

## **Cabinet Member for Regeneration – Vision for Portfolio**

### **Introduction**

This vision statement is deliberately short and concentrates on key areas of work which require to be maintained, enhanced or added to the programme for the coming municipal year. It represents a challenge, but an achievable one.

### **Planning Policy**

The Local Development Framework represents both a significant opportunity for the Borough and a major risk. The consequences of decisions taken now will impinge on the residents and businesses of Maidstone for many years. Consequently delivering a high standard, robust, fit for purpose LDF must be the highest priority for any holder of this Portfolio and a very high priority for the Cabinet and Council. It is the Cabinet's aim to deliver the 20/20 vision of moderate housing and economic growth supported by the necessary infrastructure and Enhanced Green Networks.

The various documents that make up the LDF will be refined to assist in the delivery of this Vision and to take account of public responses to the consultation process. The Core Strategy and Allocations DPDs will require significant support from lower tier policies and considerable emphasis will continue to be placed on the development of Area Character Assessments and the range of Supplementary Planning Policies.

In addition the Council, which has often talked about Masterplanning and Development briefs, must start to deliver on these areas in a way it frankly has not done in the past. If this is not done we may well get housing, but we shall have precious little else.

A particular consideration that requires increased emphasis in the LDF process is the issue of public transport (in relation to park and ride, but also generally).

I will be working closely with my Colleague, the Cabinet Member for the Environment on these issues.

### **Development Control, Enforcement and Compliance**

The Development Control process remains vital. For many members of the public, it is their main contact with the Council, other than the Waste Collection. In conjunction with the Planning Committee I hope to see our improved performance in Development Control maintained. Having improved the speed of decision making, quality of outcome must now be the goal.

The moves to fill the holes in the Council's policy framework are underway and these must be supported by further improvements in process.

Important areas include getting the new pre-application protocol to work successfully, developing a modified approach for deferred applications that does not lose the benefits of the old one, yet complies with the code of conduct, improving the Planning Forum, improving further the approach to Section 106

agreements and above all dealing with Enforcement and Compliance.

There is no point in having the finest Policy Framework and Decision process unless those policies and decisions are properly implemented. Progress has been made in the areas of Enforcement and Compliance, but there is much still to do

## **Housing**

The provision of affordable housing remains a key goal. Meeting our target is challenging, but essential, this will continue to be addressed both through the Planning process and through direct support where possible action will be taken to deal with empty properties.

In addition it is vital that housing is not only affordable, but is actually fit for purpose. Much of the Boroughs private rented housing is not.

I aim to reinforce enforcement in relation to private sector rented housing. In addition the Private Sector grants system for Owner occupiers requires further improvement and refinement.

Other major issues include a need, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Community Services, to make further progress on dealing with anti social behaviour and the introduction of Choice based lettings.

## **Economic Development**

The Council has clear aspirations in the field of Economic Development, which are partly addressed through the LDF process. In addition to this the Council has some more direct opportunities to influence events. To achieve a move towards a higher value economy the Council will need, above all, to work on its links to the academic and media sector.

I and the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture will be working on this and on our role as a council in encouraging new businesses and the small business sector.

We will also take account of the role that the Borough's environment plays in attracting inward investment.