

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF RECOMMENDATION OF THE CABINET

TO COUNCIL

Recommendation Made: 8 April 2009

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-12

Issue for Decision

To consider the proposed final draft of the authority's Strategic Plan 2009-12.

Recommendation Made

That the attached Strategic Plan 2009-12 Key Objectives, next steps and Key Performance Indicators be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

Background

The Strategic Plan is a medium term strategy setting out the overall direction of the authority for the next three years. It is a rolling three year document which is updated on an annual basis to ensure that actions, performance indicators and targets remain relevant.

The document details the Key Objectives for the Council to progress over the life of the plan. The Key Objectives and next steps – the actions the authority will take to deliver these objectives – are shown at Appendix B to the Report of Management Team. The plan is supported by a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure progress on the Key Objectives. Extensive work has specifically been carried out in consultation with officers and Cabinet to ensure the KPIs are more outcome-focussed this year.

The Budget Strategy and the Strategic Plan are the key corporate planning documents for the Council. The Key Objectives in the Strategic Plan have informed the Budget Strategy so that resources to deliver the Strategic Plan were included in the budget.

Consultation

A draft Strategic plan was considered by Cabinet on 17 December 2008. This document then went out to consultation with members of the public and partners. Consultation was carried out with:-

- Councillors;
- Parish councils;

- Community groups;
- Partners through the Local Strategic Partnership;
- Council's website;
- Undertaking an exercise in the Gateway which resulted in nearly 200 people giving their views (results shown at Appendix D)

Feedback from community groups, partners and, in particular, parish councils was excellent. It has helped us develop the priority themes for the Council, improve the Strategic Plan and informed the on-going development of the customer friendly shorter leaflet.

The Council's priorities

The Strategic Plan 2009-12 has been developed alongside the draft Sustainable Community Strategy 2020 (SCS), which sets out the vision and the objectives for the Borough of Maidstone. The Strategic Plan lays out the Council's Key Objectives under the eight topics in the SCS to explain how the Council will contribute to the delivery of the vision and objectives for the borough.

However, it is essential that the Council retains its own identity and that staff and partners understand what it wants to achieve. The Strategic Plan defines what the Council's priorities are, ensuring that these align with the agreed objectives for the borough as a whole. Given the changes to the overall vision for the borough the Council's themes have also been reviewed and a revised list has been discussed with the Cabinet and these are set out below: -

- 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; and
- 5) A place with efficient and effective public services.

Appendix E to the Report of Management Team, shows the previous six priority themes, the SCS topics and explains how the new proposed priorities are aligned with the SCS topics.

Improvements in the Strategic Plan

It is important that the Strategic Plan is a useable document for officers and members as well as informative and accessible to the public. Following recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny it was agreed that the following be produced: -

- A full colour plan (Appendix A to the Report of Management Team) – mainly to be circulated electronically and only a small number printed;
- A shorter style leaflet – for the wider public; and
- A technical document for members and officers (Appendix B to the Report of Management Team).

This approach is much more cost effective for the Council. Research has also shown that this will ensure that the information in the Strategic Plan is much more accessible to the public: when customers were asked in what format they would like to see the Strategic Plan published, the two highest responses were on the internet (58%) and a short leaflet (54%).

Other improvements include: -

- A combined foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive;
- Further clarifying the Cabinet responsibilities;
- More photographs, diagrams and illustrative examples;
- More focus on outcomes for the community; and
- A clear table of contents.

These changes will also enable further improvements to the officer target setting process which will be reflected in service plans and the annual performance plan.

At the Cabinet meeting, a number of additional amendments, mostly of a grammar and spelling nature, were submitted and agreed.

Alternatives considered and why not recommended

The authority could decide not to produce a Strategic Plan, but this would result in a lack of strategic direction, affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council.

The authority could decide that the Strategic Plan does not need to be updated. However, from 2009 the Council and its partners will be expected to deliver on the new SCS and Local Area Agreement. In order to ensure that the authorities objectives fit with those of the whole community and other partners and to clarify who is doing what by when the document is essential

The Council could decide to further change the content or develop an alternative approach, however, the document has been reviewed this year and it is believed that this currently represents best practice. The Council will continue to look at further improvements as part of preparing future plans.

Background Papers

- *The Strategic Plan 2008-11;*
- *Report to Cabinet 13 August 2008: Corporate Planning Process 2009-12;*
- *Report to Cabinet 17 December 2008: Strategic Plan 2009-12 Key Objectives;*
- *Report to Cabinet 17 December 2008: Budget Strategy 2009-10 onwards;*
- *Report to Cabinet 14 January 2009: Strategic Plan 2009-12;*
- *Report to Council 25 February 2009: Corporate Revenue and capital Budget 2009-10; and*
- *Report to Council 25 February 2009: Treasury management Strategy 2009-10 to 2011-12.*

These documents are available at the Council offices.

Maidstone Borough Council

Strategic Plan 2009-12



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By Cllr Chris Garland and
David Petford

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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 world recession, the focus will be on our economy in the short to medium term. The main challenges will be to continue to attract investment to our borough and to maintain our County Town profile. There will be a shift in demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn. Already there has been a significant increase in the number of benefit and homelessness applications and the Council has taken the opportunity to secure additional affordable housing at a very competitive price.

Council finances will be tight over the next few years, with less income due to the economic downturn and predicted rises in government funding of just 0.5% per annum. 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 look at how services can be jointly provided to improve them and reduce costs.

The Audit Commission assesses how councils manage and use their resources. In 2008 Maidstone achieved the top score of 4, "Performing Strongly" for its Use of Resources and scored top marks in all elements of Value for Money. The Council had already achieved an "Excellent" rating for its Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Although we are not complacent and there is still room for improvement, this does show that we are getting most things right.



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

Good progress has been made on the key objectives set out in the Strategic Plan for 2008-11. 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;
- Reduced the number of families living in temporary accommodation;
- Moved offices and opened the purpose-built Maidstone Gateway to provide a single point of access to public services;
- Submitted a bid for £2 million of lottery funding to make improvements to Mote Park;
- Increased levels of recycling;
- Entered into a shared Benefit Fraud and Visiting service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, saving £50,000; and
- Held a number of musical and cultural activities including - Radio One's Big Weekend, the re-enactment of the Battle of Maidstone and the Maidstone Mela.

Towards the end of 2008 more than 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 ten people said that they were satisfied with their area as a place to live. 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 three 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 key objectives and priorities 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



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 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)
- Eclipse – business park;
- South East Maidstone Strategic Route; and
- Re-design of the Locate in Maidstone site.

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:-

- Borough wide doorstep recycling;
- Making Maidstone a litter free borough - with clean sweeps and a crack down on fast food litter;
- Improvements to Mote Park;
- River improvements; and
- Continuing to monitor 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 Public 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 that people can afford and a variety of sporting, leisure and cultural activities that meet the needs of local people. Projects include:-

- A revitalised Leisure Centre;
- Expansion of the Museum;
- Maidstone Youth Café;
- The Partnership Venture for an Athletics Track at Sutton Valence School
- Affordable homes; and
- Decent homes for vulnerable people.



A place with efficient and effective public services

Maidstone Council is one of highest performing councils in the country. 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;
- Continuing a programme of Business Transformation to review service in order to ensure value for money; and
- Reviewing higher cost services to improve efficiency and service standards.

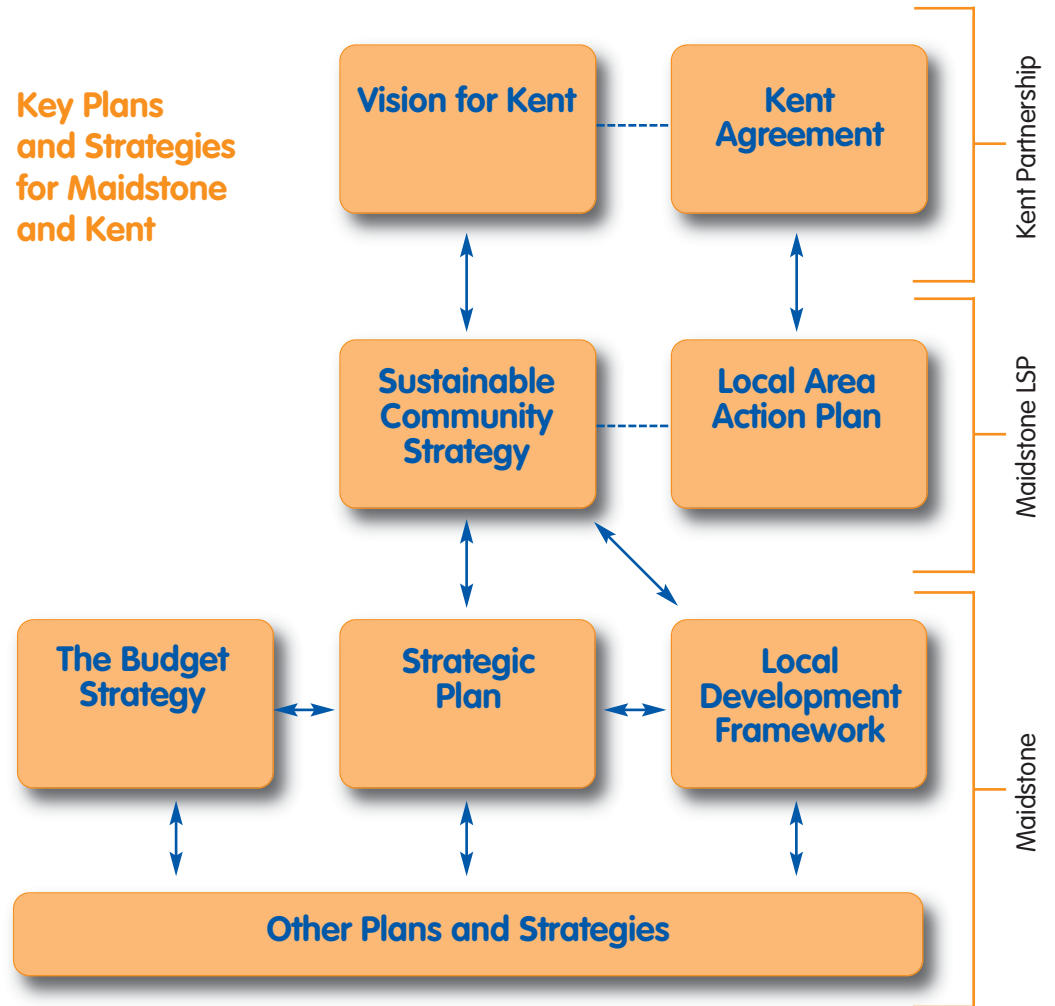


Working in partnership

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 other partners in the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership - like the Police, Primary Care Trust, voluntary sector and local business - 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.

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 two 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.
- 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 Health and Older People
- 4 Children Young People and Families
- 5 Crime and Safety
- 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 will require considerable growth across the South East with modest levels in Maidstone. The nature of development is limited by a number of factors, such as agricultural land and limits of the local transport infrastructure.

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

The Council's aim must be to secure an effective planning framework that delivers growth and takes account of environmental considerations. Development Plan Documents relating to two key areas - Affordable Housing and Open Spaces - have already set the priority context for dealing with the Government's key challenges identified as part of the development of the LDF.

Budget Strategy

To ensure that the Council's priorities are met, the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is 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 including the 'budget simulator' which allows local residents to make policy decisions and see financial consequences. The consultation which took place in November and December 2008 on the budget for 2009-10 saw more than 200 residents take part.

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 and efficiency

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 all of our services are delivered 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 greatly to allow people to make enquiries and fill in forms on-line. Customers can still write or email us with enquiries. Whatever 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.



The context in which the Council Works



Kent has a two tier council system. Kent County Council covers the whole of Kent (other than 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 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

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, 35 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.

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 every two months 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 have 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 which 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 on their findings.

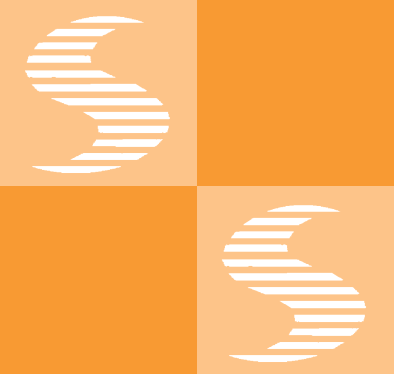
Other committees reporting to Council

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

- Planning Committee - makes decisions on planning applications;
- Licensing Committee - makes decisions on licence applications;
- Standards Committee - helps ensure the Council promotes and maintains high standards of conduct and corporate governance; and

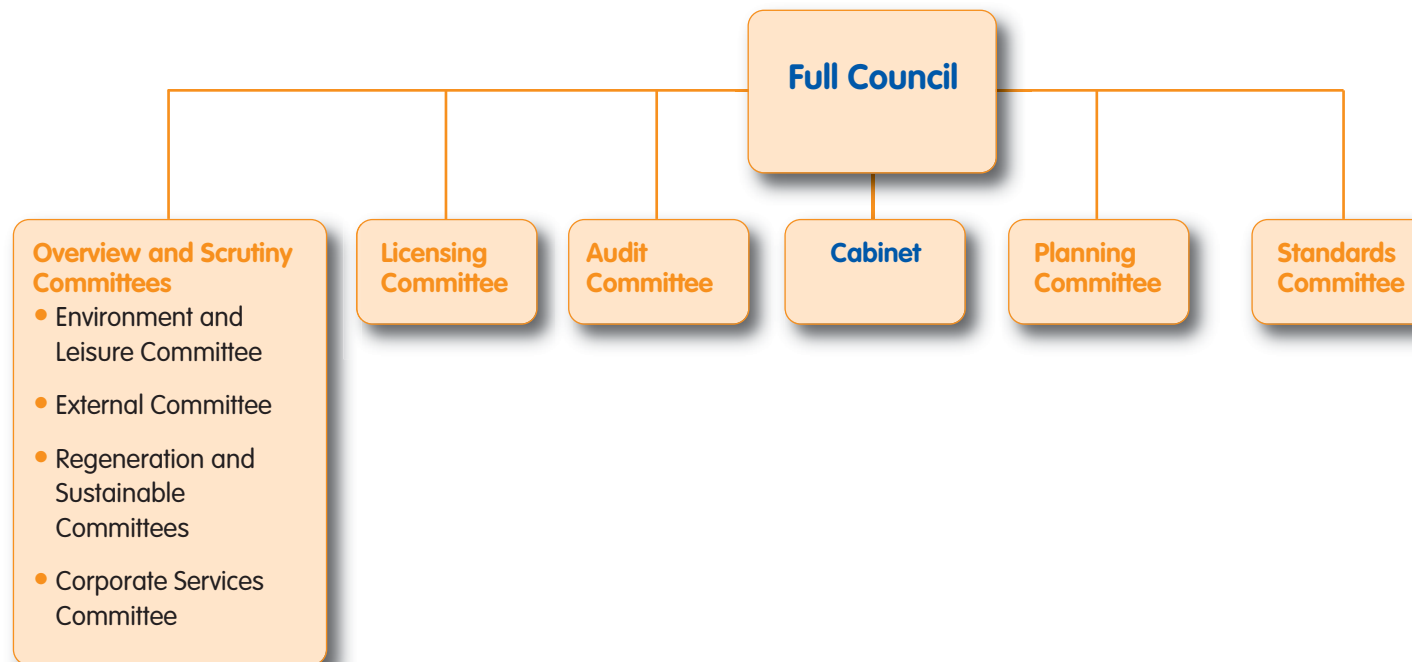
- Audit Committee - ensures the Council's risk management framework is adequate and reviews the authority's financial and non-financial performance.

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 to help 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 run 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

Progress and Performance

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

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

2008/09 is the last year councils will be assessed using the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Maidstone Council was rated as "Excellent" under CPA in 2004 and has continued to receive positive inspection assessments on the use of resources, data quality and direction of travel. The Council was awarded the top score of 4 in our most recent 2007/08 assessments for data quality and use of resources.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the new annual inspection

process introduced by the government which comes into effect in April 2009. CAA is different from CPA in that it is much more focussed on outcomes for local people and consists of two main elements:

- An Area assessment; and
- An Organisational assessment

Area Assessment

This assessment will look 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 will be Kent wide and the starting point will be the Local Area Agreement for Kent: Kent Agreement 2 (KA2).

Organisational assessment

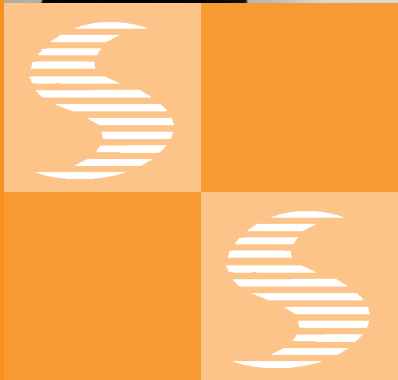
Councils will receive a score of between 1 (poor) and 4 (excellent) for the organisational assessment.

There is much more emphasis on delivery of outcomes for local people and achievements in value for money rather than on council processes.

National Indicators (NIs)

The Government has also introduced in 2008/09 a national indicator set consisting of 188 performance indicators which will 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 64 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 on the country, so inspectors will pay most attention to the NIs adopted as priorities in the Local Area Agreement for Kent, KA2.





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;**
- **Environmental Excellence and Climate Change**



Economy and Prosperity



“Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all”

National Context

The national economic picture is challenging. The UK's economy is in recession, consumer confidence has reduced, house prices have fallen and increasing numbers of people have found themselves without jobs as businesses have had to cut costs or have failed. The Government have taken a number of steps to stimulate the economy and the Bank of England has cut interest rates. However, reduced 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.

Why it is important to Maidstone

There are over 7000 businesses within the borough of Maidstone, 30% of which are 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 3500 jobs. Maidstone town is the largest shopping centre within 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, 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.



Economy and Prosperity



“Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all”

In 2008/09 we

- Worked with partners to introduce an education programme to rehabilitate offenders held at Maidstone Prison.
- Publicised Maidstone to businesses using a range of different methods e.g. www.locateinmaidstone.com
- Worked to develop the tourist and business economies.
- Won two awards for Kent Conference Bureau which is run by the council's tourism team: “Best Brochure” in the Meeting Industry Marketing Awards and the gold award for “Business Tourism” at the Tourism ExSellece Awards.
- Developed Economic Development and Tourism Strategies to help Maidstone to grow complimentary with the neighbouring areas of the Thames Gateway and Ashford, where massive investment is planned.
- Developed an online guide to Maidstone for the disabled to help disabled visitors plan their trip more efficiently and encourage them to shop in the town.
- Facilitated through the planning process the completion of phase 1 of Eclipse Park, attracting a number of businesses to move their head quarters to the business park.



Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Actively promote the commercial benefits of Maidstone to new businesses to increase the prosperity of the area, diversify the economy and encourage existing businesses to grow.
- Continue to develop our offer in terms of retail, cultural leisure and tourism accordingly to make Maidstone more attractive to investors.
- Work with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partners to deliver and support key regeneration projects.
- Strive to expand the range of learning opportunities, education and skills provision available in the Maidstone borough to provide a highly skilled workforce and improve productivity.
- Work with key higher and further education partners to increase access opportunities to education and training, improving outcomes for disengaged and vulnerable groups and reducing worklessness.
- Continue to review the services the Council provides to ensure they meet the needs of local people and provide value for money.
- Monitor and manage the impact of the credit crunch and economic downturn to ensure that key services are protected, help is available to those affected by the downturn and to ensure that the Council is best placed to move forward when the upturn comes.

What this means for Maidstone...

- More businesses offering employment specialisms.
- More higher paid high quality jobs.
- Increased opportunities for education and training for all.
- Increased tourism.
- New jobs for the borough
- A better, more easily accessible town centre.
- Help will be available for the increasing numbers of those affected by the recession who may find themselves homeless or unemployed.
- Town centre public realm improvements providing better facilities and an attractive business location.
- A vibrant economy and prosperity in Maidstone.





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 their 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 is increasingly common on many local roads, particularly if Operation Stack is implemented. It is predicted that the town will be gridlocked within four 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 Maidstone.

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.

Following the implementation in April 2008 of free bus travel throughout England for those over 60, it was predicted that Maidstone Council would have significant increased cost, due to the high visitor rates to the borough and excellent links to other towns. Maidstone Council also chose to continue to provide discretionary extras as part of the scheme, which have remained popular.

In 2008/09 we

- Achieved a small decrease in traffic flows at peak times.
- Worked with partners on the first Maidstone In Town Without Your Car Campaign.
- Re-introduced the companion bus passes which enables those receiving a higher rate of mobility component to take an un-named escort with them to help on journeys.
- Introduced a new disabled travel voucher scheme in liaison with Age Concern.
- Re-tendered the Park and Ride scheme.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Work to reduce congestion and support economic growth through development of the transport infrastructure including seeking improvements to public transport.

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 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. Last year the Government introduced a three year strategy on cutting crime with focus on reducing rates of re-offending, tackling anti-social behaviour, designing out crime and increasing public confidence.

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.

Road safety has become an increasingly important and recognised issue as the number of people killed or seriously injured on the UK's roads, whilst reducing, is still too high. 'Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone' is the Government's strategy for improving road safety over the next decade, setting out the target to reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured by 40% by 2011 compared to the period 1994-1998.

Why it is important to Maidstone

On a local level violent crime, burglary and vehicle crime are all reducing. 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 contrast to the national trend, Maidstone has seen a year on year increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads between 2005 and 2007. During 2006/07, 97 people were killed or seriously injured on the roads of Maidstone, which is the highest number in Kent.



In 2008/09 we

- Improved the CCTV system and made it more cost effective.
- Trained all of our Community Safety Officers to NVQ level 3 to give them the skills needed for the identification of crime and suspicious behaviour.
- Worked with the Police on 'Operation Safer Summer' which resulted in several arrests for drug offences and increased enforcement activity in the alcohol

control areas. This was followed up with work from Turning Point, the drug out-reach agency. Extra patrols were also carried out in key areas such as Mote Park and Brenchley Gardens to help tackle anti-social behaviour.

- Continued a scheme to restrict vehicle parking on grassways and verges in the Parkwood area with the aim of improving pedestrian safety.



Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Work in partnership to address issues of road safety.
- Take a preventative approach to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour.
- Work with the police and other partners to reduce crime and ensure that our residents feel safe.

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.
- Increased road safety.



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 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 5 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 2009 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 the services are in place to support older people to live independently and to ensure that older people have a voice.



In 2008/09 we

- Appointed a new joint Primary Care Trust/Maidstone Borough Council Healthy Lifestyles Co-ordinator to develop Maidstone's Choosing Health plan and programme.
- Reviewed mental health services across the borough, working in partnership with Tunbridge Wells through the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report is intended to help healthcare providers inform their service delivery and development.
- Continued to progress Maidstone Older Persons Forum to ensure older people in the borough have a voice and are listened to.
- Secured PCT funding for Choosing Health and set up a multi-agency Health Action Team for Maidstone to lead on the implementation of the Choosing Health initiative.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Harness the Council's Services to help partners, promote healthier lifestyles, improve the health of residents and hold healthcare providers to account.
- Continue to build an effective partnership with the Primary Care Trust and other healthcare providers to improve public health and reduce health inequalities in the borough.

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.



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 believe 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. Percentages of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs A*-C grade are 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 significantly lower than others in all key stage examinations.



In 2008/09 we

- Promoted the availability of benefits through the Kent Benefit Partnership and through local initiatives.
- Doubled turn out for the Youth Forum elections compared with the previous year. This year the Youth Forum also received the 'Spirit of the Try Angle Award, Recognising the Efforts and Achievements of Young People in Our Community' for their dedication to Switch Town Centre Youth Café and other projects.
- Worked with KCC Social Services to fund 87 free places on play schemes and provided a further 108 places for children from low income families.
- Introduced a new sports club for disabled children called DMAX. Over 50 young people attended the launch.
- Continued to develop a new teenage pregnancy action plan and supported a Teenage Pregnancy Outreach Worker to work with vulnerable young people in local schools and youth clubs.
- Assisted the Youth Forum to run a number of activities including 'Peace One Day' at Whatman Park.
- Worked with partners to progress the Maidstone Skills Studio, which will help 14-16 year olds gain vocational skills in an out of school setting.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Continue to provide an effective and responsive benefit service promoting the range of benefits available and how they can be accessed, whilst also ensuring that issues of fraud are tackled.
- Increase the number of people (especially young people) involved in positive activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

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.
- Improved engagement with young people and more young people involved in positive activities.
- Organisations working together to improve life for children, young people and families in the borough
- Housing Benefit applications determined quickly and correctly.



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 and has 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 10,080 homes within the next 20 years. The Council was awarded Growth Point Status in 2007, so has access to funding for additional infrastructure. In 2005 the Housing Needs survey showed that 59% of those who wanted to could not afford to join the private rental sector, 68%

who wanted to could not afford to purchase their own home, even though 23% or more were earning over £27,000 (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 2500 families on the waiting list for social housing. There has also been a rise in homelessness. Regeneration schemes to create new homes, including social and affordable housing, and help tackle deprivation are on-going at Shepway, Parkwood and the High Street wards.

In 2008/09 we

- Ensured developments of over 15 homes contained at least 40% affordable housing. This meant 307 new affordable homes were built.
- Bought back 63 empty homes into use
- In response to the economic downturn helped fund the purchase of 64 properties from developers at an average cost of £6,250, working with Registered Social Landlords.
- Formed a North & West Kent Partnership with neighbouring authorities and secured £1.5 million funding to use for energy efficiency measure, first time buyers' grants and other efficiency measures.
- Prevented 316 households from becoming homeless.
- Reduced the number of families living in temporary accommodation.
- Opened the Maidstone Gateway, improving access to our services and those of our partners.
- Awarded grants to 110 people who continue to live in their own homes.
- Continued to work closely with parishes to compile and publish parish plans.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Enable the development of a range of homes in accordance with local housing need in order to develop sustainable communities. This means taking care to ensure that the Council responds to the market, encourages good design and maintains an awareness of the importance of architecture and landscaping.
- Use the development control service to ensure that future developments are built to high design standard and improve planning enforcement activity as well as simplifying design.
- Enable the Delivery of new affordable homes.
- Reduce the number of empty properties.
- Improve the quality of the existing housing stock in the borough, including through the use of renovation grants. Ensure that the best use is made of the existing housing stock.
- In terms of spatial planning ensure an appropriate allocation of land for house building.
- Reduce the number of households who become homeless (through intervention).
- Continue to improve access to services.
- Continue supporting parish councils and representative groups in all communities of the borough.
- Promote effective partnerships working with the voluntary and community sectors.

What this means for Maidstone...

- More people will be able to have a real say in local services through parish councils and other representative groups.
- 400 new affordable homes built 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 creating a strong sense of place and pride in our communities.
- Prevented 600 households from becoming homeless by March 2012.
- Promote equal opportunities, encourage greater community involvement and improve social inclusion in the borough.
- Encourage greater citizen participation, especially in registering to vote, elections and Council meetings and promote greater engagement with Council members.
- Improve communications and delivery of services to Gypsy and Traveller communities.



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 focus on the supporting deaf and disabled artists and increase 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. 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 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 the geographical identity of the area but also hold some of the best collections outside of London. The Hazlitt Arts Centre has recently been renovated 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.

In 2008/09 we

- Celebrated the Museums 150th Birthday.
- Agreed a contract to manage the leisure centre to ensure high quality services and value for money.
- Increased the number of people visiting the museum and launched new initiatives like a series of classical concerts which are held at the museum
- Held the Maidstone Mela in Mote park as part of Black History month, which attracted 15,000 visitors.
- Completed work on the Hazlitt Theatre and Exchange to provide more facilities e.g. recording studio and rehearsal area and made a music and cultural information centre.
- Continued to improve play areas across the borough e.g. new equipment for teenagers has been installed at Giddyhorn Lane play area in December and includes a sports wall and basketball hoop, a Rodeo board and sheltered seating.
- Were awarded a green flag for Clare Park.
- Held a re-enactment of the Battle of Maidstone which attracted a large number visitors to the town.
- Put in a bid for lottery funding to improve Mote Park.
- Hosted Radio One's Big Weekend in Mote Park. 30,000 people attended and people living in the borough were given priority for the free tickets.

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.
- Increased tourism.
- Better access to sport and sporting facilities.
- More activities and things to do for those living in Maidstone.
- If the Mote Park lottery bid is successful new paths and a nature trail will be created, the car park, lake and café area improved and more volunteer work will be coordinated.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

- Improve parks and green open spaces through the green spaces strategy action plan and the play area strategy and enhance Maidstone's watercourses.
- Monitor residents' access to sport, leisure and cultural facilities, improve and maximise the use of Council facilities and encourage other service providers to provide high quality services to meet the needs of our residents.
- Develop the leisure centre to offer improved facilities.
- Work to raise the profile of Maidstone's music, sporting and cultural activities, including Art at the Centre, with the museum and the Hazlitt Theatre.





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 green house 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. The recent ICUN Red List of Threatened Species indicates that 75% of plant species, one in three amphibians, one in four mammals and one in eight birds that have so far been assessed are at risk of extinction world wide. Biodiversity supports life itself through a range of ecosystem services and resources. In 1994, the UK became the first country to produce a national biodiversity action plan, following the Convention on Biological Diversity signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.



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. Maidstone contains 10% of the county broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland representing 12% of the borough's land cover. Biodiversity is primarily conserved via land designation.

In 2008/09 we

- Re-tendered the Park & Ride service to ensure the service provides value for money and minimises the environmental impact.
- Held several 'Clean Sweep' events in the borough. Volunteers from parish councils and community groups have joined with the Council, to collect hundreds of bags of litter over the year.
- Brought into effect new air quality management areas and worked on their assessments.
- Were awarded a grade B for the energy usage of the Leisure Centre. Most leisure centres score lower efficiency ratings of D or E.
- Increased recycling rates with a new kerbside collection service.
- Introduced rigorous carbon reduction targets.
- Secured £10,000 funding from DEFRA to support our air quality work.
- Secured one to one support from the Energy Saving Trust.
- Secured participation in the Low Emissions Peer Group.

Over the next three years our key objectives are:

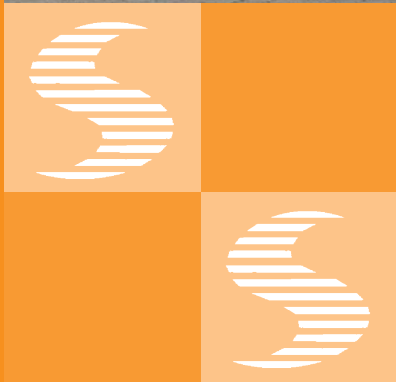
- Reduce the Council's carbon emissions through, amongst other activities, the introduction of Environmental Management System and carbon reduction targets.
- Encourage and promote the reduction in carbon emissions by residents and businesses.
- Ensure the Local Development Document currently being prepared deals with all development in an environmentally sustainable way.
- Reduce fuel poverty in the borough.
- Enhance biodiversity in Maidstone to improve the natural environment.
- Reduce water and material consumption in Council-owned properties and improve energy efficiency throughout the borough.
- Continue to support better cleaning, waste minimisation and recycling and improve monitoring.

What this means for Maidstone...

- **Maidstone will be better prepared to adapt to climate change and cope with the changes.**
- **Improved air quality: carbon emissions reduced by 2011.**
- **Easier ways of recycling for everyone, boosting recycling rates to 35%.**
- **A cleaner and tidier borough.**
- **10,000 native trees planted by 2010 as part of our Climate Change Action Plan.**
- **The Council's carbon emissions will reduce by 3% a year.**
- **Environmentally sustainable developments.**

Making it happen

How we'll deliver our priorities



Our service planning, delivery and monitoring mechanism 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

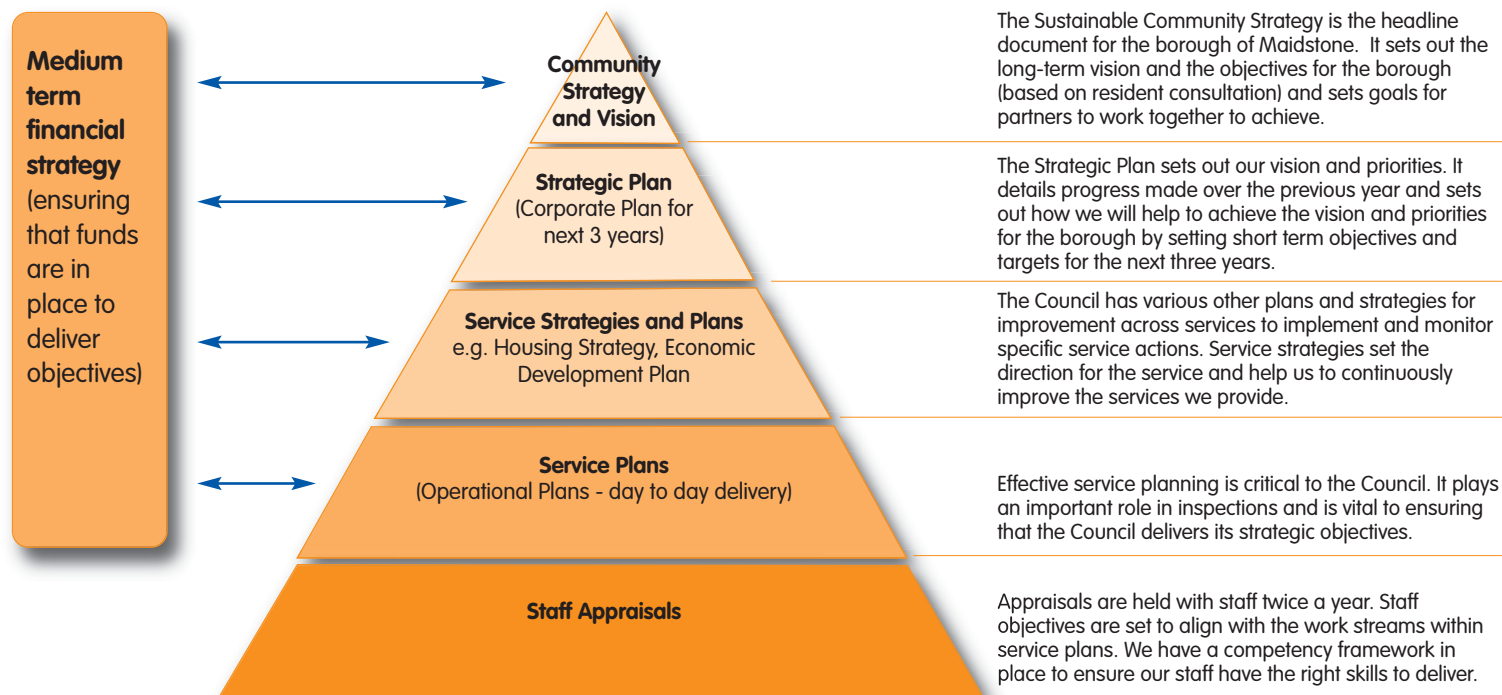
The service planning process allows us to convert high level objectives from the Strategic Plan into actions for each directorate, service or team across the authority. The function of any service plan is to ensure that all activities carried out by the department complement the aims and objectives of 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
- effectively plan at all levels

Service plans are an essential tool for setting the work for each department's developments 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:

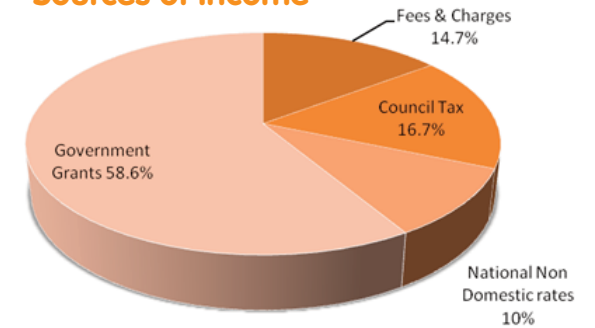
- Less income generation with a reduction in applications being received for licensing and planning;
- A reduction in funding from Central Government;
- Increased demand for services such as housing benefit with an increase in those losing their homes as a result of the economic climate;
- Less income from the sale of property assets due to the slump in 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.

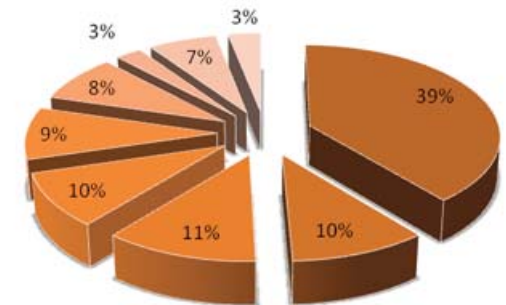
For the year 2009/10 the Council has had to identify savings of £1.8 million.

Each year between November and December the Council undertakes a budget setting consultation exercise. In 2008 the 'Budget Simulator' was available on our website to find out what residents think we should spend money on. In 2008 over 200 residents took part and the results of this consultation have been reflected in the 2009/10 budget.

Sources of Income



Budget Estimates for 2009/10



- Housing Benefits £30,067
- Housing-Other £7,868
- Council Tax Benefit £8,811
- Highways £7,264
- Planning & Economic Development £7,047
- Recreation & Tourism £6,401
- Environmental Health £1,957
- Refuse Collection £4,957
- Other £2,387



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 efficiently

- ✓ 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 records management 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 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 services 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
- ✓ Reduce the 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 key 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
- Overview and Scrutiny – partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Learning and Development – partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Benefit Fraud and Visiting service – shared service with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Business transformation – shared service with Tunbridge Wells BC and Ashford BC

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

Business transformation

The Council has a Business Transformation department shared with Tunbridge Wells and Ashford and is developing links with other authorities undertaking similar programmes. Business Transformation involves reviewing services and seeing where efficiencies can be made. The section is able to re-engineer processes in one off reviews with one authority or with multiple authorities reviewing the same process.

Benchmarking – Price Book

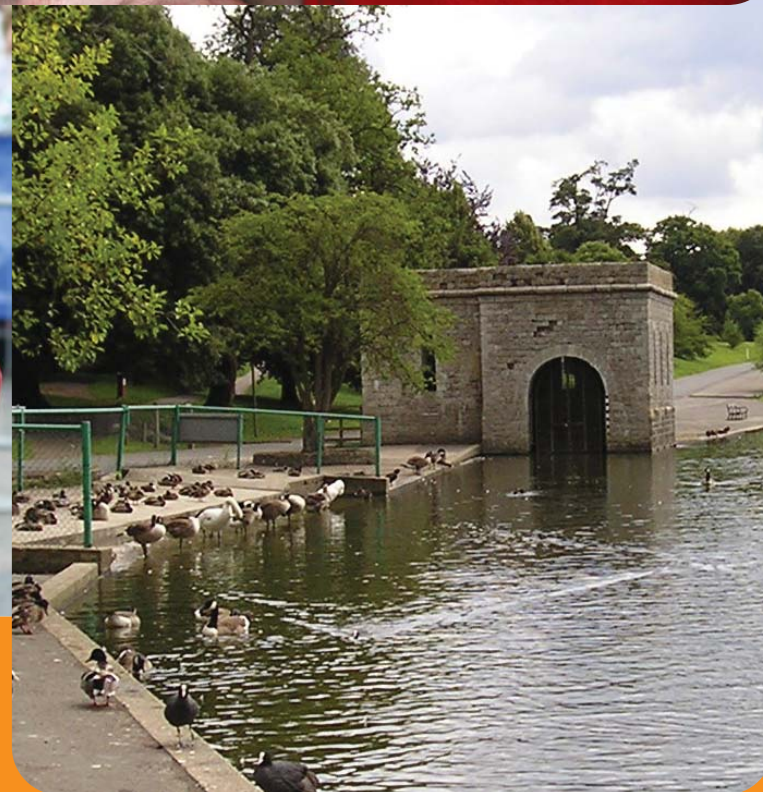
The term benchmarking means comparing our performance with other authorities. This helps to ensure we are performing well in comparison with our peers and helps drive forward improvements. The Price Book is benchmarking exercise with the other Kent district councils. The aim is to provide high quality services at the lowest possible cost.

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)** - any other PI 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 which 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

Educational and other skills attainment**B2**

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 provided 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.

Infrastructure**B2**

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 SE 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 5 years. This level of funding requires further public and private monies to provide the necessary infrastructure

Corporate Projects**B2**

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.

Two-tier working**B2**

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.

Waste Collection - Review of waste collection**B3**

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.

Climate Change**C2**

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.

Partnership working - Shared Services**C3**

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.

Key**High Risk****Medium Risk****Low Risk**

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
E&P	Actively promote the commercial benefits of Maidstone to new businesses to increase the prosperity of the area, diversify the economy and encourage existing businesses to grow.	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Investigate the possibility of using section 106 agreements to finance physical and community infrastructure including, in relation to this Key Objective, skills and training initiatives	Brian Morgan	Number of new businesses set up in the borough (VAT registrations) - John Foster - annually
			Explore the opportunities for using the Local Development Framework Core Strategy policies to improve employment in the borough	Brian Morgan	
			Actively pursue a programme of business visits undertaken by the Senior Management Team and the Economic Development Manager	John Foster	
			Continue with businesses newsletter on quarterly basis and increase circulation to improve communications	John Foster	
			Redesign of Locate in Maidstone as the principal shop window for promoting Maidstone to new and existing businesses	John Foster	
			Work with Partners to promote and support businesses in Maidstone including the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Town Centre Management Initiative (TCMI)	John Foster	
			In partnership with Kent County Council investigate how the Council should be working with its Local Authority neighbours to deliver economic development in line with the Sub National Review	John Foster	
E&P	Continue to develop our offer in terms of retail, cultural leisure and tourism accordingly to make Maidstone more attractive to investors	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Explore the options for the delivery of the Night Time Economy Action Plan	John Foster	Percentage of business starter units occupied - Chris Finch - Quarterly
			Continue to investigate actions which will promote the River Medway and drive improvements through the public realm.	John Foster	
			Deliver key Projects and events in the Arts Development Plan in conjunction with the town centre public realm improvements	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	
			Undertake a programme of town centre public realm improvements, phase one of which will be the High Street	John Foster	
			Support schools preparing bids for Arts college status to maximise access to arts facilities for the local community	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
E&P	Work with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partners to deliver and support key regeneration projects	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Identification of need in order to ensure the right amount of land sites to be released through the Local Development Framework	Michael Thornton	Percentage of new homes built upon previously developed land - Brian Morgan - annual
			Identification of land and locations and the promotion of development in those areas	Michael Thornton	
			Wrens Cross and environmental land use improvements around the town centre and Upper Stone Street	John Foster	
			Support South East rail services and road infrastructure in line with Growth Point Status	Brian Morgan	
			Work to Deliver the framework and actions set out in the Tourism Strategy	Laura Dickson / John Foster	
			Deliver Create in Maidstone	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	
			Reflect proposals in Local Development Framework Document	Michael Thornton	
			Develop Gypsy Development Plan Document	Sue Whiteside / Sarah Anderton	
Monitor progress of the Local Development Framework to ensure that the South East Maidstone Strategic Route is delivered	Brian Morgan				
E&P	Strive to expand the range of learning opportunities, education and skills provision available in the Maidstone borough to provide a highly skilled workforce and improve productivity	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Work with the University of Creative Arts to ensure Maidstone is the location of their new campus	John Foster	Percentage of 'Growth Value added' per annum - John Foster -Annually
			Work with the learning skills council to improve the training in the borough	John Foster	
			Support the Maidstone skills studio initiative	John Foster	
			Identify targets at the museum (educational) for exhibitions specific educational programmes	Simon Lace	
			Continue to maintain close working relations with Kent County Council, education funding bodies (including the Learning Skills Council), other education providers, the voluntary sector and local children's partnership services board	Ian Park	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
E&P	Work with key higher and further education partners to increase access opportunities to education and training, improving outcomes for disengaged and vulnerable groups and reducing worklessness	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Improve educational attainment in GCSEs and A Levels by supporting the Local Strategic Partnership to lobby educational bodies and monitoring performance through the Local Area Agreement	Ian Park	Number of long-term unemployed returning to work – John Foster - quarterly
			Lobby further education providers including Kent Adult Education and Mid Kent College the provision of appropriate community-based courses and programmes	John Foster / Ian Park	
			Deliver the West Kent Arts Partnership intergenerational project for young and older people sharing life experiences and life skills to take place in targeted estates	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	
			Work with offenders in partnership with the prison service and local educational providers	Simon Lace	
			Supporting Maidstone’s Local Strategic Partnership to develop an action plan around improving access to education and training	Jim Boot	
			Engage with social housing providers regarding tackling worklessness through basic skills provision	John Littlemore	
			Continue to identify opportunities for the Museum to contribute towards improve access to learning	Simon Lace	
E&P	Continue to review the services the Council provides to ensure they meet the needs of local people and provide value for money	Cllr Ash - Corporate Services	Business Transformation Programme/Best Value/Scrutiny reviews		£ saved through reviews - Alasdair Robertson - Quarterly
			Through the Business Transformation Partnership re-engineer the processes of all our key services, ensuring that customer accessibility is taken into account	Alasdair Robertson	
E&P	Monitor and manage the impact of the credit crunch and economic downturn to ensure that key services are protected, help is available to those affected by the downturn and to ensure that the Council is best placed to move forward when the upturn comes	Leader – Cllr Garland	Create a balanced budget 2009-10	Derek Williamson	Percentage of National Non-Domestic Rates collected against target – Steve McGinnes -quarterly Percentage of Council tax collected against target - Steve McGinnes -quarterly Unemployment rate - John Foster - quarterly

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
			Consider the medium term impact and to create an action plan to take the Council and the borough through the downturn	Derek Williamson	
SIT	Work to reduce congestion and support economic growth through development of the transport infrastructure including seeking improvements to public transport	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Continue to lobby other organisations and transport providers for improvements to infrastructure and transportation, including improving rail links	Brian Morgan/Clive Cheeseman	Number of on board transactions on Park & Ride from previous year - Clive Cheeseman-quarterly
			Keep up to date with proposed change to a County operated Concessionary Fare scheme to ensure that we are prepared to assist Kent County Council to transfer of the Concessionary Fares service with the minimum disruption to users	Lisa Cook / Clive Cheeseman	
			Work with partners to minimise the impact of operation stack		
			Develop a strategic approach to sustaining the Park and Ride sites and integrate with wider transportation and planning strategies in the long term	Brian Morgan	
C&S	Work in partnership to address issues of road safety	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Work with Kent County Council to deliver a road safety partnership	Brian Morgan	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents - Annual (NI 47)
C&S	Take a preventative approach to tackle and reduce antisocial behaviour	Community Services –Cllr Ring	Implement the anti-social behaviour action plan with the anti-social behaviour group which focuses on identified offenders and the Partnership and Tackling group which focuses on anti-social behaviour hotspots.	David Hewetson	Number of anti-social behaviour incidents - David Hewetson - quarterly
			Implement Multi Agency Youth Development Action Group action plan (youth issues sub group of Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership)	Jacqueline Bobb	
			Reduce alcohol related crime in the town centre.	David Hewetson	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
C&S	Work with the police and other partners to reduce crime and ensure that our residents feel safe	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Assess suitable systems for the upgrading and relocation of the CCTV network. Make more cost-effective use of the CCTV system	David Hewetson	Reduction in all recorded crime in the borough – David Hewetson - quarterly Percentage of people who say they feel safe walking alone in their local area during the day (a) and night (b) – annually – David Hewetson (Kent Crime and Victimisation Survey)
			Develop stronger licensing powers to tackle alcohol abuse and related crime.		
			Continue to contribute towards the delivery of the Safer Maidstone Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy	David Hewetson	
			Reduce all recorded crime in hotspot locations.	David Hewetson	
			Implement the Violent Crime and Criminal Damage Action Plan to reverse the trend in the crime rate.	David Hewetson	
			Ensure training on crime and disorder is being taken into account in all we do	David Hewetson	
			Through the Environmental Crime Group, deliver a high profile service that actively discourages enviro-crime while enforcing against enviro-crime through proactive and intelligence driven enforcement efforts	Martin Jeynes	
			Develop a multi-agency Public Community Safety Unit	David Hewetson	
			Through the new wardens tackle a broad range of environmental issues before they become problems and engage, educate and enforce environmental crime issues.	Martin Jeynes	
H&OP	Harness the Council's Services to help partners, promote healthier lifestyles, improve the health of residents and hold healthcare providers to account.	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Ensure that the Council is well prepared to Lobby the health sector when required	Ian Park	1. Number of people helped by the staying put partnership – John Littlemore -quarterly
			Participate with the public health board for West Kent Primary Care Trust in supporting the delivery of the strategy for public health in Kent	Ian Park	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
H&OP	Continue to build an effective partnership with the Primary Care Trust and other healthcare providers to improve public health and reduce health inequalities in the borough	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Ensure the effective use of the 'choosing health' budget for Maidstone	Ian Park	Positive outcomes reported by programme users (Choosing Health) - Jane Coombes - quarterly
			Work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and other partners to promote and improve health and reduce health inequalities through smoking cessation programmes and by tackling substance abuse (including alcohol), obesity, mental health and sexual health issues	Ian Park	
CYPF	Continue to provide an effective and responsive benefit service promoting the range of benefits available and how they can be accessed, whilst also ensuring that issues of fraud are tackled.	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Promote the range of benefits available and monitor extra income through benefits	Steve McGinnes	1. Average time for processing changes of circumstances and new benefits claims (NI 181) – Steve McGinnes - quarterly 2. Value of fraud identified- Steve McGinnes-quarterly
			Continue to improve the way the Council tackles fraud	Steve McGinnes	
CYPF	Increase the number of people (especially young people) involved in positive activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas.	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Expand the range of opportunities and activities at the museum and with the Sports and Play and Youth Development Team	Simon Lace/Jacqueline Bobb	1. Number of volunteer hours worked by volunteers under 25 for MBC (Museum, Sports and Play)) - Simon Lace, Jacqueline Bobb - quarterly NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering (place survey)- Ian Park
H&C	Enable the development of a range of homes in accordance with local housing need in order to develop sustainable communities. This means taking care to ensure that the Council responds to the market, encourages good design and maintains an awareness of the importance of architecture and landscaping	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Develop housing mix policy to provide a range of home types	Brian Morgan	1. Percentage of all planning applications determined within 8 weeks – Rob Jarman – quarterly 2. Total number of affordable homes – Rob Jarman & John Littlemore – annually
			Promote inclusion of a Green and Blue infrastructure component to the Local Development Framework	Michael Thornton	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
H&C	Use the development control service to ensure that future developments are built to high design standards and improve planning enforcement activity as well as simplifying design	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Undertake a review of the authority's planning enforcement systems to build on the success to date and ensure that it is able to respond to what residents and customers want	Rob Jarman	1. Percentage of major applications having pre-application discussions(design element) (Annual) – Rob Jarman 2. Percentage of enforcement cases signed off within 21 days -Rob Jarman - quarterly
H&C	Enable the Delivery of new affordable homes	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Ensure that each relevant new housing development delivers a minimum 40% affordable housing Engage with Social Housing Providers regarding and anti social behaviour	John Littlemore/ Rob Jarman/ Michael Thornton John Littlemore	1. Number of affordable homes (funded through LA)– Quarterly – John Littlemore
H&C	Reduce the number of empty properties	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Implement the empty homes strategy	John Littlemore	1. Number of private sector dwelling that are returned into occupation or demolished as a result of action by MBC – Quarterly – John Littlemore
H&C	Improve the quality of the existing housing stock in the borough including through the use of renovation grants. Ensure that the best use is made of the existing housing stock.	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Continue to deliver against decent homes commitment Maximise the use of regional housing based funding In partnership ensure that all house in multiple occupation are safe for the occupants Respond to the private housing stock condition survey and review outcomes	John Littlemore John Littlemore John Littlemore Stuart White	Decent homes – John Littlemore -quarterly (No targets to be set until completion of housing stock survey) Percentage of licensed Houses of multiple occupation that comply with houses of multiple occupation standards - quarterly - John Littlemore
H&C	In terms of spatial planning ensure an appropriate allocation of land for house building	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Effectively promote the Council's views to Government in the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy Maintain a local development scheme work programme. Achieve successful adoption following Examination in Public (EIP) Prepare suitable land allocation in subsequent Local Development Document Ensure that planning policy reflects the need for an appropriate supply of housing (catering for a range of residents) to meet the needs of the economy (identified through the Housing Needs Survey and employment survey)	Michael Thornton Michael Thornton Michael Thornton Michael Thornton Michael Thornton	Supply of ready to develop housing sites - Michael Thornton - Annual (NI 159)

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
H&C	Reduce the number of households who become homeless (through intervention).	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Provide a range of housing options and enable vulnerable households to achieve independent living	John Littlemore	Number of homeless cases prevented through intervention of housing advice – quarterly – John Littlemore
			Support partners to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable households	John Littlemore	
H&C	Continue to improve access to services	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Improve access to face to face services through the Council's Gateway and by bringing services together in the Maidstone Gateway whilst also ensuring the Contact Centre maintains the high level of service	Paul Taylor	Average wait time for calls to contact centre – quarterly - Sandra Marchant Percentage of visitors to the gateway responded to within 20 minutes by a Customer Services Officer – quarterly – Sandra Marchant
			Provide enhanced self help facilities though payment kiosk, public wireless internet access and fully accessible self help PCs	Paul Taylor	
			Continue to develop the transactional capabilities of the Council's web site to include use of personalisation through "web 2" technologies	Paul Taylor	
			Through the Business Transformation Partnership ensure that customer accessibility is taken into account in reviews	Alasdair Robertson	
			Ensure that the council continues to keep residents informed about the results of consultation (e.g. through Borough Update and Cabinet Road shows)	Roger Adley	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
H&C	Continue supporting parish councils and representative groups in all communities of the borough	Community Services - Cllr Ring	Review the form of the Council's support for parishes and review delegations	David Terry	
			Analyse the potential for synergies / links between the Council's aims and objectives and those of parishes (including links with the Local Development Framework)	David Terry	
H&C	Promote effective partnerships working with the voluntary and community sectors	Leader – Cllr Garland & Community Services - Cllr Ring	Support the Local Strategic Partnership and enable the Local Area Agreement to achieve their outcomes (for Maidstone and ensure that these local bodies are accountable)	Ian Park / Paul Taylor	£ in grants to outside bodies - David Terry - Quarterly
			Influence and develop the next generation of Local Area Agreements with partners	Ian Park / Paul Taylor	
			Progress and monitor the range of initiatives agreed as part of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Local Area Agreement and Service Level Agreements	Ian Park / Paul Taylor	
			Use the Museum's community volunteering services to support this objective	Simon Lace	
			Ensure that any funding for key voluntary sectors in the borough from MBC is effectively monitored, evaluated and reviewed to ensure successful outcomes	David Terry	
			Promote volunteering through support for Voluntary Action Maidstone (VAM)	Ian Park	
H&C	Promote equal opportunities, encourage greater community involvement and improve-social inclusion in the borough	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Corporate Equality Plan to be reviewed	Ian Park	Number of volunteers registered with Maidstone Volunteer Bureau – Ian Park – Annually
			Progress the neighbourhood action planning process to empower communities in disadvantaged areas and tackle inequalities.	David Terry	
			Monitor and Update Sustainable Communities Strategy	Jim Boot	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
H&C	Encourage greater citizen participation, especially in registering to vote, elections and Council meetings and promote greater engagement with Council members	Corporate Services – Cllr Ash	Undertake review of Council's provision in line with White Paper Communities in Control and implement identified actions	Neil Harris	Number of hits to web cast meetings - quarterly - Neil Harris Percentage of the those entitled to vote registered to do so - Neil Harris- annually Local election turn-out - Neil Harris - annually (where applicable)
			Continue working with schools to encourage greater participation in the democratic process	Neil Harris	
			Lead on the annual Maidstone Youth Forum election processes and extend to other schools	Jacqueline Bobb	
			Implement Charter for Member's development	Neil Harris/Tina Edwards	
			Continue to expand the use of the web-cast where possible	Neil Harris	
H&C	Improve communications and delivery of services to Gypsy and Traveller communities	Community Services – Cllr Ring	Continue to liaise with Kent County Council and other agencies to expand our involvement with the needs of the Gypsy community	John Littlemore	Satisfaction with Council owned sites – Quarterly/ Annually – John Littlemore
			Continue to work of towards improving the quality of Council owned Gypsy and traveller sites	John Littlemore	
			Progress actions and objectives from Scrutiny Committee review to improve community cohesion between Gypsies and travellers and the wider community	John Littlemore	
SCC	Improve parks and green open spaces through the green spaces strategy action plan and the play area strategy and enhance Maidstone's watercourses	Leisure and Culture – Cllr Moss	Deliver improvements for Green Spaces Strategy Phase 3 action plan	Jason Taylor	Footfall in parks - Quarterly– Jason Taylor Improvement to parks as measured through quality audits - Jason Taylor - Bi-annum
			Deliver the Play Area Strategy	Tim Jefferson	
			Progress the conservation plan for Mote Park	Jason Taylor	
			Enhance the river	Jason Taylor / John Foster	

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
SCC	Monitor residents' access to sport, leisure and cultural facilities, improve and maximise the use of Council facilities and encourage other service providers to provide high quality services to meet the needs of our residents	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Enhance marketing for sports and leisure facilities	Jason Taylor	Number of visits to the museum per 1,000 pop – Quarterly – Simon Lace (BV 170)
			Investigate the feasibility of obtaining external funding to carry out a comprehensive community sports and play facilities audit	Jacqueline Bobb	
			Implement Create in Maidstone and Elemental projects	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson	
			Maximise the effect for the borough from the 2012 Olympics	Laura Dickson / Jacqueline Bobb	
			Increase school visits to the museum	Simon Lace	
SCC	Develop the leisure centre	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Maximise use of the facilities & the provision of a diverse programme of activity	Jason Taylor	Satisfaction with the leisure centre and its facilities – Quarterly - Jason Taylor Number of users at the leisure centre –Quarterly – Jason Taylor
			Develop a programme of ongoing maintenance work with the centre management	Jason Taylor	
SCC	Work to raise the profile of Maidstone's music, sporting and cultural activities, including Art at the Centre, with the museum and the Hazlitt Theatre.	Leisure and Culture -Cllr Moss	Through the cultural marketing group work to maximise profile and share resources through joint working	Wendy Hegley / Sarah Robson / Vronni Ward / Jacqueline Bobb / John Foster/ Simon Lace	Total number of media hits between the Hazlitt and Museum - Vronni Ward - Quarterly Take-up of council funded activities facilitated by the Sports and Play team - Jacqueline Bobb - quarterly
			Develop and implement a cultural calendar		

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
EE&CC	Reduce the Council's carbon emissions through, amongst other activities, the introduction of Environmental Management System and Carbon reduction targets	Environment – Cllr Wooding	As part of the new environmental management post: - Create the environmental management system - Collect relevant data to prepare reports - Develop an action plan to reduce carbon emissions	Ben Robinson	Reduction in Council's carbon footprint- Ben Robinson - annual
			Explore the benefits of external accreditation of the Environmental Management system and set in place action plan to carry forward findings	Ben Robinson	
			Ensure the Council reduces its carbon footprint achieving a year on year annual reduction of 3% across all the Council's activities, working towards the long term targets of a 20% reduction by 2015/16 and a 30% reduction by 2020/21	Ben Robinson	
EECC	Encourage and promote the reduction in Carbon emissions by residents and businesses	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Develop partnerships to share best practice and jointly tackle the issue of carbon emissions	Jim Boot / Ben Robinson	Kent Energy efficiency Partnership - Number of energy advice surveys - Stuart White- annual
			Promote best practice	Jim Boot / Ben Robinson	
			Develop the Maidstone 'Go Green' partnership with support of the energy saving trust		
			Apply Building Research Establishment Limited Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)	Jim Boot / Ben Robinson	
EECC	Ensure the Local Development Document currently being prepared deals with all development in an environmentally sustainable way	Regeneration – Cllr Greer	Ensure Core strategy sets appropriate targets and policy context for future Local Development Framework documents and other strategies of the Council	Michael Thornton	Percentage of conservation areas in local authority with up to date character appraisal - annual - Michael Thornton
			Progress the programme of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, and Character Area Assessments.	Michael Thornton	
EECC	Reduce fuel poverty in the borough	Regeneration – Cllr Greer		Stuart White	Percentage of people receiving benefits living in homes with a low energy rating - Stuart White - annual (NI 187)

Ref	Key Objective	Portfolio / Member	Next Steps	Responsible Officer	Performance Measures
EECC	Enhance bio-diversity in Maidstone to improve the natural environment of the borough	Environment -Cllr Wooding	Adopt and implement the bio-diversity action plan which will enhance Maidstone's natural environment.	Jason Taylor	Percentage of land with local nature reserve - Jason Taylor - Annually Percentage of land in LA holdings currently managed to enhance bio-diversity- Jason Taylor - Annually
			Work in partnership to deliver accessible sites of bio-diversity interest.	Jason Taylor	
EECC	Reduce water and material consumption in Council-owned properties and improve energy efficiency across the borough	Environment - Cllr Wooding	Continue to reduce energy, water and material consumption	David Tibbit	Co2 emission from energy consumption in operational buildings – Quarterly – David Tibbit Council water consumption in operational buildings (m3)- Quarterly – David Tibbit
			Continue to improve energy efficiency	David Tibbit	
			Through Development Plan Documents aim to improve energy efficiency	Michael Thornton	
			Pursue sustainable landscaping through high quality planting in Council owned green spaces and by encouraging developers	Jason Taylor	
EECC	Continue to support better cleaning, waste minimisation and recycling and improve monitoring.	Environment – Cllr Wooding	Meet the targets set for national performance indicators relating to street cleansing, flytipping, fly posting and graffiti	Roger Wilkins	Number of missed bin collections per 1,000 – Quarterly – David Campbell Lenaghan Percentage of waste sent for recycling or composting – Quarterly – David Campbell-Lenaghan
			With our Partners develop the various work streams of the Kent Waste Partnership Action Plan in order to improve performance and value for money in waste minimisation and recycling through innovation and new ways of working	David Campbell - Lenaghan	
			Maintain and develop knowledge of developments in the field of waste management in order to identify good practice and to proactively develop the Council's services and working practices	David Campbell - Lenaghan	
			Develop an optimum model for waste collection, minimisation and recycling	David Campbell - Lenaghan	
			Undertake benchmarking to check to ensure the service is providing value for money and take appropriate steps for improvement if necessary	David Campbell - Lenaghan	