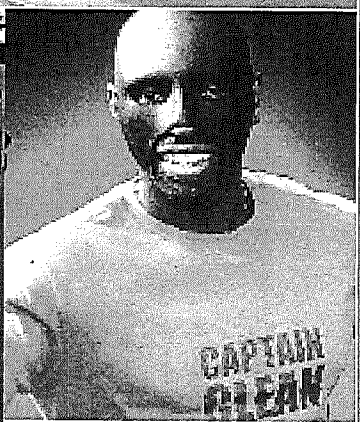
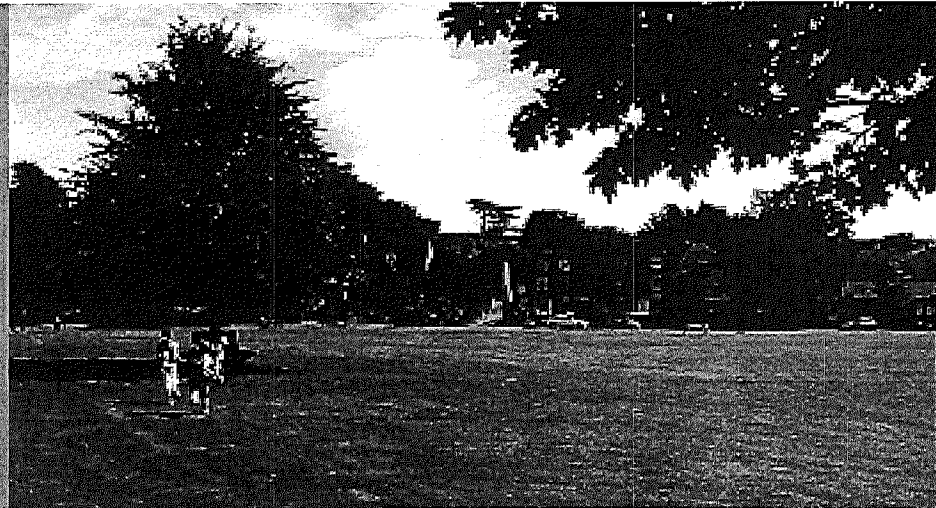


Appendix A

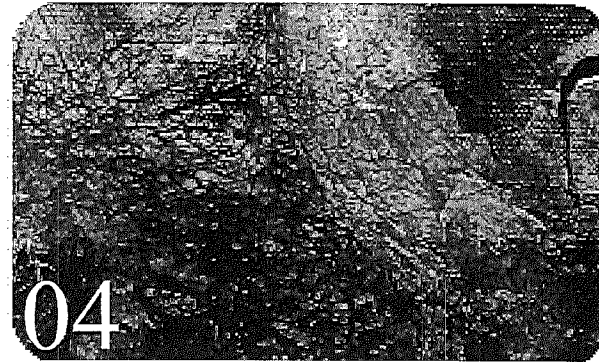
Maidstone Borough Council

Strategic Plan 2009-12

2010-11 update



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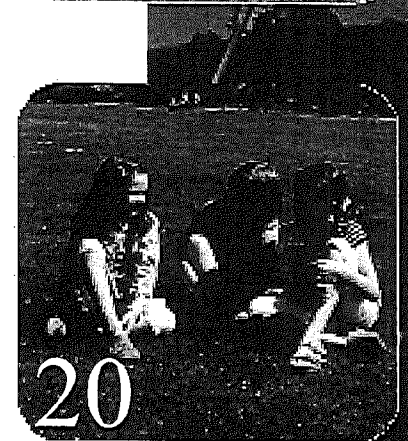
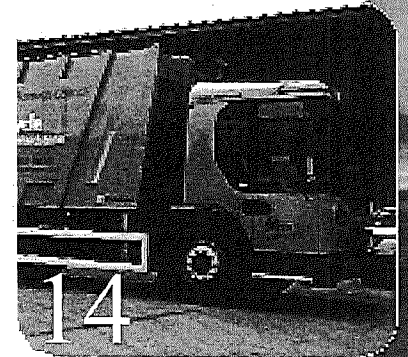
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Foreword

by Cllr Chris Garland and David Petford

Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan sets out how the Council will work to achieve its objectives and how it will contribute to the goals in Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) over the next three years. This work is set against the backdrop of our achievements over the previous year.

Not surprisingly, given the continuing world economic situation, the focus will remain on our economy in the short to medium term.

The main challenges will be to attract investment to our borough and to maintain our County Town profile.

There has been a shift in demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn. There has been a significant increase in the number of benefit and homelessness applications and the Council has targeted its resources to help those most in need.

Council finances will be tight over the next few years, with less income and predicted rises in government funding of just 0.5% per annum for 2010/11 and no growth in the short to medium term. The Council will have to find significant savings in order to deliver balanced budgets.

Value for money is important to us all and the Council will continue to find new ways of working to provide quality services in a cost effective way.

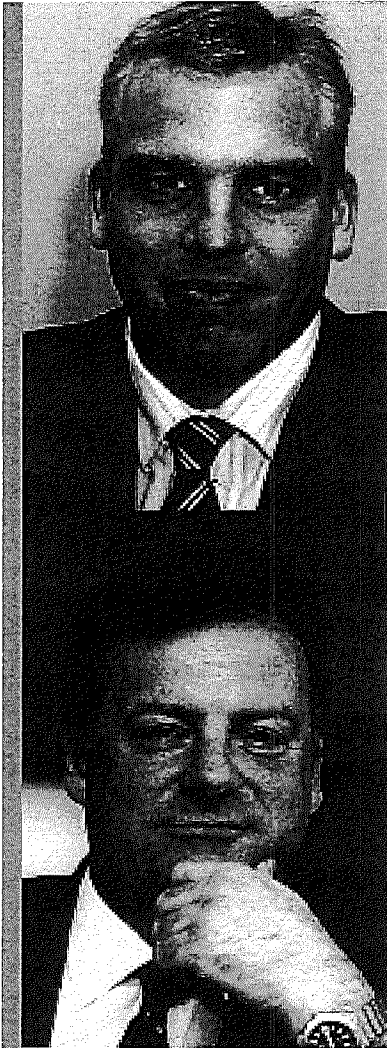
In particular, the Council is working with the neighbouring boroughs of Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells, and with Kent

County Council (KCC), to provide services jointly; to improve them and to reduce costs.

The Audit Commission assesses how councils manage and use their resources. In 2009 Maidstone Borough Council was assessed as performing well on our overall organisational assessment and performing excellently on the Managing Performance element. *Our results put us in the top 18 performing councils in the country.*

The Strategic Plan 2009-12 has been updated for 2010/11, but the Council is still working towards medium and long term objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Some of our top priorities up to 2015 are:

- *Increasing the number of jobs in the borough;*
- *Increasing recycling levels to 50%;*
- *Developing a wide-ranging Housing Strategy to ensure that the right homes are built in the right areas at the right price;*
- *Improving outcomes in priority areas, such as Park Wood, High Street, Shepway North and Shepway South; and*
- *Delivering high quality services that provide good value for money.*



Top: Cllr Chris Garland
Leader of the Council
Above: David Petford
Chief Executive

Good progress has been made on the Council's objectives in 2009/10. We have:

- Worked with the Youth Forum to promote positive activities for children and young people, such as Peace One Day, which attracts thousands of young people every year;
- Welcomed new partners and offered more services at the Maidstone Gateway, which provides a single point of access to many public services;
- Completed the roll-out of our doorstep recycling service so that every household can recycle paper, card, tins, cans and plastics – and we increased recycling rates in the borough;
- Entered a shared legal service with Swale and Tunbridge Wells councils;
- Entered a shared internal audit service with Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells councils;
- Invested £X million pounds in affordable housing to provide X number of homes;
- Helped residents and businesses fight the recession with housing and council tax benefits, heating, insulation and home improvement grants, free bus travel and money advice;

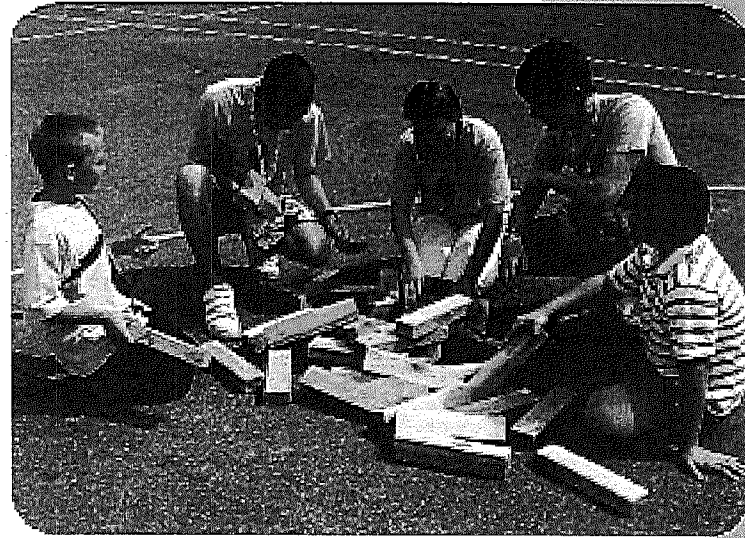
- Held many musical and cultural activities including the Maidstone Mela, St George's Day parade and our Summer Shakespeare season; and
- Progressed our three flagship regeneration schemes - Mote Park improvements, Maidstone Museum's East Wing project and the High Street regeneration scheme.

Towards the end of 2008, 2,400 Maidstone residents responded to the Place Survey. They told us what they thought of the services that are delivered locally and what they thought of their local area. Eight out of ten people said that they were satisfied with their area as a place to live.

In 2009 we improved our services as a result of what people had said. For example, we are *reviewing* the way we manage street cleaning *to provide a better service* and we are working with our partners to ensure that all land is clear of litter.

It is important that we engage effectively with communities, share information, listen to views and then plan and deliver services that people want and can easily access.

Over the next two years we will continue to maintain key public services at the best possible price, with a sustained focus on performance, partnership working and shared services.



Our priorities and key objectives for the borough are ambitious and demanding, but we are confident that through the continued dedication of councillors, staff and partners, we will continue to provide leadership in the community and deliver the services local residents need.

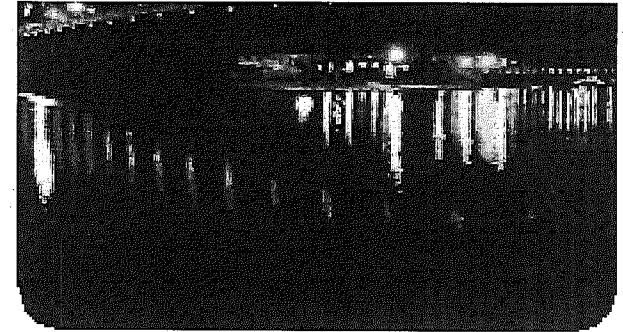
Cllr Chris Garland
Leader of the Council

David Petford
Chief Executive

section

1

Our vision priorities and values



We share the vision for Maidstone taken from the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS):

We want Maidstone borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations.

We believe the priorities for Maidstone are also our priorities and this Strategic Plan explains how we will contribute towards achieving the priorities for the borough.

To support this vision and ensure the objectives for Maidstone are delivered the Council has identified five priority themes that explain the issues we will concentrate on to help deliver the vision for Maidstone in the SCS. We want Maidstone to be:

- 1 **A place to achieve, prosper and thrive**
- 2 **A place that is clean and green**
- 3 **A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities**
- 4 **A place to live and enjoy**
- 5 **A place with efficient and effective public services**

These priority themes are based on the objectives for Maidstone in the SCS and have been developed following consultation with local residents and partners. The Council has also agreed a number of key objectives and specific actions or next steps showing what we will do to help deliver the priorities for the borough.

These are outlined in Section 5 and have been aligned with the eight Sustainable Community Strategy topics.

A place to achieve, prosper and thrive

To be successful the borough must be prosperous and innovative. Economic development and regeneration initiatives are essential and we will work with partners to attract new and existing businesses with high quality jobs to the area, whilst ensuring that all residents have access to the

training and education required to provide a skilled local workforce. We will contribute to this in a number of ways, including:-

- Town centre improvements (public realm)
- *Encouraging the development of the Eclipse business park;*
- *Pressing for the provision of the South East Maidstone Strategic Route;* and
- The re-launched Locate in Maidstone website.

A place that is clean and green

Having a clean and green environment is important to us all. We want to ensure Maidstone has clean streets and well maintained parks and green spaces. We will always work to minimise climate change and make the best use of natural resources through:-

- Encouraging waste minimisation;
- Making Maidstone a litter free borough - with clean sweeps and a crack down on fast food litter;
- Improvements to Mote Park;
- River improvements; and
- *Producing an action plan to improve air quality.*

A place that has strong, healthy and safe communities

People want to be healthy, feel safe where they live and feel that they belong. The borough needs to be a place where people of all ages, faiths and cultures can live and work together. Priorities include:-

- A multi-agency Community Safety Unit;
- A robust CCTV network;
- The Choosing Health Programme; and
- Neighbourhood Plans to empower communities.

A place to live and enjoy

We want people to choose to live in Maidstone. The borough must have high quality homes *in both rural and urban areas* that people can afford, as well as a variety of sporting, leisure and cultural activities that meet the needs of local people through: -

- A revitalised Leisure Centre;
- Expansion of the Museum;
- Switch Youth Café;
- Maidstone's Dream – building a sporting heritage *and supporting local athletes to reach the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics;*



- Affordable homes; and
- Decent homes for vulnerable people.

A place with efficient and effective public services

Maidstone Council performs well when compared to other councils nationally. We will continue to seek innovative ways of delivering excellent services that provide value for money, as well as working with our partners in the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure all local public services are high quality and joined up. We will be:-

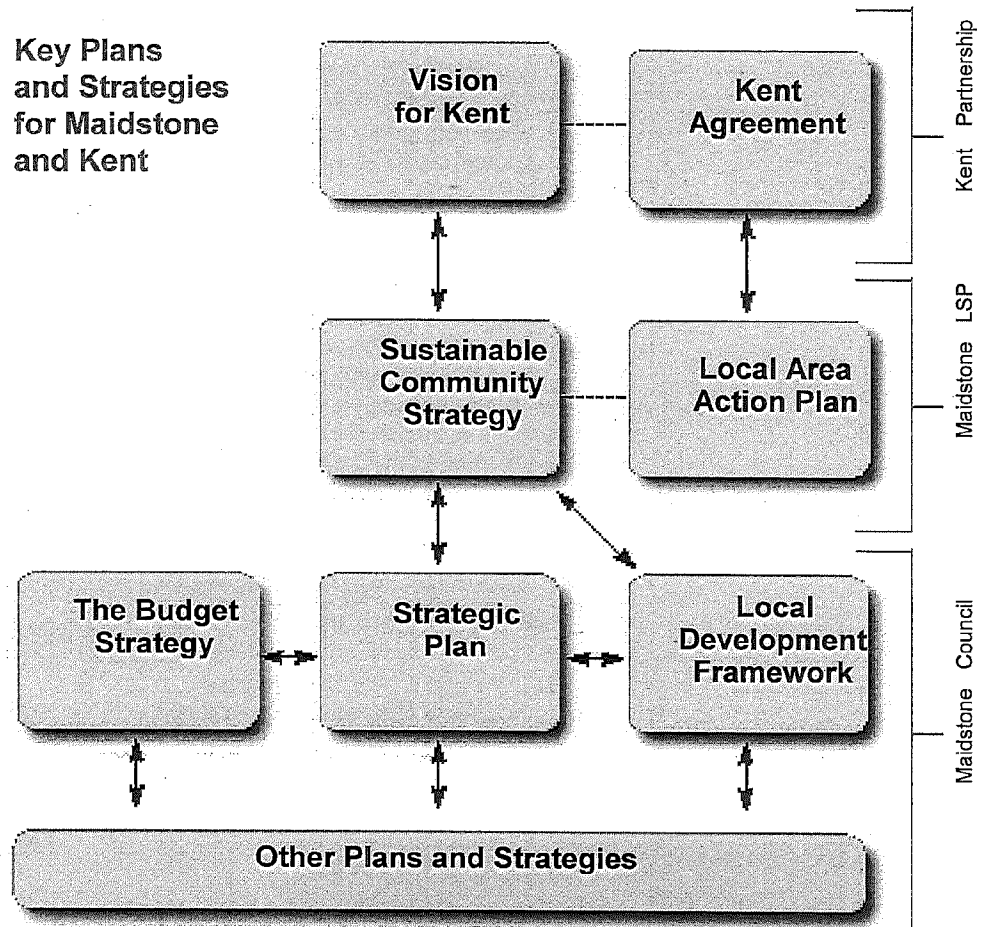
- Expanding the range of services available in the Maidstone Gateway;
- *Developing shared services to ensure value for money;* and
- Reviewing higher cost services to improve efficiency and service standards.

Working in partnership

More gets done if people and organisations in an area work together. There are elements of the vision and improvements the Council would like to see, but which it does not directly deliver. The Government expects councils to be community leaders and broaden their remit to tackle long term challenges such as public health, climate change and changes in the local population.

We are working with partners in the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - like the Police, Primary Care Trust, voluntary sector and local businesses - to ensure the priorities for Maidstone are delivered. Where this is the case we have tried to say so in our key objectives.

Key Plans and Strategies for Maidstone and Kent



Local Area Agreement - Kent Agreement 2

At the highest level the link between Government and local priorities is made through Local Area Agreements.

The Kent Partnership is the countywide local strategic partnership and is responsible for overseeing the community strategy for Kent, the Vision for Kent. The Kent Agreement 2 (KA2) is the Local Area Agreement for Kent. It includes key targets agreed jointly between the Kent Partnership and central government and takes forward the ambitions contained in the Vision for Kent.

Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is one of nine in Kent which have developed their own sustainable community strategies. The priorities for Kent are reflected in Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Maidstone Local Action Plan

Maidstone LSP's Local Action Plan (LAP) is based on the priorities and targets for Kent set out in KA2 and sets out how Maidstone will contribute to meeting the targets for Kent and progress the priorities of Maidstone's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) provides a framework for all the agencies involved in the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and details the priorities and targets for Maidstone for the next 10 years. The Maidstone LSP brings partners - public sector agencies as well as representatives from business and the community sector - together to agree the priorities for Maidstone, co-ordinate service delivery and improve outcomes for the residents of Maidstone.

The SCS includes eight vision-related objectives and three cross-cutting objectives for Maidstone. The cross-cutting objectives are extremely important and are incorporated throughout the whole of the SCS.

Vision related objectives

- Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all;
- Develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system;
- Build stronger and safer communities;
- Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives;

- Make Maidstone borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations;
- Develop Maidstone borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living;
- Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all; and
- Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character.

Cross-cutting objectives

- Tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage;
- Establish Maidstone borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate; and
- Public agencies and their partners to undertake a programme of continuous community engagement and work with communities to resolve their issues at the community level.

Actions to be delivered in the SCS are laid out under eight topics. These are:

- 1 Economy and Prosperity
- 2 Sustainable Integrated Transport
- 3 Crime, Confidence and Safety
- 4 Health and Older People
- 5 Children, Young People and Families
- 6 Homes and Communities
- 7 Sport, Creativity and Culture
- 8 Environmental Excellence and Climate Change

We have detailed the Council's objectives under the eight SCS topics to show how we will be contributing to the overall vision and objectives for the Maidstone borough.

Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out the authority's strategy for development in the borough. The South East Plan designates Maidstone as a *Growth Point and 'regional hub'* because the County Town serves as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities in Kent and is well related to strategic rail and road networks. The Council's aim must be to secure an effective planning framework that delivers growth with the necessary transport infrastructure, whilst taking account of the borough's environmental constraints.

The Council has already adopted two Development Plan Documents for Affordable Housing and Open Spaces provision together with a number of supplementary planning documents. Completion of the core strategy is the Council's prime focus, as this key LDF document will set the policy framework for future growth in addition to protecting and enhancing the borough's assets.

As it deals with the physical development of the borough there is a large degree of overlap between the LDF and the Strategic Plan.

Budget Strategy

To ensure that the Council's priorities are met, the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are aligned with the authority's corporate planning process, identifying issues over a three to five year period. The MTFS sets the context for delivering a balanced budget and identifies the required medium term annual savings.

The Council also undertakes an annual budget consultation using a variety of methods. *In October to November 2009 the Council asked residents what they thought about fees and charges, council tax levels and cuts in services. Over 1,200 people were interviewed and the results have been reflected in the 2010/11 budget.*

Equalities

The Council has a Corporate Equality Plan which ensures that every service and department of the Council is working to increase access to services and reduce inequality.

The Council is committed to the Sustainable Community Strategy cross-cutting objective of reducing inequalities within the borough. We have ensured that under each of the eight strategic themes we have plans in place to tackle inequality where it exists.

Consultation and Involvement

The strategic themes and objectives contained within this plan were developed during the formulation of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Extensive consultation was carried out to ensure that the priorities are focussed on what residents feel is important. We used a number of methods of involvement including resident focus groups, local surveys and a new campaign entitled 'Stick up for Maidstone'. There was a good response to the involvement exercises: more than 600 people participated and more than 2,400 comments were received.

The Council also undertook consultation on the Strategic Plan. The draft Strategic Plan was available on the website for comment and copies were distributed to Councillors, parish councils, partners, community groups and Maidstone Borough Council staff.

We also carried out a week long consultation event in the Maidstone Gateway, meeting nearly 200 customers and asking their opinions. The feedback

and comments received, plus the recent results from the Place Survey, have been reflected in the final version of the Strategic Plan and have informed the development of the Council's priorities.

The Council's Values

Our six core values were developed with our staff and are at the heart of everything we do. We always STRIVE to deliver services in accordance with them.



Superb customer service

Teamwork

Responsibility to deliver our promises

Integrity and high standards of corporate governance

Value for money

Equality in a diverse organisation

Customer care and engagement

The Council's core values of 'Superb customer service' and 'Responsibility to deliver our promises' reflect how important our customers are to us. We have a customer care policy that sets the standards and expectations in relation to delivering quality services.

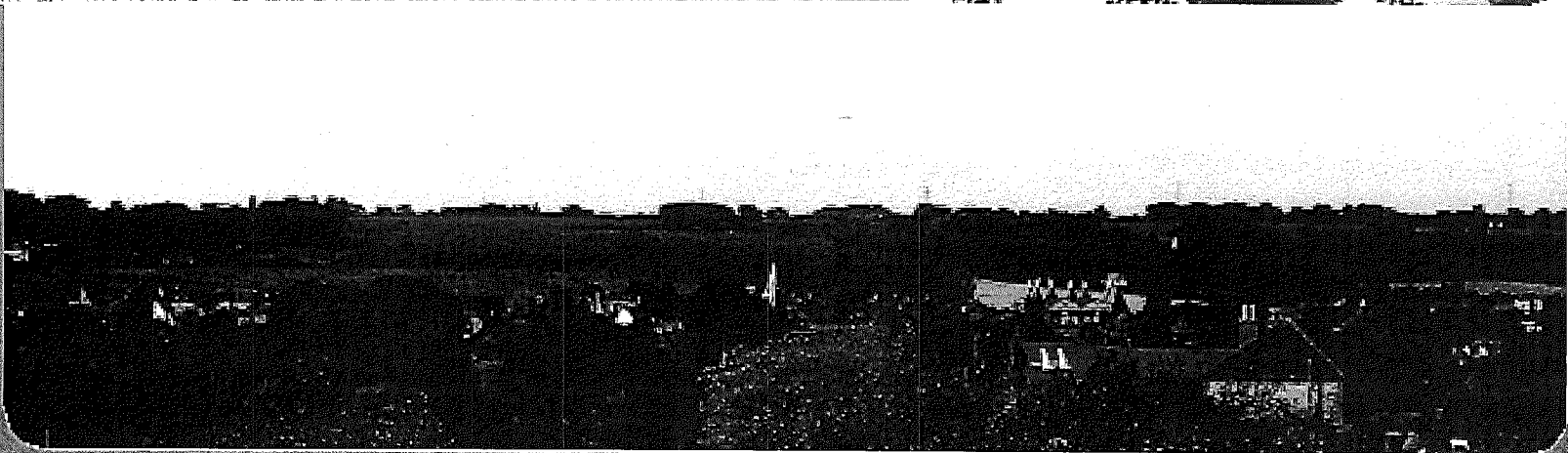
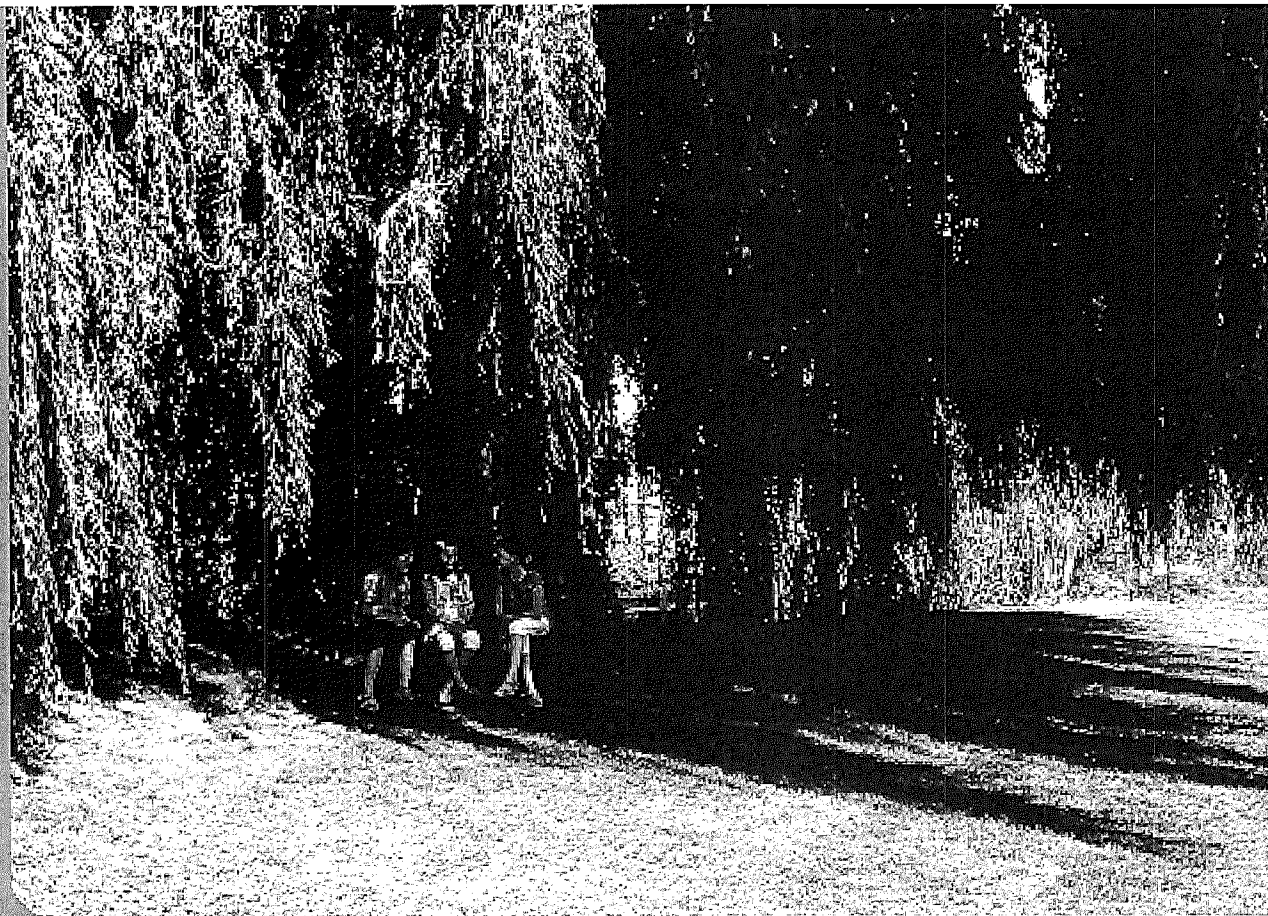
We undertake regular customer satisfaction reviews to ensure that we identify what our customers want and make improvements accordingly. We have a corporate complaints system to ensure that we respond to customers quickly and correctly. We always try to get things right first time, but when this does not happen we make sure we learn lessons to improve customer service in the future.

As a customer-focussed organisation we want to ensure our customers can access our services easily and in a way which suits them.

We opened the new Maidstone Gateway in King Street at the beginning of 2009, replacing our offices on London Road and Tonbridge Road. This now means customers can access all of our services from one office right in the centre of town. Many of our partners also deliver services from the Maidstone Gateway (e.g. Kent County Council, Citizens Advice Bureau) creating a 'one stop shop' for customers.

We have a dedicated telephone contact centre to ensure that when people call the Council their queries are dealt with quickly at first point of contact wherever possible. We have also improved our website to make it more attractive and accessible, allowing people to make enquiries and payments and fill in forms on-line. Customers can still write or email us with enquiries. Whichever method people choose to contact us, we aim to respond as quickly as possible with the right information.

We plan to keep improving by looking at innovative approaches to service delivery. For example, we have introduced a benefits hub at the new Maidstone Gateway, where customers can speak to one person who will be qualified to help them with all their applications for benefits. This means they will not have to visit a number of different organisations to apply for all the benefits available to them. We also recognise how important it is that our customers have more opportunity to influence the services we provide. We are committed to shifting the power to local people and will look at new ways of engaging successfully with local communities.



section

2

The context in which the Council Works

Kent has a two tier council system. Kent County Council (KCC) covers the whole of Kent (except Medway) and Maidstone is one of the 12 district councils. This means that Maidstone Council delivers some services to the residents of Maidstone e.g. waste collection and Kent County Council delivers others e.g. road and pavement repairs.



What Maidstone Council is responsible for

- Housing including Housing and Council Tax benefits
- Planning, *Planning Policy* and Development Control
- Council Tax collection and non-domestic rates
- Waste collection
- Electoral registration
- Local Land charges
- Food and Safety
- Environmental enforcement
- Building control
- Museum
- Theatre
- Crematorium and cemetery
- Leisure centre
- Parks and open spaces
- Street cleaning
- Abandoned vehicles
- Community safety including provision of CCTV
- Arts and sports
- Public conveniences
- *Licensing*

What Kent County Council is responsible for

- Footpaths and bridleways
- Highways maintenance including road safety and street lighting
- Trading standards
- Social Services including adult and children's services
- Education including adult education
- Libraries
- Registration of births, marriages and deaths
- Transport planning
- Waste disposal

What Parish Councils are responsible for

Different parishes are responsible for different functions, but they have the powers to spend money on the following:

- Allotments
- Open spaces and playing fields
- Community halls
- Roadside verges
- Seats and shelters
- Footway lighting
- Crime prevention e.g. installation of CCTV
- Litter - bins and anti-littering campaigns

The borough of Maidstone is made up of the unparished town and 41 parishes, 36 of which have parish councils. The services provided in parished areas by parish councils are provided by Maidstone Borough Council in the town. Because parish councils are physically closer to the community, they tend to focus more closely upon the priorities of the residents of a particular area.

section

3

How the Council works

Council

The Council has 55 elected Councillors or Members. The Council is elected by thirds over three years with the next local elections in 2010. Every fourth year there are no Borough Council elections. The full Council meets six times a year and sets the budget and overall Council policy as well as the level of Council Tax. The Council chooses the Council Leader, who then selects the Cabinet.

Cabinet

Since May 2008 the Conservative party has held the majority of seats on the Council and six Councillors make up the Cabinet. The Cabinet makes key decisions on Council services, which must be in line with the overall policy and budget frameworks set by the Council. Each Cabinet Member has their own portfolio area that they make decisions on.

Matters that concern two or more portfolios are dealt with by the whole Cabinet, which meets monthly.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Cabinet is held to account by four Overview and Scrutiny committees which meet every month. These committees ensure the decisions of the Cabinet are properly monitored and examine the Council's policies, services and expenditure. They also carry out investigations and research into relevant topics and make recommendations to Cabinet and external partners on their findings.

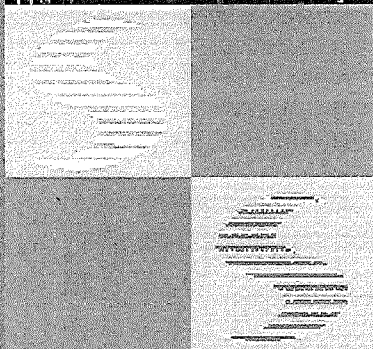
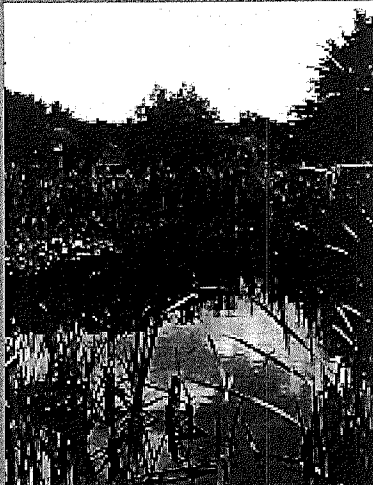
Other committees reporting to Council

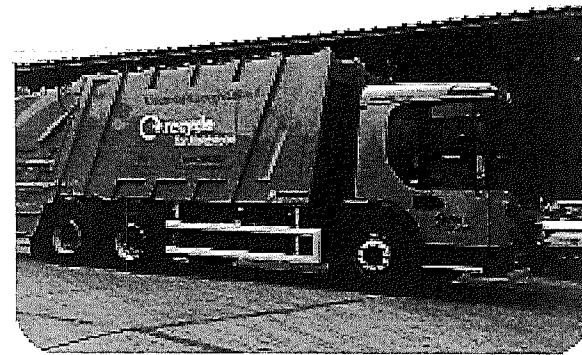
There are a few other committees that meet and these include:-

- Planning Committee - makes decisions on planning applications;

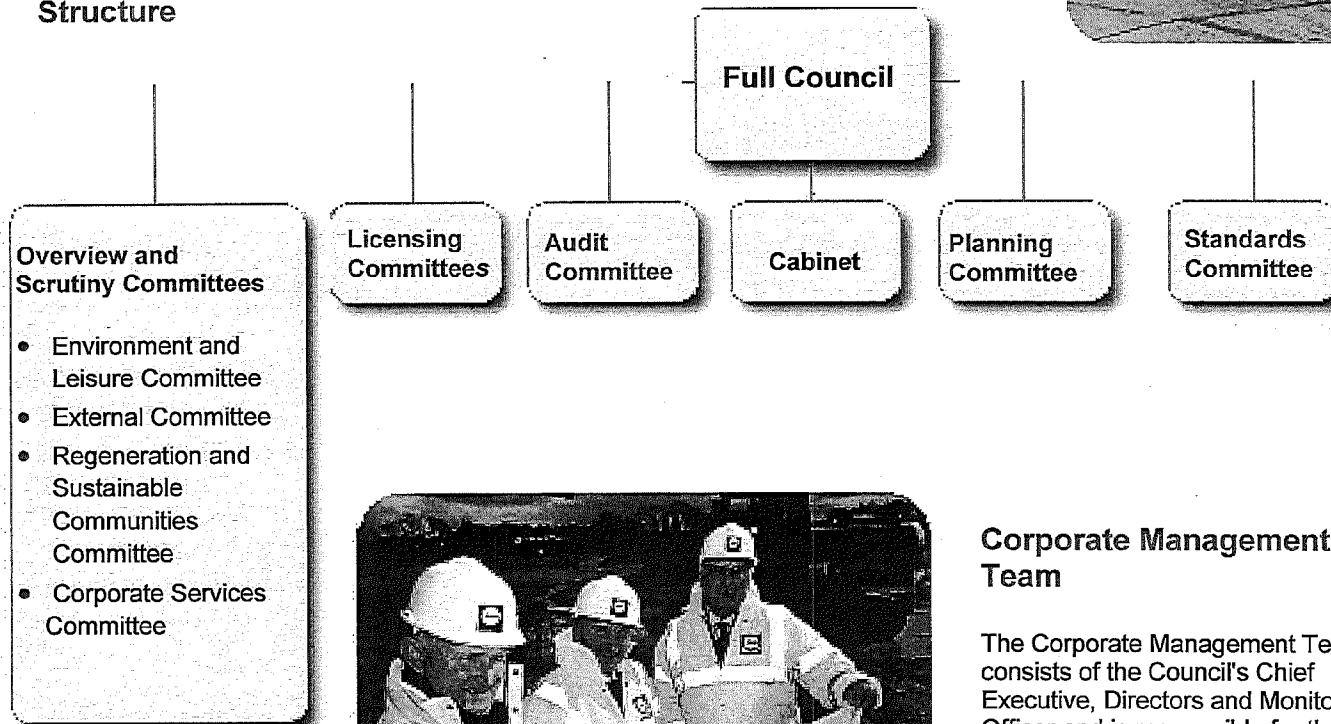
- Licensing Committees - make decisions on *licensing matters*;
- Standards Committee - helps ensure the Council promotes and maintains high standards of conduct and corporate governance; and
- Audit Committee - ensures the Council's risk management framework is adequate and reviews the authority's financial and non-financial performance.

Copies of all the agendas, minutes and reports, as well as further information on the committees, can be found on the Council's website. The decision making structure is set out in the chart on the next page.





Decision Making Structure



Corporate Management Team

The Corporate Management Team consists of the Council's Chief Executive, Directors and Monitoring Officer and is responsible for the day to day management of the Council and all its staff. Management Team ensures that the Council's policies are implemented and that the Council's key objectives are delivered.

Member training

In 2008 the Council was awarded the 'Charter for Member Development' by South East Employers. This national Charter recognises the Council's commitment and performance in providing effective and comprehensive induction, development and support to our 55 Members. This enables them to successfully fulfil their varied and challenging roles as elected Councillors for the borough and helps them contribute to the achievement of the strategic priorities and objectives. Members are actively involved in setting the learning and development programme annually and individual learning needs are addressed through personal development planning. The Council has also held information sessions for local people who may be considering becoming a Councillor to highlight what is involved and the expectations placed on members.

The Cabinet - Roles and Responsibilities



Leader of the Council
(Strategic Leadership)

Cllr Christopher Garland

- Communications
- External affairs
- Performance management and data quality
- Value for money
- To ensure that the Cabinet Members are delivering priorities within their own portfolio structures
- Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnership



Cabinet Member for
Corporate Services

Cllr Richard Ash

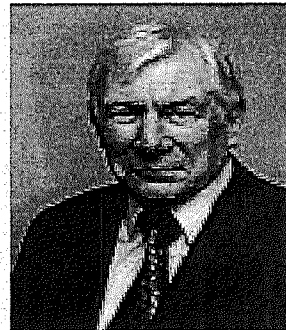
- Legal and Human Resources departments
- Land Charges
- Council Tax and Housing Benefit systems
- Property, Procurement and Projects
- Customer contact and complaints
- Democratic services
- ICT and e-Government



Cabinet Member for Environment

Cllr Mark Wooding

- Highways
- Public transport and Park & Ride
- Climate change
- Parking
- Waste collection and street cleansing
- Environmental health
- Public toilets



Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Cllr Malcolm Greer

- Planning
- Economic Development Strategy
- Sustainability
- Housing
- Regeneration and Growth Point Status
- Achieving close links with the business community



Cabinet Member for Community Services

Cllr Marion Ring

- Health and community health
- Community safety and social inclusion
- External relationships with parish councils, KCC and other levels of local government
- Representing young people
- Lifelong learning



Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

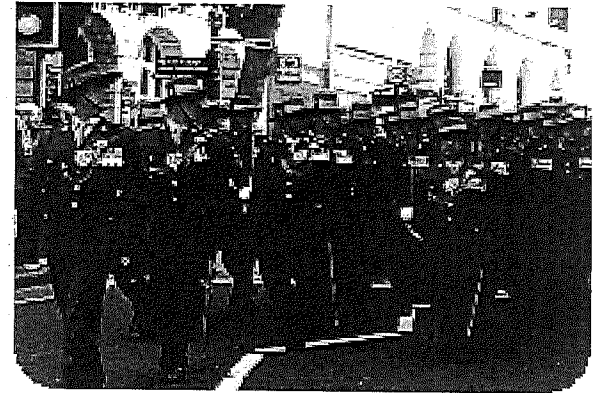
Cllr Brian Moss

- Museum
- Cemetery and crematorium
- Tourism
- Parks, open spaces and allotments Market
- Theatre and arts development
- Leisure Centre and sports and leisure

section

4

Progress and Performance



Maidstone is a high achieving council. We know this through comparing our results with others and because the Audit Commission, the independent organisation which reviews how well councils are performing, have said so when they have assessed us.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

Last year was the first year in which the Council was assessed under the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). This is the new annual inspection process introduced by the Government which came into effect in April 2009. It is focussed on outcomes for local people and consists of two main elements:

- An Area assessment; and
- An Organisational assessment.

Area Assessment

This assessment looks at how the different public services in Kent are working together, how well the services they provide are being delivered and, most importantly, whether local services are improving outcomes for citizens, particularly those groups who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded. The area assessment is Kent-wide and the starting point was the Local Area Agreement for Kent: Kent Agreement2 (KA2).

Organisational assessment

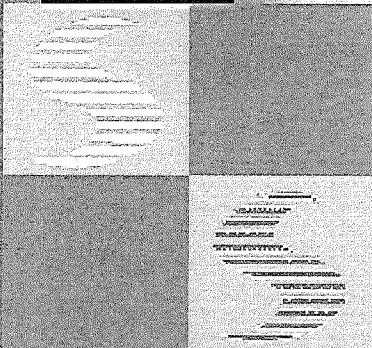
In the organisational assessment there is much more emphasis on delivery of outcomes for local people and achievements in value for money rather than on council processes.

The organisational assessment is made up of two parts:

- Use of Resources; and
- Managing Performance.

Councils receive a score of between 1 (poor) and 4 (excellent) for each part, which are combined to give an overall score.

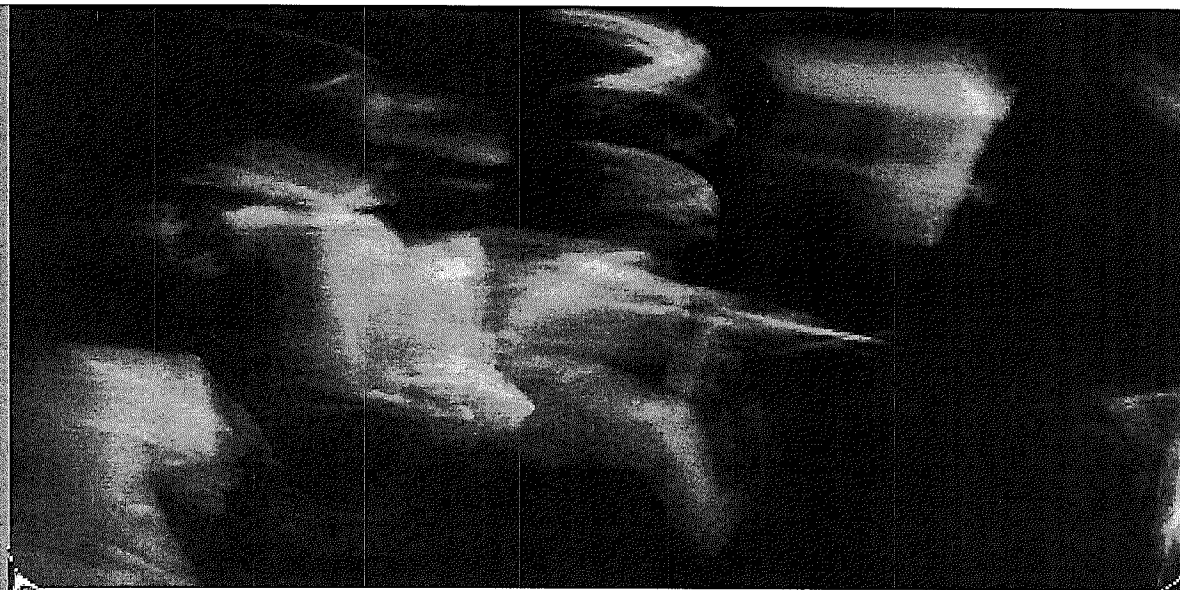
In our most recent assessment for 2008/09 Maidstone was awarded a 3 (performing well) for Use of Resources and a 4 for Managing Performance (performing excellently), giving an overall score of 3.



National Indicators (NIs)

The Government has also introduced, in 2008/09, a national indicator set consisting of 188 performance indicators which measure how local authorities and partnerships are delivering on the national priorities agreed by Government. They provide important evidence for both area and organisational assessments. As Maidstone is a district council, it is judged on only 63 of the NIs, but all of the 188 NIs will be collected at a county level.

The Government understands that priorities will be different in different areas of the country, so inspectors will pay most attention to the NIs adopted as priorities in the Local Area Agreement for Kent, KA2.



section

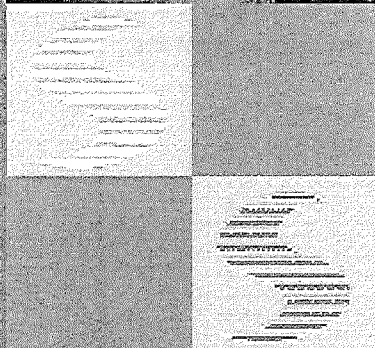
5

20 Maidstone Borough Council Strategic Plan 2009-12

What we will deliver

The Council is committed to its lead role within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Strategic Plan has been developed alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and explains how the Council will contribute to the delivery of the priorities for the borough. We have set out our key objectives under the eight topics in the SCS to show how the Council's priorities fit with the wider aims for the borough.

- **Economy and Prosperity;**
- **Sustainable and Integrated Transport;**
- **Crime, Confidence and Safety;**
- **Health and Older People;**
- **Children, Young People and Families;**
- **Homes and Communities;**
- **Sport, Creativity and Culture; and**
- **Environmental Excellence and Climate Change.**



Economy and Prosperity



"Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all"

National Context

The national economic picture remains challenging. The social consequences of the recession will continue to be felt long after the UK officially comes out of recession and the public sector is on the front line of service provision to those affected by the economic conditions. The national debt was £870bn at the end of December 2009, the budget deficit for the year 2009/10 is predicted to be £178bn, and the Government aim to have halved this annual increase in national debt by 2013-14. The Government has taken a number of steps to stimulate the economy, including temporarily cutting the rate of VAT from 17.5% to 15%, injecting cash into the economy through quantitative easing, and the Bank of England has maintained low base rates. However, continued low levels of bank lending means people are finding it difficult to get loans or mortgages. Regeneration is a high priority with greater emphasis on economic development powers devolved to local authorities (Sub National Review) and a focussed approach to worklessness (Transforming Places, Changing Lives, a Framework for Regeneration). Ensuring everyone has access to education and skills training remains a top priority for the Government in terms of narrowing the equality gap and ensuring the UK has a workforce that has the skills required to meet the needs of the economy.



Economy and Prosperity



Why it is important to Maidstone

There are over 7,000 businesses within the borough of Maidstone; 30% located in rural areas. Financial and business sectors, the public sector, retail and construction comprise the bulk of Maidstone's economy. The borough also has a large tourist industry, supporting around 4,700 jobs. Maidstone town is the largest shopping centre in Kent, with approximately 700 shops and 75 cafes and restaurants. The town has a vibrant night-time economy, which is also the largest in Kent.

Although the average earnings of those living in Maidstone are higher than the South East average, those who work in Maidstone earn less. This suggests many people who live in Maidstone commute out of the borough to work in higher paid jobs. The percentage of unemployed people

in the borough is below the Kent and the South East averages, but is starting to rise.

It is important to retain businesses currently based in Maidstone and attract new businesses, particularly those offering high value, skilled and well paid employment in high growth sectors and to encourage specialisms. Regeneration, renewal and redevelopment are important in achieving this and several areas in the town centre, including poorly occupied secondary office stock, and mixed use sites around Upper Stone Street and Wrens Cross, are key areas for regeneration, as are other areas in the south of the borough. Crucially, regeneration must tackle issues of social and economic exclusion.

In 2009/10 we

- Developed the range of services offered by the Gateway as part of the Benefits Hub.
- Signed an accord with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) that drives the Council's approach to helping the business community in the current downturn.
- Signed a memorandum of understanding with Business Support Kent setting out how the two bodies will work more closely together for the interests of residents and businesses.
- Along with partners assisted 36 independent businesses with subsidised advertising.
- Appointed an architect to undertake the High Street public realm improvements. Pictures of what the High Street will look like have been placed as window dressing in empty shops and consultation has been carried out.
- Continued to work with neighbouring district councils to improve service delivery and cut costs through shared services.
- Improved the way we work with other organisations, like the Police, Primary Care Trust and voluntary groups, through the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership.

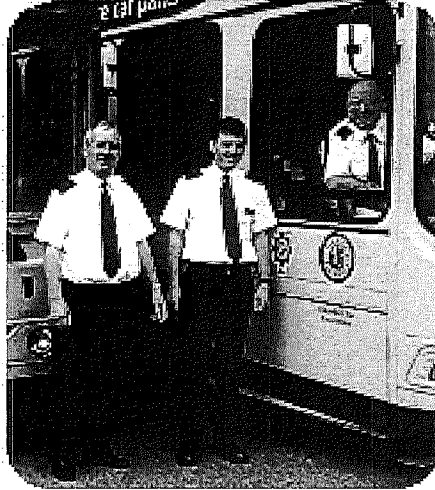
Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Increase the prosperity of the borough by stimulating investment and working with existing businesses to create a distinctive local economy.
- Raise skills levels and reduce worklessness, including matching the skills of the workforce to the needs of local business.
- Achieve regeneration, focussing on enhancing the attractiveness of the Town Centre through initiatives like the high street public realm.
- Deliver more efficient and effective Council services and increase value for money
- Improve the delivery of services to local people through an effective *Local Strategic Partnership*

What this means for Maidstone

- **More businesses offering employment specialisms.**
- **More higher paid high quality jobs.**
- **Increased opportunities for training for all.**
- **Increased tourism.**
- **New jobs for the borough.**
- **A better, more easily accessible town centre.**
- **Town centre public realm improvements providing better facilities and an attractive business location.**
- **A vibrant economy and prosperity in the borough.**

Sustainable and Integrated Transport



"Develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system"

National Context

The Eddington study was commissioned in 2005/06 to examine the long-term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability. The Government published its objectives in November 2008 based on the results of this study. These are:

- To support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks;
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change;
- To contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life-expectancy

by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport;

- To promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and
- To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.

To support these goals the Government is developing policies on safety and emissions reduction. There is also a greater focus on maintaining and improving the connections within the national transport infrastructure.



Why it is important to Maidstone

Maidstone is the County Town of Kent and is a centre for business, retail and administration. The borough is advantageously situated on the main transport routes between London, which is only 37 miles away, and the channel ports, just 35 miles away. Rail services to London run regularly and take around an hour. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link station of Ashford International is only a 20 minute rail journey away and Ebbsfleet International can be reached in 30 minutes by car. The town is located close to the County's motorway and trunk road network and therefore has good links to the rest of the UK and to the coast via the M20. As a result, localised traffic congestion and poor journey time reliability are increasingly common on many local roads, particularly if Operation Stack is implemented. It is predicted that the town will be gridlocked within three years.

Quality of life of local residents and the future economic prosperity of the town are, therefore, reliant on the development of a sustainable and integrated transport system for the borough of Maidstone, which takes

into account the needs of both urban and rural areas.

Maidstone has a good Park & Ride scheme, enabling commuters travelling into the town centre to park their cars and catch a bus into the town. This helps to reduce traffic in the town and reduce emissions from cars. *However, funding the Park & Ride service has become a greater cost for the Council as passenger numbers have decreased.*

Following the implementation in April 2008 of free bus travel throughout England for those over 60, Maidstone Council experienced significant increased cost due to the high visitor rates to the borough and excellent links to other towns. It is expected that the Council will continue to experience high costs in 2010/11. Maidstone Council also chose to continue to provide discretionary extras as part of the scheme, which have remained popular. *From 1 April 2011 the provision of this scheme will transfer to KCC. The financial and operational arrangements for this transfer are a risk to the Council.*

In 2009/10 we

- Introduced Park & Sail over the busy Christmas period to reduce traffic and congestion in town.
- Reviewed the Park & Ride service and reintroduced the London Road and Sittingbourne Road dedicated bus link.
- Lobbied Network Rail and responded to Kent County Council's 20 year integrated transport strategy, supporting better rail links to Maidstone.

Our key objective until 2012 is:

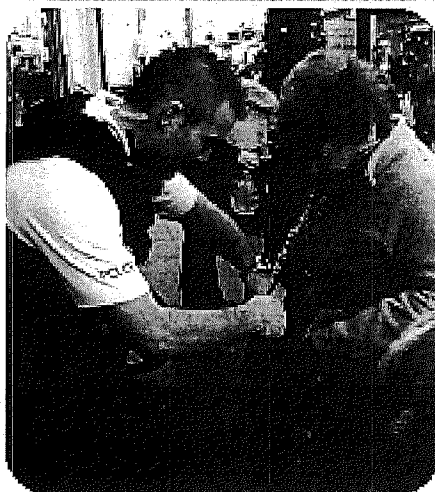
- Reduce traffic congestion and support economic growth through the development of a sustainable transport strategy.

What this means for Maidstone

- Improved accessibility.
- Better, more joined up public transport.
- Reduced congestion in the town.
- Improved parking and car parks.
- A good Park & Ride service.



Crime, Confidence and Safety



"Build stronger and safer communities"

National Context

The risk of becoming a victim of crime has fallen sharply in recent years. While in 1995 the risk was 40%, by 2008 it had fallen to 22%. Antisocial behaviour is often a major priority for the public, particularly in the most deprived communities.

An update to the national crime strategy "Cutting Crime" was published in May 2009, and stated that the Government will tackle violent crime by intervening early to prevent it, preventing escalation, being robust in the response to violent offenders, being proactive in providing services for victims, and finding innovative solutions to difficult issues.

The economy influences crime rates with evidence showing that when the economy performs well, crime generally falls. However, deprivation and disadvantage exist for some even when the economy is performing strongly. There is a correlation between the area in which people live and their involvement in crime.

Why it is important to Maidstone

On a local level violent crime, burglary and vehicle crime are all reducing. *The Place Survey carried out in 2008 also shows that most local people do not believe antisocial behaviour is a problem in the area in which they live.* Maidstone has an extensive CCTV network that covers the town centre and some other areas of the borough e.g. Mote Park, that helps to discourage crime and anti-social behaviour and has helped to catch offenders in the act and secure convictions.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires public bodies to work together in reducing crime and disorder through forming partnerships and devising strategies for crime reduction and action plans to ensure effective delivery. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in Maidstone is the 'Safer Maidstone Partnership' and involves several agencies working together to reduce crime and make Maidstone a safer place for all.

In 2009/10 we

- Worked with the Police on a Community Safety booklet on crime prevention and safety issues which was sent to 40,000 households in the borough.
- Installed CCTV with operator links in our Park and Ride car parks as well as regular warden patrols.
- Worked with the Police on 'Operation Safer Summer'.
- Ran Operation Cubit, targeting graffiti and abandoned cars.
- Helped reduce overall crime in the borough by XX and made XX anti-social behaviour interventions.
- Were nominated for an award for the Zeroth gym programme, which seeks to divert young people from behaving antisocially by improving their confidence and self-image.
- Worked with Kent Police to set up a new multi-agency Community Safety Unit.

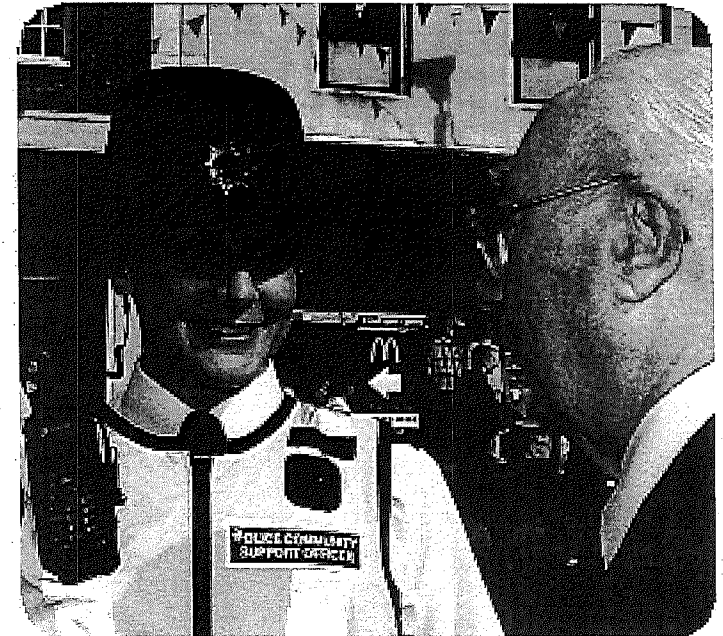


Our key objective until 2012 is:

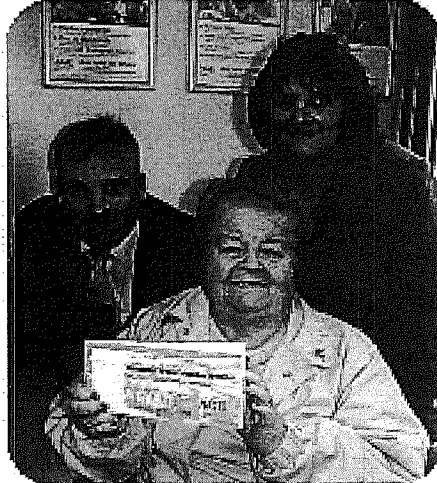
- Make people feel safer where they live.

What this means for Maidstone

- Increased feeling of safety for local residents.
- Fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour and fewer crimes committed.
- Improved reputation of the night-time economy.
- Better responses and more effective action taken in response to reports of anti-social behaviour and crime.



Health and Older People



"Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives"

National Context

The NHS has limited resources and has to use them as wisely as possible. In 2008 the Government decided that patients would be allowed to pay privately for treatment with expensive drugs without losing their entitlement to NHS care. There has also been a shift in recent years away from treating people when they become ill, to preventing them from getting ill in the first place. Prevention is better and cheaper than cure. Prevention is also seen as key to reducing health inequalities. Smoking, alcohol abuse and obesity are all major factors in poor health. They are also more common in more deprived communities.

Britain has an ageing population. In 2007, for the first time, the population of those aged 16 and under dropped below the percentage of the population of state pensionable age. The number of older people is increasing because those born in the post World War Two baby boom are reaching pensionable age and because more people are living longer: the fastest growing age group are those aged 80 and over, who now make up about 5% of the population. There is a need to ensure services are tailored to meet the needs of increasing numbers of older people to ensure they lead healthy, active and independent lives.

Why it is important to Maidstone

The health of people living in Maidstone is better than the England average, but health inequalities remain an issue e.g. men from the most deprived areas of Maidstone will live on average five years less than men from the most affluent areas.

In 2007 Maidstone Hospital was heavily criticised for its failure to control infectious diseases. There are plans to move emergency and orthopaedic surgery to the Kent and Sussex Hospital in 2011 and make Maidstone Hospital a centre for excellence in cancer surgery.

From 2005 to 2020 it is predicted there will be a 30% increase of over 65 year olds in West Kent. Half of the adult population will be over 50 by the early 2020s and many will live in areas of deprivation. Therefore, it is particularly important to ensure that services are in place to support older people to live independently and to ensure that older people have a voice.



In 2009/10 we

- Provided advice in the town centre and Shepway on a range of issues, including promoting the wellpoint machine which measures a range of health factors and is available in the Gateway.
- Undertook an assessment of the health implications within the key Air Quality Management Areas.
- Introduced the 'Urban Blue' bus which travels throughout the borough promoting healthy lifestyle choices, including stopping smoking and weight management.

Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Improve the health of people living in the borough and reduce health inequalities.

What this means for Maidstone

- More support to help older people continue to live in their homes for as long as they can.
- Increased life expectancy across all areas of Maidstone.
- Easier ways of accessing health care e.g. clinics in some schools.
- Reduced number of teenage pregnancies.

Children, Young People and Families



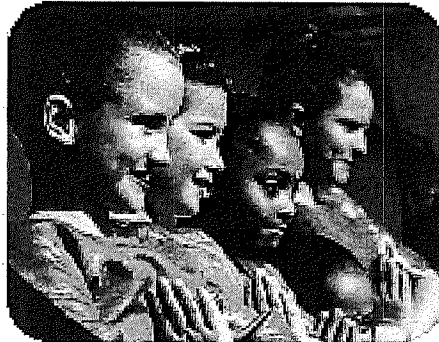
"Make Maidstone borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families – can achieve their aspirations"

National Context

'Every Child Matters' is a Government-led approach that aims to ensure every child and young person, whatever their background and circumstances, is protected from harm and is given access to the resources they need to achieve their life choices. It was introduced alongside the Children Act 2004 after the investigation into the death of Victoria Climbié. It has meant that all organisations involved with providing services to children - from councils, schools and hospitals, to police and voluntary groups - now share information and work together through Children's Trusts to protect and support children. In the wake of the Baby P case it is likely that the way children's services are provided across the country will again be examined.

The Government places a high priority on reducing child poverty, aiming to ensure no child is living in poverty by 2020. Since 1998/99 approximately 600,000 children have been lifted out of poverty, but numbers living in poverty have risen over the past two years.

The Government has recognised that a culture of dependency on benefits can pass from generation to generation and believes children suffer when they grow up in a home where nobody works. This is one of the drivers behind the initiative to support people, including lone parents and disabled people, to move from claiming benefits into work. Certainly children from deprived areas where more people are not in work tend to underachieve at school in comparison to their peers.



Why it is important to Maidstone

Kent has a Children's Trust, but in order to ensure services work together at an even more local level there are 23 Local Children's Services Trusts. Maidstone is covered by two multi-agency Local Children's Services Trusts.

Kent County Council provides social services for children and young people, but as a district council, Maidstone has some responsibilities under the Children Act, including effective working relationships within the Council and with other agencies, providing appropriate training for staff and using the views of children and young people to help shape services.

The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C grade is higher in Maidstone than the Kent and national average, but there are clear differences in the performance of schools in the borough. Maidstone has a relatively high level of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), but some wards have much higher levels than others. Reflecting the national picture, pupils who come from less affluent backgrounds perform at a significantly lower level than others in all key stage examinations.

Our key objective until 2012 is:

- Improve outcomes for vulnerable people and minimise the negative effects of recession.

Improving outcomes for children, young people and families is a cross-cutting theme.

Supporting key objectives include:

- Raising skills levels and reducing worklessness, including matching the skills of the workforce to the needs of local business (p. 23)
- Improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for communities in priority areas (p. 34)
- Encourage more adults and children to participate in sport (p. 38)
- Improve the cultural offering of the borough through projects like the Museum East Wing extension (pg.38)

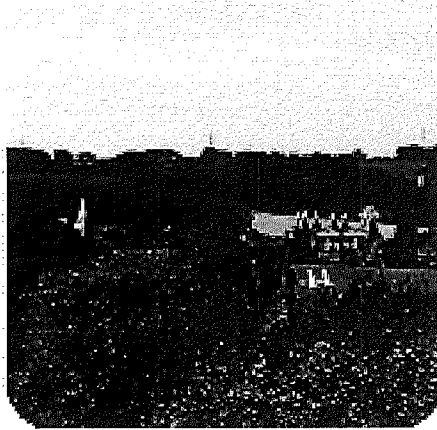
What this means for Maidstone...

- **Better educational opportunities and training for young people, meaning a reduction in 16-18 year olds NEET figures.**
- **Equal access to training opportunities creating more opportunities in disadvantaged areas.**
- **600 households prevented from becoming homeless by March 2012.**
- **Organisations working together to improve life for children, young people and families in the borough.**
- **Housing Benefit applications determined quickly and correctly.**
- **More homes occupied by vulnerable people made decent.**

In 2009/10 we

- Worked with partners like Kent County Council and Mid Kent College to deliver the Maidstone Skills Studio, which will help 14-16 year olds gain vocational skills in an out of school setting.
- Bid for lottery funding for the Switch Youth Café and received £335,000 to support staffing for the next five years.
- Supported the Youth Forum, which won its second Try Angle award for the Switch Youth Café.
- Successfully bid for £4000 for the Youth Forum's Peace One Day event.
- Following the success of previous years, held Proms in the Park, which attracted 4000 visitors.
- Prevented xx households from becoming homeless.
- Funded 66 places on the Hotfoot play scheme and along with KCC provided 110 places to vulnerable children on our play schemes.
- Worked with partners to help long term unemployed young people into apprenticeships.

Homes and Communities



"Develop Maidstone borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living"

National Context

The Government believes it is a basic right that everyone should have a decent place to live. The Government has set a Decent Homes standard and wants all councils and registered social landlords to ensure all the homes they own meet the standard by 2010. The Government has also set targets which aim to make sure that at least 70% of vulnerable households (including families with children) within the private sector live in decent homes by 2010. It is an aim of many people to own their own home. House prices have continued to rise in recent years, meaning that it has been difficult for many people to get on the housing ladder, particularly in areas where people particularly want to live e.g. cities like London and some rural areas and villages. This led to a number of initiatives to help first time buyers and key workers own at

least a stake in their homes e.g. shared ownership. The economic downturn has seen house prices drop, repossessions increase, people struggle to get mortgages and homelessness increase.

Regeneration is seen as critical to tackle inequality and poor living standards, but the number of homes being built has dropped considerably since the onset of the credit crunch. When homes are built it is important that enough affordable homes and social housing are included. It is recognised that on large developments it is important to provide a good mix of social housing, affordable housing and private sector housing to create balanced communities, as well as the necessary infrastructure to ensure communities are sustainable.

Why it is important to Maidstone

Maidstone is home to around 143,000 people, living in about 60,000 households. Maidstone has been identified as a Growth Point area by the Regional Spatial Strategy and the population of Maidstone is expected to increase to around 158,000 people by 2026, with the addition of around 11,080 homes within the next 20 years. The Council was awarded Growth Point Status in 2007, so has access to funding for additional infrastructure.

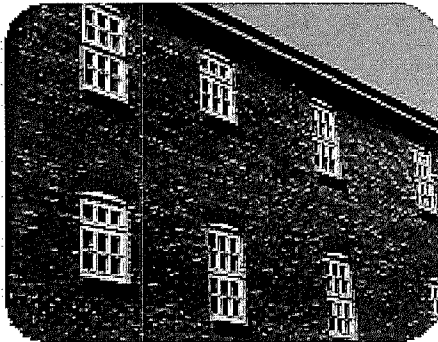
In 2009 over 1700 residents responded to the Housing Needs survey. The survey showed that xx% of those who wanted to could not afford to join the private rental sector and xx% who wanted to could not afford to purchase their own home, even though xx%

or more were earning over £xx (national average earnings). Like the rest of the country, house prices have fallen in Maidstone due to the economic downturn, but people have also found it more difficult to get mortgages.

The pressure on social housing is high, illustrated by the fact that there are xxx families on the waiting list for social housing. Regeneration schemes to create new homes, including social and affordable housing, and help tackle deprivation are on-going in Shepway, Parkwood and the High Street wards.

In 2009/10 we

- Ensured developments of over xx homes contained at least xx affordable housing. This meant xx new affordable homes were built.
- Consulted Gypsies, travellers, parish councils, land owners and other partners as part of identifying sufficient sites for Gypsy and traveller accommodation.
- Brought back xx empty homes into use.
- Completed the first Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which will help us build the right types of new homes in the right places.
- Awarded grants to xx people who are now able to continue to live in their own homes.
- Worked with the Police, Kent County Council and Maidstone Housing Trust to empower and engage residents in Park Wood so they have a greater say in a five year neighbourhood action plan that will address the most important issues in the area.
- Teamed up with Heatseekers to undertake thermographic surveys of all homes in the borough by 2012 and assist local people in improving energy efficiency in their homes.
- Worked with partners to secure £890,000 in funding for a local housing needs scheme of 18 affordable homes in Broomfield and Kingswood.



Homes and Communities

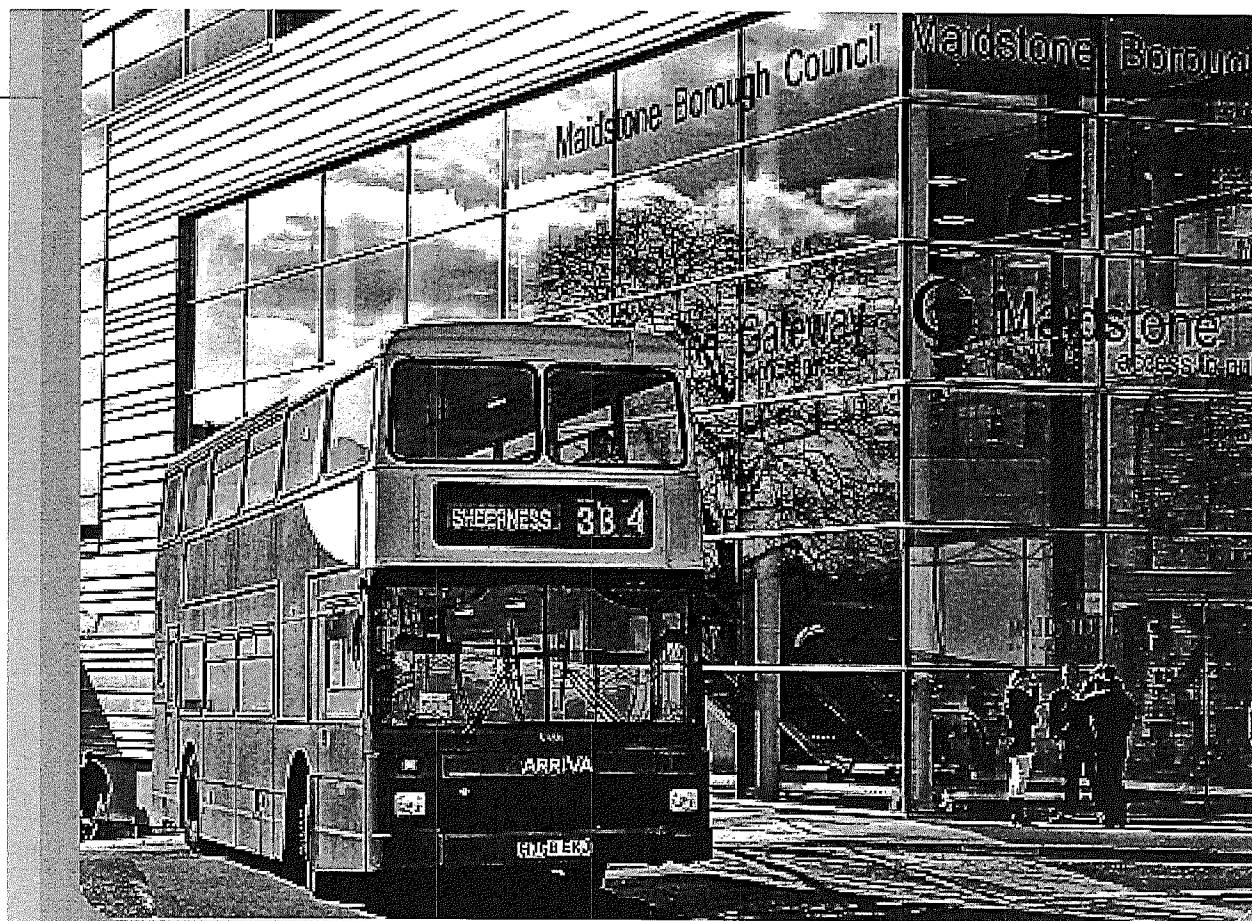


Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Deliver enough of the right type of well designed new homes where they are needed, maximising the numbers of affordable homes.
- Improve the condition, accessibility and energy efficiency of existing housing, including reducing fuel poverty.
- Better meet the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and traveller community.
- Improve the quality of the built environment including protecting the borough's heritage and ensuring new developments are well designed.
- Improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for communities in priority areas.
- Ensure people can access a wider range of services in ways that suit them.
- Engage communities so people have the opportunity to participate and have a real say in what happens in their local area.

What this means for Maidstone

- More people will be able to have a real say in local services through neighbourhood forums, parish councils and other representative groups.
- 750 high quality new affordable homes of mixed tenure built across the borough by March 2012.
- High quality developments that complement the area.
- Increased allocation of land for Gypsy and traveller pitches to respond to the accommodation needs of these communities.
- The right sized homes built in the right areas to fulfil the housing needs of the residents of Maidstone.
- More opportunities for volunteering and community involvement.
- People able to access more services at the Gateway and through the Council website, leading to more website transactions.



Sport, Creativity and Culture



"Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all"

National Context

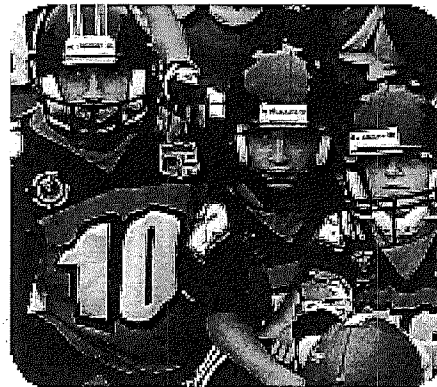
Government has set a target for 2010 to offer all children at least four hours of sport a week. It is hoped that some of the work being done in relation to the Olympic and Paralympic Games will inspire more young people to get involved in sporting activities.

The Olympic Games is also an opportunity for culture and the arts. The 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games will be accompanied by a four-year cultural festival which began at the end of the Beijing Games, providing an opportunity to show the creative industries in England to a global audience.

In addition the Government has implemented a number of initiatives to

encourage participation in culture and the arts. Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creativity programme for schools and young people. Since its launch over 2,000 schools have participated, involving more than 80,000 teachers and 800,000 students.

The Arts Council for England has set its ambition for 2008-11 in 'Great Art for Everyone'. The Arts Council wants to increase the focus on supporting deaf and disabled artists and increasing engagement in priority places.



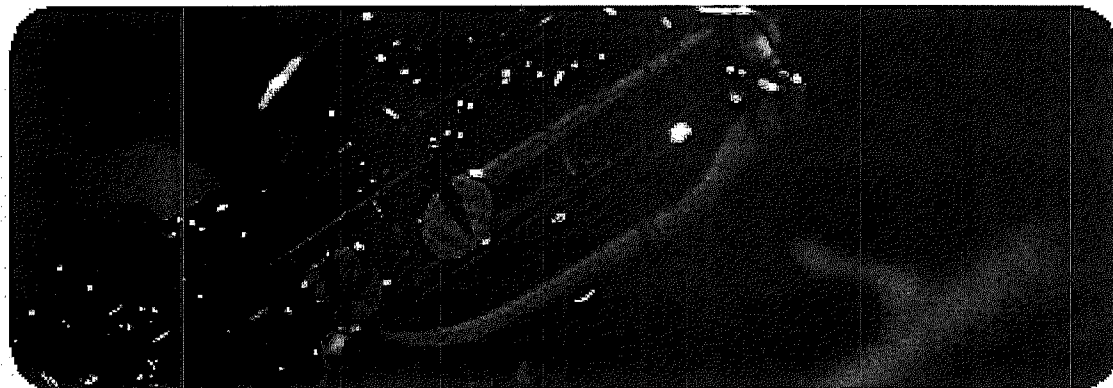
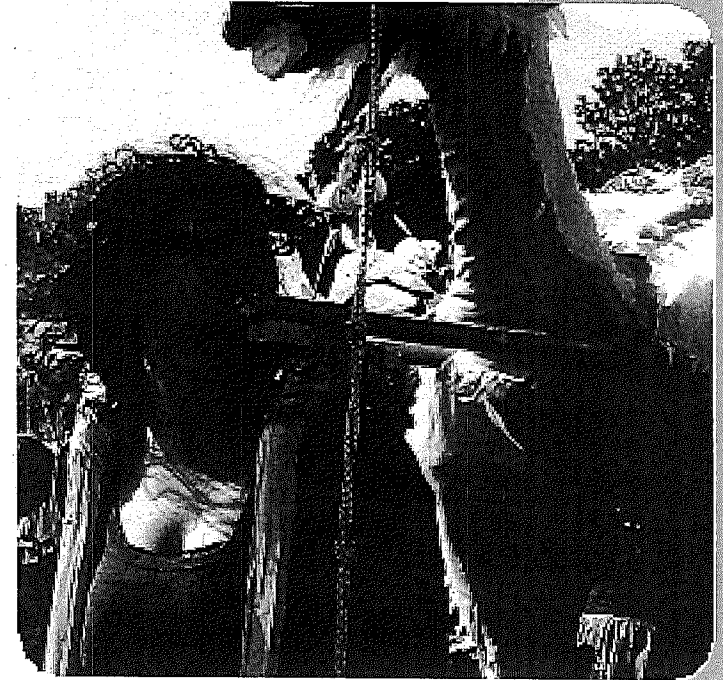
Why it is important to Maidstone

The Maidstone Leisure Centre at Mote Park is one of the largest outside London and offers a variety of sports including swimming, a fitness suite and exercise classes. *A multi-million pound improvement programme will ensure the Leisure Centre continues to meet the needs of local people in the future.* Sport and cultural services can play a crucial role in tackling social exclusion, contributing to regeneration, promoting safer communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles, providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity and stimulating lifelong learning, which are all important for the borough. The Leisure Centre is also located close to the park which offers a range of outdoor leisure opportunities.

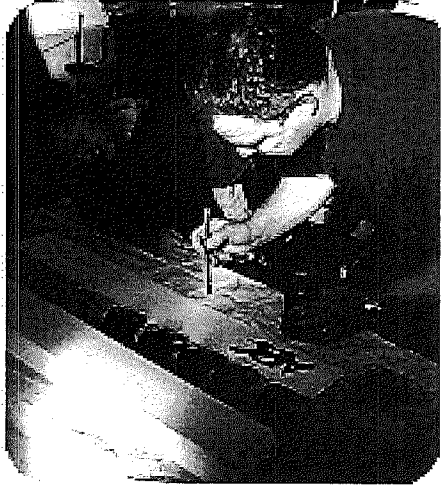
Maidstone has three museums, which not only reflect the local history and

geographical identity of the area, but also hold some of the best collections outside of London. The Hazlitt Arts Centre *has been improved* and as a result offers a wider range of activities and interests for local residents and visitors to the area.

Maintaining facilities and activities that allow local residents and visitors to engage in sports and creative and cultural activities is essential to improving quality of life. This is particularly important in the current economic climate as more people are watching their spending and may want to participate in social activities at a reduced cost, closer to home.



Sport, Creativity and Culture



In 2009/10 we

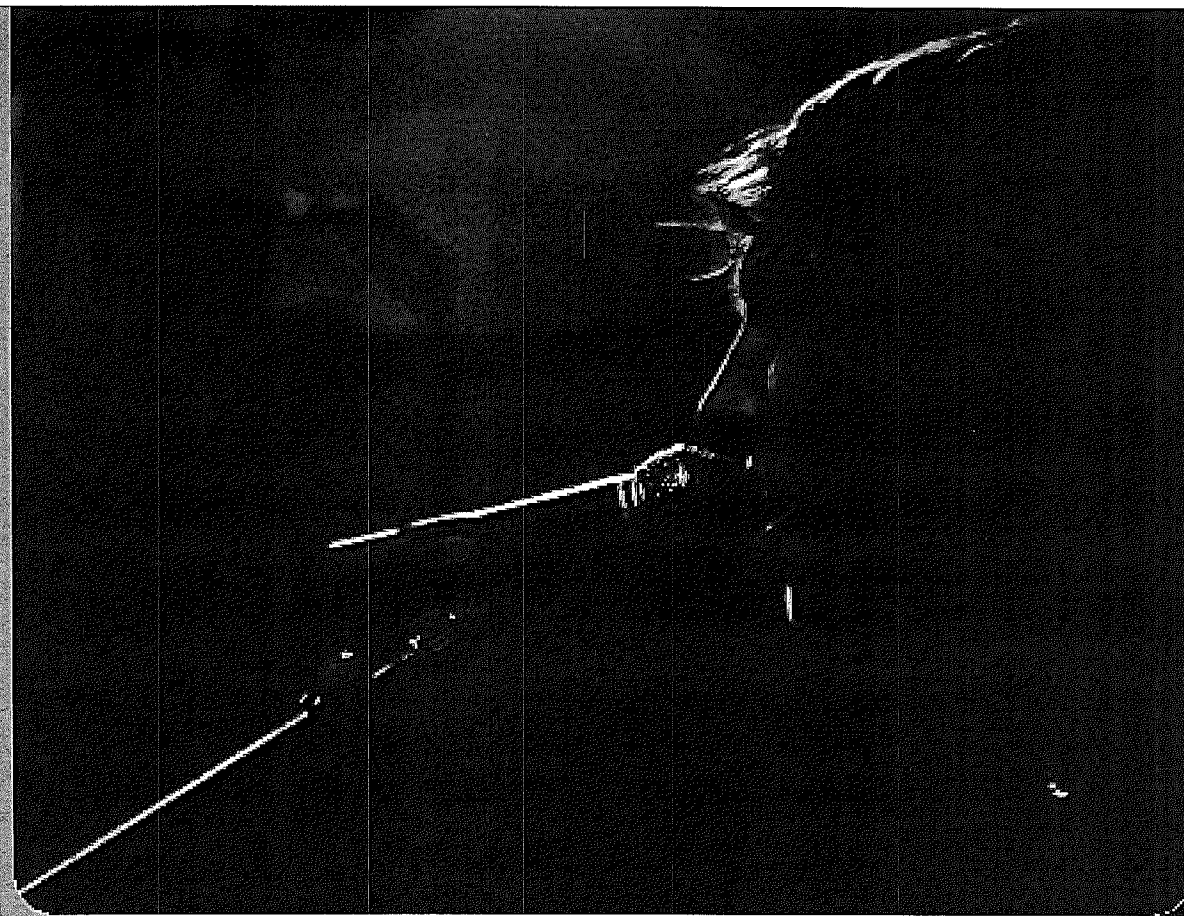
- Held the Maidstone Mela in Mote Park as part of Black History Month, which attracted xxx visitors.
- Began a £4.5 million refurbishment of Maidstone Leisure Centre which will see a newly reinvigorated leisure centre operating from April 2010.
- *Were commended by Visit Britain for the 'very good visitor experience' provided by the Museum. The Museum met the criteria of the Visitor Quality Assurance Scheme at a very good standard.*
- Started construction of the Museum East Wing extension which will improve learning opportunities, preserve the collections and increase the use of the museum.
- Launched Maidstone's Dream, *working to create a sporting legacy and supporting young people towards the 2012 Olympics.*
- *Worked in partnership to complete the running track at Sutton Valence.*

Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Encourage more adults and children to participate in sport.
- Improve the cultural offering of the borough through projects like the Museum East Wing extension.

What this means for Maidstone

- A refurbished Leisure Centre offering a range of sporting activities.
- An extension of Maidstone Museum on Faith Street will provide a bigger and better museum, art gallery and Tourist Information Centre.
- Better access to sport and better sporting facilities.
- More activities and things to do for those living in Maidstone.



Environmental Excellence and Climate Change



"Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character"

National Context

People have become increasingly concerned about climate change. Carbon dioxide contributes to 85% of greenhouse gases and the UK has committed to reduce emissions by 20% from 1990 to 2010. Around 29% of all carbon dioxide emissions were released as a result of road transport and, whilst air is cleaner than it has been at any time since the industrial revolution, local traffic hot spots continue to be an increasing problem. The need to travel to work and taking children to school are major factors in traffic levels. The weather patterns over recent years have demonstrated that climate change is a real problem, with flooding in 2007 in the Midlands and Gloucestershire. Meanwhile, certain areas of the country have continued to suffer from drought. Across the country, space in landfill sites for rubbish is running out: landfill life averages between three and

13 years across different regions. There is a real need to reduce waste production, promote waste recovery and develop new infrastructure to support this. The Government encourages people to recycle as much as possible and expects local councils to work hard to increase recycling rates.

Why it is important to Maidstone

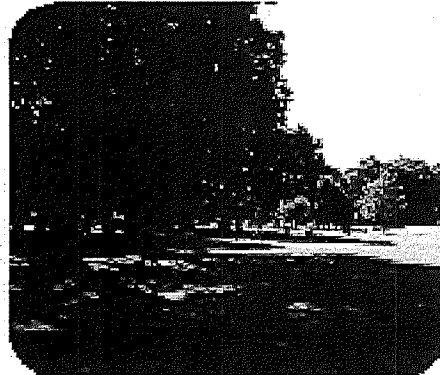
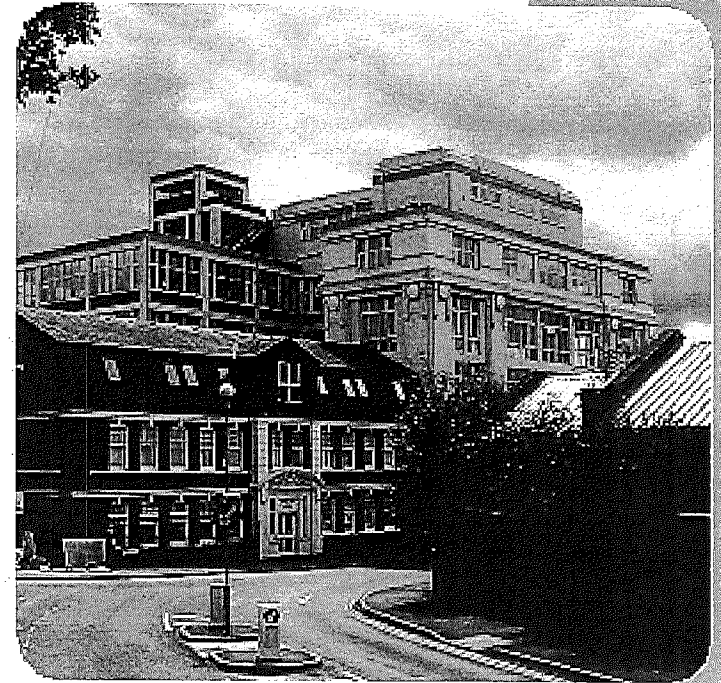
Climate change is an important issue for Maidstone, having suffered floods in 2000 and a heat-wave in 2003. Drought is of particular concern as Kent is a drought zone and Maidstone is a particularly susceptible area within Kent.

In Maidstone most carbon emissions are produced by industry and commercial activities. There is also more road traffic within the South East than any other area of the UK and in Maidstone this has contributed to an air quality management area being introduced, which covers the entire urban part of the borough. When looking at regeneration and new developments it is important that we minimise the impact on the environment by balancing housing and employment to

reduce the need to travel to work, designing buildings that are energy efficient and ensuring that the areas used for developments allow for the use of public transport or cycling.

Landfill void space in Kent is about five and a half years, lower than the national average. By increasing recycling and using the incinerator at Allington the amount of rubbish from Maidstone going into landfill will be vastly reduced. Levels of waste generated per head in Maidstone are also high when compared to other authorities.

The borough has a number of parks and open spaces, the largest being Mote Park, covering over 450 acres of mature parkland.



Environmental Excellence and Climate Change



"Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character"

In 2009/10 we

- Rolled out the final phase of the new recycling scheme, which extended the collection of mixed dry recyclables to over 60,000 householders, increasing the Council's recycling rate to XXX and reducing residual waste per household by XX% to XXkg.
- Supported Town Centre Management to provide residents and visitors to Maidstone with ideas and information on a whole range of greener living initiatives including recycling, reducing food waste, keeping our borough clean and tidy, cutting fuel costs, insulation, cycling and car-sharing.
- Made improvements to Brenchley Gardens, including fitting new railings.
- Moved to a new environmentally friendly depot with solar hot water panels, rain water harvesting and recycling and intelligent lighting.
- Made improvements to Vinters park crematorium, including installing two new environmentally sound cremators.
- Received £2.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund to make improvements to Mote Park which includes the planting of 400 trees and repair and conservation works to footpaths and the lake, as well as works to prevent flooding.
- Retained the green flag for Clare Park.



Our key objectives until 2012 are:

- Reduce carbon emissions across the borough and improve air quality.
- Reduce the Council's carbon footprint and improve the use of other natural resources, whilst ensuring the Council is planning to adapt to climate change.
- *Reduce the amount of waste produced by local people and increase the proportion of waste reused or recycled.*
- *Enhance the Council's parks, green spaces and natural habitats through initiatives like the Mote Park improvement project.*
- *Maintain a clean and pleasant environment for people who live in and visit the borough.*

What this means for Maidstone...

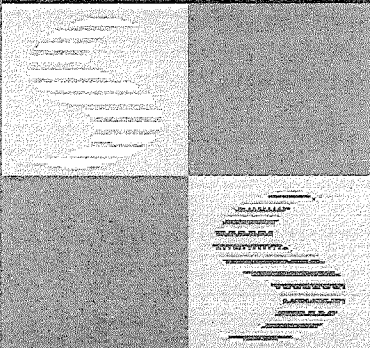
- **Maidstone will be better prepared to adapt to climate change and cope with the changes.**
- **Improved air quality, with emissions reduced by 2011.**
- **Easier ways of recycling for everyone, boosting recycling rates to XX%.**
- **A cleaner and tidier borough.**
- **The Council's carbon emissions will reduce by 3% a year.**
- **Environmentally sustainable developments.**
- **As part of the Mote Park improvements new paths and a nature trail will be created, the car park, lake and café area improved and more volunteer work will be coordinated.**



section

6

Making it happen How we'll deliver our priorities



Our service planning, delivery and monitoring mechanisms will be the processes through which this plan is delivered. We must ensure we plan carefully and have the financial resources to deliver our priorities, so the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy are aligned with our corporate planning process.

Service Planning

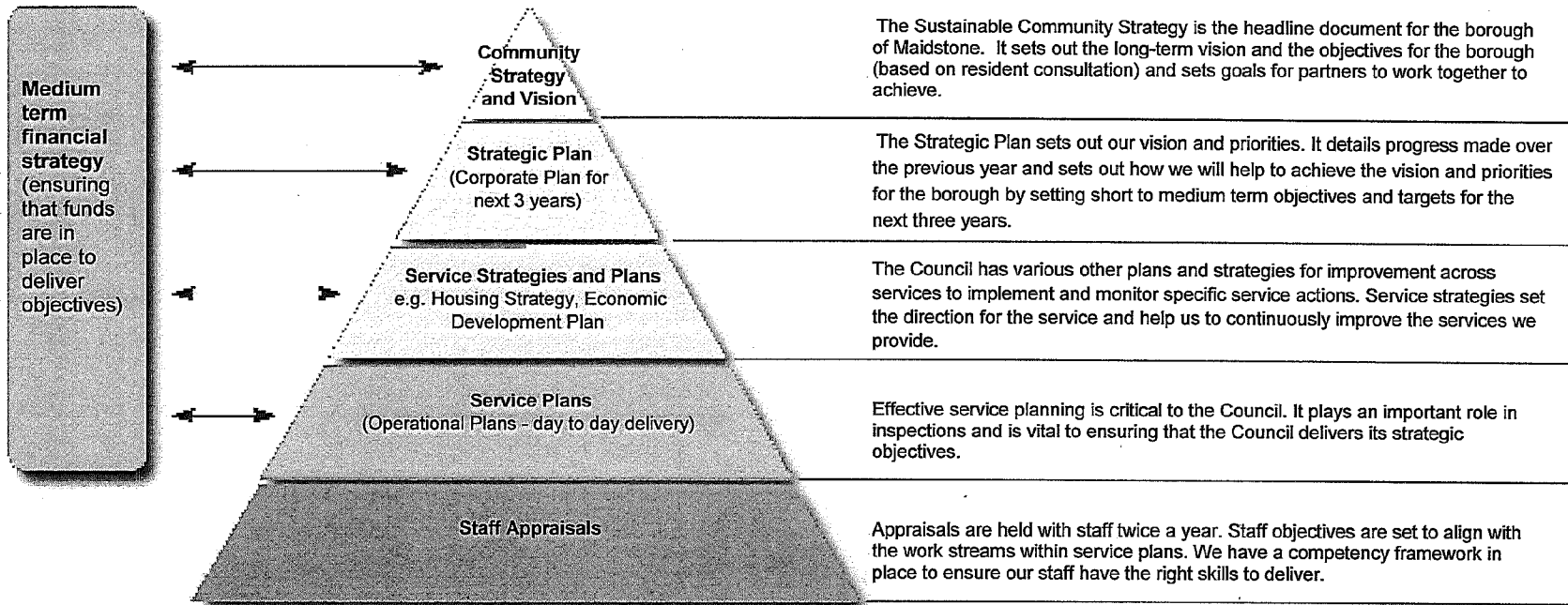
The service planning process allows us to convert high level objectives from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the authority. The function of any service plan is to ensure that all activities carried out by the department complement the aims and objectives of the Council and the community as a whole. This process allows us to draw down objectives into individual performance areas and the

development of personal action plans for employee development. Effective service planning helps us:

- deliver our corporate priorities;
- match resources to priorities; and
- effectively plan at all levels.

Service plans are an essential tool for setting the work for each department's development and the priorities for the next three years, clearly linking these with financial planning, workforce planning, risk and performance management. The process is set out in the diagram on the next page.

Maidstone Service Planning Process



Prioritisation

The Council does not have the money to do everything it would like, especially in light of the current economic climate, which means we have to make difficult decisions about what services are most important.

Currently our focus must be on delivering statutory services (services we have to provide) and the services that help those most in need. We have to shift resources towards delivering our priorities and away from areas that are not priorities.

Financial Resources

Councils have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Local authorities are having to support more people through the tough financial climate at a time when income from services that councils charge for is falling. In addition to these pressures the targets from the Comprehensive Spending Review came into force in 2007/08, placing the obligation on authorities to achieve 3% cashable efficiency savings each year.

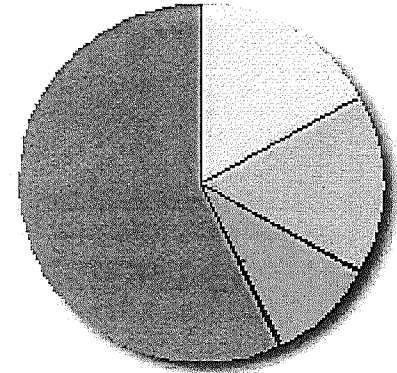
Despite these pressures Maidstone Council remains committed to avoiding excessive council tax increases and is determined to provide good value for money. The Council has developed an increasingly sound financial position over recent years, whilst recognising the pressure on resources that will continue to apply in the future. Locally the economic downturn and the impact on the Council can be summarised as:

- Less income generation with a reduction in applications being received for licensing and planning;
- A reduction in funding from Central Government;

- Increased demand for services such as housing benefit with an increase in those losing their homes as a result of the economic climate;
- Less income from the sale of property assets due to the slump in the housing market; and
- Pressure in certain service areas for additional capital spend to protect the local economy and address service issues such as affordable homes.

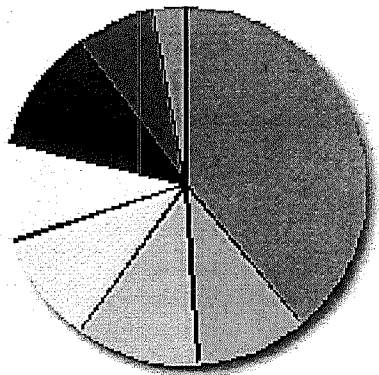
For the year 2010/11 the Council has had to identify savings of £1.6 million. Each year the Council undertakes a budget setting consultation exercise. *In October to November 2009 the Council decided to undertake comprehensive research on residents' attitudes to fees and charges, council tax levels and cuts in services. Over 1,200 people were interviewed and the results have been reflected in the 2010/11 budget.*

Sources of Income



- xxx% Government Grants
- xx% National Non Domestic Rates
- xxx% Council Tax
- xxx% Fees and Charges

Budget for 2010/11



- xx% Housing Benefits - £xx million
- xx% Housing Other - £xx million
- xx% Council Tax Benefits - £xx million
- xx% Transportation and Highways - £xx million
- x% Planning and Economic Development - £x million
- x% Recreation and Tourism - £xx million
- x% Environmental Health - £x million
- x% Refuse Collection - £xx million
- x% Other - £xx million





Other resources

Our resources are not just financial. The table below highlights how we will ensure that the best use is made

of the Council's resources, and that the priorities in this Strategic Plan are adequately supported.

Human – the people who deliver our services

- ✓ Continue to focus on high performance through performance indicators and team by team performance through Reach the Summit
- ✓ Ensure performance is taken into account in deciding pay progression through the new appraisal process
- ✓ Improve the Council's workforce planning and recruitment and retention
- ✓ Improve the equality and diversity of the Council's workforce
- ✓ Support new Councillor development, training and performance evaluation arrangements
- ✓ Explore, with partners, opportunities to develop new, more cost-effective ways of working
- ✓ Ensure all our staff have the training and development they need to be able to do their jobs well and deliver excellent services to our customers
- ✓ Ensure we develop our staff to match competencies with what the Council requires and develop a more structured approach to succession planning

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - new technology to help us deliver services more effectively and records

- ✓ Support flexible and home working to improve work/life balance and help improve efficiency and quality of service
- ✓ Automate and streamline business processes wherever possible
- ✓ Develop e-procurement and e-billing to improve efficiency of procurement
- ✓ Investigate how customers access our services currently and will want to in the future
- ✓ Encourage customers to use more cost effective transactions i.e. E-billing and E-citizen initiatives providing key information online
- ✓ Support shared services/partnership arrangements being developed in, for example, Licensing, Housing Benefits and ICT
- ✓ Investigate the benefits of a corporate Electronic Document Recognition Management System to improve document and knowledge management
- ✓ Take advantage of pooled procurements (such as combined disaster recovery contract) and partnership/shared service arrangements (such as a Kent-wide network linking all partners) through the Kent Connects Partnership

Assets - the property and assets that we own or use to deliver our services

The Council will manage its property resources to ensure they are:

- ✓ in the right location and suitable for staff to deliver services
- ✓ in good condition to the extent that services can be provided from them in a comfortable environment for both staff and customers without interruption
- ✓ suitable for the purpose for which they are being used and accessible to people with disabilities
- ✓ flexible to the extent that they can be adapted economically to adjust to changing service needs, including sharing with partners in service delivery
- ✓ able to demonstrate 'Best Value' in terms of a balance between efficiency in operation, running costs and long term sustainability
- ✓ able to convey a positive image of the Council and the service being provided
- ✓ able to contribute positively to the immediate environment, particularly where there is a need for physical regeneration of the locality
- ✓ good examples of sustainable development if new or extensively refurbished
- ✓ maintained through a programme of planned maintenance arrangements
- ✓ managed to mitigate their impact on and the effect of climate change
- ✓ able to make the maximum contribution to service revenue budgets in terms of rental income
- ✓ able to make a positive contribution to the social wellbeing of the community either through its presence as a heritage asset or through use by others such as voluntary groups, charity organisations or small businesses
- ✓ retained for reasons of strategic importance, such as to influence the physical and economic regeneration of the borough

Natural - ensuring we make effective use of natural resources and reduce the impact on the environment

- ✓ Reduce the amount of energy we use in our buildings
- ✓ Consider the type and amount of fuel we use in our vehicles
- ✓ Look at the amount of water we use in our buildings and try and reduce this
- ✓ Increase use of laptops with low-energy power supplies, utilising less than half the power of a desktop PC and flatscreen monitors
- ✓ Automatic power-down of desktop PCs overnight to save energy
- ✓ Reduce the waste we produce and increase recycling
- ✓ Look at reducing the environmental impact of services as part of all tendering processes
- ✓ Minimise how much paper we use through reducing what we print
- ✓ Work with local residents and KCC to make efficiencies in recycling

Value for Money

The Council continuously looks for ways to save money and improve services. It is essential our services provide value for money: good performance at the best possible price. We address the value for money or efficiency agenda in a number of ways:

- Procurement;
- Shared services and partnership working;
- Business transformation; and
- Comparing our delivery with the best performers.

Procurement

Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, while minimising damage to the environment. Procurement is essential in achieving our value for money agenda. We have efficient procurement processes in place to ensure value for money is central in the tendering process we use to award contracts and purchase goods.

Partnership working and shared services

We believe that it is important that we work with other local district councils and Kent County Council to provide more cost effective services. The Council is signed up to the Kent Commitment, which seeks more effective working arrangements between the district councils in Kent and Kent County Council. It also led in the development of the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership with Ashford, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Councils.

The partnership looks for opportunities for working together in partnerships or providing shared services i.e. having only one Council providing a service for two or more councils, rather than each council having departments providing the same service. Partnerships and shared services ensure the service is resilient and can deliver large financial savings.

The Council currently has partnerships and shared services in the following areas:

- Internal Audit - partnership with Ashford Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale Borough Council
- Overview and Scrutiny –partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

- Learning and Development – *joint training* with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council.
- Benefit Fraud and Visiting service - shared service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Business Transformation - shared service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council.

Through the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership and through our Business Transformation function we are progressing shared services, partnership working or ways to significantly improve services e.g. Legal, Human Resources.

Business transformation

The Business Transformation team operates as a shared service for the Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership (Ashford, Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells). The team brings considerable benefits to the Council, such as developing links with other authorities, comparing best practice and identifying potential for improvement. Business Transformation involves reviewing services and identifying where efficiencies are possible and improvements to the customer experience can be made. This includes use of a range of business improvement techniques such as process re-engineering, activity based costing and performance and financial analysis. Reviews are carried out across the partnership with one or more authorities.

Benchmarking

The term benchmarking means comparing our performance with that of other authorities. This helps to ensure we are performing well in comparison with our peers and helps drive forward improvements.

Benchmarking on the cost and quality of services across Kent is being coordinated by the Kent Finance Officers Association.

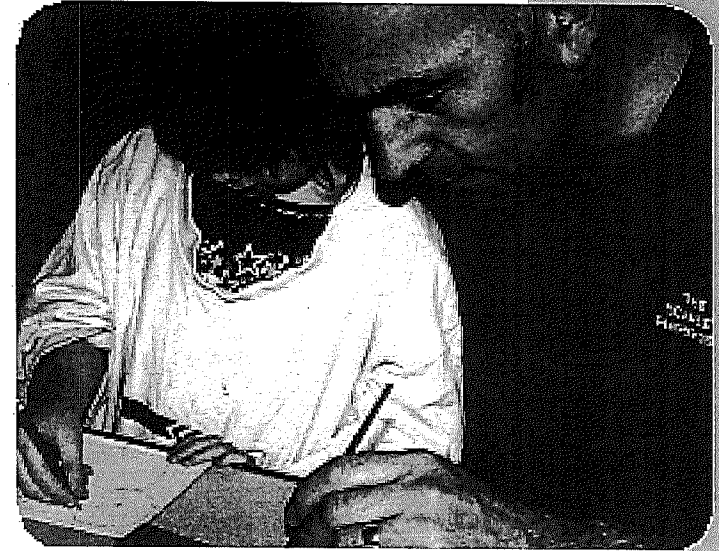
How our performance will be monitored

To make sure we deliver on our promises, we monitor the progress made in achieving the objectives in the Strategic Plan. Performance indicators (PIs) help us do this by measuring how we are doing in delivering the Council's key objectives and provide important information on how well we are delivering services.

- **National indicators (NIs)** - are statutory indicators set by the Government that we have to collect.
- **Key performance indicators (KPIS)** - are indicators we have set for ourselves to measure how well we are delivering our key objectives.

- **Local Performance Indicators (LPis)** - are any other we have set for ourselves that we use to manage performance.

We use PIs to monitor how well we are doing in comparison to previous years, but also looking forward, to set challenging yet achievable targets for the coming years. This ensures the Council is always striving to improve.



Risk Management

The Council must manage threats and maximise opportunities that impact on the achievement of our priorities. Over the last five years Maidstone Borough Council has embedded a strong risk management culture. The table below shows our strategic risks. These are risks that could impact on the whole borough and could impact on the

delivery of our priorities. Risks are aligned with priorities and take into account the environment in which we operate.

Risk levels are calculated by the likelihood of an event occurring against its predicted impact and have been rated as high, medium or low. If a risk is highly likely to occur and has a significant impact then it

is high. All our strategic risks have action plans with the aim of reducing the risk to the authority along with controls which are taken into account when calculating risk. However, some risks will always remain high due to the predicted impact. The authority's strategic risk register is set out below.

Strategic Risk Register

**Credit Crunch/
Economic Decline**

The current economic climate has changed dramatically over the past twelve to eighteen months. The credit crunch, which occurred in 2007 and is still continuing, has reduced the supply of money in the financial markets. This has had the impact of increased interest rates, scarcity of money, impact on the housing mortgage market with a knock on effect on supply of new houses as the overall scenario has led to a reduction in house prices - plus uncertainty in the banking sector, both nationally and internationally, which adds to the risk/reward trade off in the investment strategy. This scenario has been complemented by a reduction in national growth, an escalation in inflation rates and a general decline in economic activity. It is anticipated that this will produce a period of stagflation i.e. reduced economic growth and increased inflation.

The increase in inflation is substantially a consequence of international oil prices, which impacts on all aspects of economic activity from businesses to individual costs and, therefore, net disposable income.

A1

Affordable Housing

The Council has challenging affordable housing targets. There are limited sites for development in the borough and the value of housing is intrinsically high.

A2

Spatial Planning

Economic regeneration, development and planning - a key priority for the council but there are many opposing views both within the Council and within the community.

B2

Deprivation

The relative affluence of the local area hides some pockets of serious deprivation (two in particular) which have spending needs and require the Council's attention, but internal and external recognition is needed.

B2

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Educational and other skills attainment</p> | <p>A relatively high proportion of local school leavers do not have the necessary educational skills that are required by employers, particularly those employers whose business environment provides medium to high salary reward. The level of qualifications of working age population residents in Maidstone, though close to the national average, is inferior to that of the South East - a position inconsistent with a prosperous county town in this region.</p> <p>B2</p> |
| <p>Infrastructure</p> | <p>Geographically, Maidstone sits between the development areas of Thames Gateway to the west and Ashford to the east, and resources are being channelled into these areas. The Council has challenging ambitions, together with targets (e.g. on housing) which demand improved levels of infrastructure in the borough. The Council has been identified as a Growth Point in the South East plan and has been allocated in excess of 10,000 houses. In its bid for funding the Council has been allocated circa £5m over the next five years. This level of funding requires further public and private monies to provide the necessary infrastructure</p> <p>B2</p> |
| <p>Corporate Projects</p> | <p>The Council has a programme of projects, many of which are significant and have a high profile. These include the New Depot and the Museum extension as well as several very large scale regeneration schemes in accordance with agreed Growth Point priorities.</p> <p>B2</p> |
| <p>Two-tier working</p> | <p>Maidstone Borough Council has previously set out the goal to be part of a unitary status authority, as a key element of the vision for the organisation. There are arguments that without unitary status, some priority themes are not fully achievable. The structural agenda for local government is still in flux.</p> <p>B2</p> |
| <p>Waste Collection - Review of waste collection</p> | <p>The Council needs to meet challenging targets for recycling. Maidstone is a collection authority not a disposal authority, so needs to work closely with partners to develop an optimum model in this area. Alternative arrangements are currently being considered.</p> <p>B3</p> |
| <p>Climate Change</p> | <p>All signs are pointing to the fact that the Council must respond both by mitigating environmental impacts and by adapting to the change that comes from the changing climate.</p> <p>C2</p> |
| <p>Partnership working - Shared Services</p> | <p>The Council is increasingly being encouraged to move towards partnership working, driven by the need to improve services, reduce cost and increase resilience. Levels of commitment to partnership working across Kent are variable, as is preparedness to drive through proposals in the face of adversity. There is a wide range of ICT systems across Kent and differing political/strategic priorities.</p> <p>C3</p> |

Key

High Risk

Medium Risk

Low Risk



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A summary version of this document is also available and alternative formats of the Strategic Plan will be provided upon request.