment of Independent Member	HFCS				Y		
Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Performance 2012/13	HFCS				Y		
Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14	HFCS					Y	
Review of Risk Assessment of Budget Strategy 2013/14 Onwards	HFCS					Y	
Relationship Between Audit Committee and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DSO					Y	

Function/Issue	Lead Officer/ Body	11/06/12	16/07/12	17/09/12	26/11/12	14/01/13	25/03/13
<b>ACCOUNTS</b>							
Statement of Accounts 2011/12	HFCS		Y				
Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts 2011/12	HFCS			Y			

### **Key**

- ADRCS** Assistant Director of Regeneration and Cultural Services
- AM** Audit Manager
- DSO** Democratic Services Officer
- EA** External Auditor
- HAP** Head of Audit Partnership
- HFCS** Head of Finance and Customer Services

## **6. Assurance**

The Audit Committee has considered the following areas to assist it in gaining assurance of the governance arrangements within the organisation as part of its annual work programme.

Risk Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements</b></li> <li>• <b>Seek assurance that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors</b></li> </ul>

This has been achieved by:

- Receiving a report of the Head of Audit Partnership on action to be taken to progress the Council's risk management arrangements.
- The Chair of the Audit Committee attended and participated in Cabinet discussion of the Council's Strategic Risk Register
- Considering the draft Strategic Risk Register prior to Cabinet approval
- Considering the adequacy of the risk based approach to audit planning that led to the creation of the Council's 2013/14 operational audit plan
- Considering Cabinet referral of property investment governance arrangements
- Considering the report of the Head of Finance and Customer Services and agreeing the risk assessment of the Budget Strategy 2013-14 onwards.
- Considering reports of the Assistant Director of Regeneration and Cultural Services on action taken in relation to the Maidstone Museum East Wing project management.
- Considering the report of the Director of Regeneration and Communities with regard to the establishment by the Department of Work and Pensions of a Single Fraud Investigation Service and the financial and operational impact on the Council's Benefits Fraud service.

### Internal Control assurance

- **Be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the control environment and any actions required to improve it.**

This has been achieved by:

- Considering the Head of Audit Partnership opinion of internal control for 2011/12 and agreeing the significant issues to be included in the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12
- Endorsing the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12 and the action plan prior to reporting to Cabinet
- Considering internal audit assurance – direction of travel reports for ongoing assurance of the adequacy of arrangements for delivering improvement to identified weakness in internal control
- Considering the report of the Director of Regeneration and Communities setting out details of the performance of the Benefit Fraud team during 2011/12 and the implications arising from the Welfare Reform Act and forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit.

### Audit Activity

- **Approve (but not direct) Internal Audit's strategy and audit plan and monitor performance**
- **Review summary Internal Audit reports and the main issues arising , and seek assurances that action has been taken where necessary**
- **Receive the annual report of the Head of Audit Partnership**
- **Consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies**
- **Ensure there are effective relationships between internal and external audit, and inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.**

### Internal Audit

The Committee has:

- Considered the Annual Report of the Head of Audit Partnership detailing the work of the Internal Audit function during the year and agreed that the Council's internal audit service is effective.
- Agreed the Internal Audit operational Audit Plan for 2013/14
- Noted the progress made by the Internal Audit Partnership at the mid-point of the 5-year agreement and actions proposed to further improve the service.
- Received the interim report setting out the work of Internal Audit for the first half of the year

- Considered Internal Audit reports with regard to those areas providing minimal or limited controls assurance
- Noted the new Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and action to be taken to implement them.

### **External Audit**

The Committee has:

- Received progress reports on the transfer of the Council's External Audit responsibilities to Grant Thornton for the period 2012-17
- Considered and agreed the Audit Plan for 2011/12 and progress reports
- Received and agreed the Annual Audit Letter for 2011/12
- Considered and agreed the certification of grant claim report
- Considered the reduction in external audit fees for the 2012/13 audit and action being taken to mitigate the risk of additional fees being incurred.
- Received a progress report against the 2012/13 external audit plan

<b>Accounts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit</b></li> <li>• <b>Approve the Annual Statement of Accounts</b></li> </ul>

The Committee has sought assurance by:

- Receiving and approving the Annual Governance Report for 2011/12 and approving the Letter of Representation to the Audit Commission
- Approving the Statement of Accounts for 2011/12
- Considering the Treasury Management Annual Report 2011/2 and regular status reports
- Considering the 2012/13 Treasury Management Strategy mid-year performance report
- Considering the draft 2013/14 Treasury Management Strategy for submission to Council

## **7. Audit Committee's Effectiveness**

The Committee continued to review its effectiveness during the year and identified opportunities for improvement. This has included:

- Introducing an Annual Audit Committee Report for presentation to Full Council to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Committee by ensuring that important governance issues are being monitored and addressed by the Committee and providing evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement.
- Reviewed progress against the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) agency action plan for improvements to the effectiveness of the Committee
- Approved a reduction in the frequency of meetings of the Committee during the municipal year - from 6 to 4 – to ensure the most effective use of its time and scheduling of its work programme and for a date to be set aside in June each year for Member training
- Considering the appointment of an independent member to the Audit Committee and development of a skills and experience matrix for the Committee
- Considered arrangements between the Audit Committee and the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed for the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to meet at the beginning of each municipal year to develop complementary work programmes and avoid duplication.
- Adopted a protocol for the referral of matters between the Committee and the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its members

### **Future Challenges**

The Audit Committee will continue with its existing duties whilst continually striving to achieve best practice where this is feasible and affordable. The Committee will satisfy itself that new external audit arrangements work satisfactorily, following the appointment of Grant Thornton, and that the Council's audit, governance and risk management arrangements continue to be strengthened. Member training and development will continue to be a priority both for the current members and the new members appointed to the Committee at the beginning of the new municipal year.

## 8. Proposed 2013/14 Work Programme

- The Committee faces a challenging year ahead and the Committee's current (draft) work programme for the forthcoming year is set out below.

Function/Issue	Lead Officer/ Body	10/06/13	15/07/13	16/09/13	25/11/13	03/03/14
<b><u>INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY</u></b>						
Audit Committee Annual Report 2012/13	AM		Y			
Internal Audit Annual Report 2012/13	HAP		Y			
Internal Audit – Six Month Interim Report	HAP				Y	
Internal Audit Operational Plan 2014/15	HAP					Y
Strategic Risk Register - Action Plans	HAP			Y		
<b><u>EXTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY</u></b>						
External Auditor's Opinion Audit Plan 2012/13	EA		Y			
External Auditor's Audit Progress Report	EA		Y			Y
External Auditor's Audit Fee Letter 2013/14	EA		Y			
External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter 2012/13	EA				Y	
Certification of Financial Claims and Returns	EA					Y
<b><u>REGULARITY &amp; FRAMEWORK / INTERNAL CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS</u></b>						
Property Investment	HFR	Y				
Fraud Annual Report 2012/13	HRB		Y			
Local Code of Corporate Governance – Annual Update	HFR		Y			
Annual Governance Statement 2012/13	HPC		Y			
Treasury Management Annual Report 2012/13	HFR		Y			
Maidstone Museum East Wing Project Review	CEX		Y			
Review of Financial Thresholds in the Contract Procedure Rules	HFR			Y		
Review of corporate Policies						
- Whistleblowing						
- Anti Fraud and Corruption	HAP			Y		
- Money Laundering						
- Risk Management						
Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Performance 2013/14	HFR				Y	
Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15	HFR				Y	
Review of Risk Assessment of Budget Strategy 2013/14 Onwards	HFR				Y	
<b><u>ACCOUNTS</u></b>						
Statement of Accounts 2012/13	HFR		Y			
External Auditor's Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts 2012/13	HFR			Y		

**MEMBER TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT**

Audit Committee Member Skills

HAP

Y

**Key**

**AM** Audit Manager  
**CEX** Chief Executive  
**EA** External Auditor

**HAP** Head of Audit Partnership  
**HFR** Head of Finance and Resources  
**HPC** Head of Policy and Communications

**9. Audit Committee Membership 2013/14**

**Cllr Rodd Nelson-Gracie**  
**Chairman**



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**Cllr Derek Butler**  
**Vice-Chairman**



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**Cllr Alistair Black**



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**Cllr Dan Daley**



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**Cllr Mervyn Warner**



## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COUNCIL**

**24 JULY 2013**

#### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Report prepared by Janet Barnes

#### **1. MEMBERS' BROADBAND ALLOWANCE**

- 1.1 In May 2013 a report was sent to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel ("JIRP") (copy attached at Appendix A) requesting their consideration of increasing the basic allowance for Members to incorporate the broadband allowance, following a suggestion made by the JIRP in January 2013.
- 1.2 As set out in the report at Appendix A, the administration of the current broadband allowance has become onerous for payroll, committee services and Members.
- 1.3 The Chairman of the JIRP, following consultation, responded with his recommendations on 5 June 2013 (attached at Appendix B).

#### **1.2 RECOMMENDED:**

- 1.2.1 That the basic allowance for Members be increased from £4,666 to £4,800 per annum to incorporate an allowance for Broadband with effect from 1 August 2013 and the Members Allowance Scheme updated accordingly.

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**MAY 2013**  
**JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

**Report prepared by Janet Barnes**

**MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

In January 2013 the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel ("JIRP") undertook a partial review of the Maidstone Members' Allowances Scheme.

The recommendations of the JIRP were considered by Council in February 2013 and Council resolved:-

1. That the following clause relating to Broadband Allowance be included in the Members' Allowances Scheme as a new paragraph 11:-

Councillors are entitled to claim for the actual cost of their broadband service, up to a maximum of £23.49 per month. A copy of the Internet Service Provider's ("ISP") invoice must be supplied to the Payroll Department in May every year in order to continue to receive the allowance and should there be a change of provider, a copy of the new invoice must be sent to the Payroll Department informing them of the change of supplier and, if appropriate, the associated monthly and yearly cost thereafter.

2. That Schedule 1 of the Members' Allowances Scheme be amended as follows:-

Delete: Group Leaders Allowance;  
Add: Leader of the Opposition (minimum of 10 Councillors) (25% of Leader's Allowance) £5,831;  
Group Leader (minimum of 5 Councillors) (10% of Leader's Allowance) £2,331.

**BROADBAND ALLOWANCE**

The Chairman of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel suggested, at the same time as the recommendation of the Panel, that "the council may want to consider integrating the broadband allowance into the regular member's allowance. A number of councils are now integrating any broadband IT allowances into their basic allowance."

Following the agreed changes to the Members Allowances Scheme regarding broadband allowance, it has begun to prove difficult to supply copy invoices from

suppliers which show the "actual" cost of the broadband as many of the Councillors receive a "bundle/package" and suppliers are not willing to provide a breakdown. It is now proving to be an administrative burden for both Payroll and Committee Services to monitor and update the invoices from Members and deal with enquiries.

In view of the above, the Council would now like to consider incorporating the broadband allowance within the basic allowance for Members.

Options

The current broadband allowance within the Members Allowances Scheme is to pay the actual cost of the broadband service, up to a maximum of £23.49 per month. 18 Members currently claim the allowance, of which 6 claim the maximum amount. The average monthly cost claimed is £18.89). Over the last 3 years the amounts paid for broadband are set out below:-

2010/11	£4,925
2011/12	£3,977
2012/13	£4,930

The current basic allowance for Members is £4,666 per annum and the current annual budget for broadband is £11,000. If all 55 Members were to claim the maximum amount of £23.49 per month, this would necessitate a budget of £15,503 per annum.

The options to consider are set out below:-

1. Divide the current spend on broadband (£5,000) between all 55 Members, which would equate to an increase in their basic allowance of £91 per annum (£7.58 per month).
2. Divide the current budget for broadband (£11,000) between all 55 Members, which would equate to an increase in their basic allowance of £200 per annum (£16.67 per month).
3. Increase the basic allowance from £4,666 per annum to £4,800 per annum (an increase of £134 per annum) which would equate to a spend of £7,370 per annum out of the £11,000 budget.

**Recommendation:**

To consider the options set out in the report and determine the most appropriate option to recommend to Council.

**Janet Barnes**

---

**From:** Mark@seemp.co.uk  
**Sent:** 05 June 2013 10:08  
**To:** Janet Barnes  
**Cc:** bev@seemp.co.uk; waynewright@wsqsolutions.com; paul.hutchinson407@mod.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Maidstone/Swale Joint IRP

Dear Janet

Further to the update provided I will respond on behalf of the Chair (Mark Palmer) and Panel member Dr Wayne Wright. One place on the IRP is currently vacant and Mr. Paul Hutchinson is overseas for a month and out of contact.

The IRP supported the approach to include the broadband allowance as part of the basic allowance for administrative efficiency reasons and because access to broadband is now integral to a councillor performing his/her role.

The Panel were interested to note that currently only **18** member's claim the allowance and whether this was because collective member broadband connection was low as a percentage of members or whether members just did not claim the allowance?

The IRP in considering the recommendations were keen to ensure that the overall broadband budget of £11,000 should not increase but the basic allowance should increase at a level that allowed all members to access broadband to support the role of councillor and resulted in no individual financial loss.

With these factors in mind the Panel have taken the decision to recommend **option 3:**

- **To increase the basic allowance from £4,666 per annum to £4,800 per annum (an increase of £134 per year or £11.17 per month) which would equate to a spend of £7,370 per annum out of the £11,000 budget.**

The IRP had researched the current price of non bundled broadband packages that were not part of any introductory discount price and a number of providers including SKY, BT and Talk Talk offered a broadband contract for between £6.50 and £10 per month for a 12 to 18 month contract (These prices were reduced if part of a bundled package that included telephone and television).

I hope the recommendation meets with approval and please do contact me should you require any further support or clarification.

Kind regards

**Mark Palmer**  
**Development Director**  
**Chartered Fellow of CIPD (FCIPD)**  
**MBA (Public)**

**South East Employers**  
**supporting and enhancing councils and communities**  
Newfrith House, 21 Hyde Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 7DR  
T 01962 840664; W [www.seemp.co.uk](http://www.seemp.co.uk) M 07887-982602

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## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COUNCIL**

**24 JULY 2013**

#### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Report prepared by Debbie Snook

#### **1. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- 1.1** Notification has been received of proposed changes to the membership of Committees.

#### **2. RECOMMENDED:**

- 2.1** That the following changes be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Conservative Group:-

#### **Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

##### Members

Delete Councillor Ash. Insert Councillor Mrs Parvin.

##### Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Parvin. Insert Councillor Ash.

#### **Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

##### Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Parvin. Insert Councillor Ash.

#### **Planning Committee**

##### Substitute Members

Insert Councillor McLoughlin.

- 2.2** That the following changes be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group:-

**Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Members

Delete Councillor Beerling. Insert Councillor Vizzard.

Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Grigg. Insert Councillor Beerling.

**Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Members

Delete Councillor Harwood. Insert Councillor Chittenden.

Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Chittenden. Insert Councillor Harwood.

Background Documents

Note and emails from the Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups – Democratic and Member Support Section