

PARK WOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION PLAN 2010 to 2015– THE STORY SO FAR

Background

The Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan was developed with local residents between October 2009 and September 2010 and adopted by Maidstone Borough Council in November 2011. Nearly 600 residents took part raising 2800 issues and ideas. Community safety and crime stood out right from the start – young people hanging around, drinking and people afraid to go out at night. Also important were dog mess and litter, housing and employment.

In the first year (November 2010 to November 2011) of the five year action plan, Maidstone Borough Council, partner organisations, local groups and residents have concentrated on delivering on these issues, on the basis of 'You said, we did' (see attached). At the same time, further work has gone on to explore in more detail underlying issues relating to health, teenage pregnancies, workless-ness, skills and educational attainment, resulting in a new revised action plan.

Young people

By far the biggest issue was 'young people hanging around' the parade of shops, anti-social behaviour and intimidation. As a result, existing youth diversionary activities have been maintained or improved. Long-standing programmes such as the community football programme have been re-commissioned by MBC's Community Development Team to address anger, frustration, respect for others and team-work while still maintaining the focus on 'footie' and fun. Extra funding was found to extend the sessions so that younger kids (8-11 year olds) could take part. Using Lottery Funding, MBC Community Development and Parks and Open Spaces commissioned social enterprise Play Place Innov8 to run play activities at the park on three afternoons a week between April and September. Local residents joined in as parent volunteers or 'Play Rangers' receiving training in child protection and First Aid.

Most recently, KCC's Youth Service have just started a new detached youth project with a focus on basket ball, and strenuous efforts are being made to retain the Thursday evening youth café at Fusion, for which they are currently seeking support from MBC/Safer Maidstone Partnership. A brand new 8-12 year olds activity club has been jointly commissioned by MBC and KCC Children's Preventative Services and funded by West Kent NHS for the most vulnerable children. It started in September at New Line Learning and is run by Kent and Medway Groundwork Trust.

Litter, rubbish dumping and dog mess

Next on the list was littering, dumping of rubbish and dog mess. Visual audits and litter picks with residents and school children started even before the plan was agreed, to get everyone thinking and acting differently. MBC Environmental Services have increased their monitoring of street cleanliness from every sixteen months to quarterly, the traditional 'barrow' patrols have increased from once to three times a week, deep cleans took place at the parade and there is now enhanced cleaning at the park and play areas by MBC Parks and Open Spaces.

There has been more enforcement by Environmental Health too, with the Foul Play dog mess campaign being launched in Park Wood in May this year. Park Wood had more fixed penalty notices issued than any area outside the town centre. The threat of enforcement action was enough to make shop keepers and the parade landlord Golding Homes secure lock ups to the rear of the shops which had become an eyesore and targeted by fly tippers and for anti-social behaviour. Letters have been written to householders above the shops and in other areas reminding them of their obligations to avoid rubbish dumping and further enforcement action promised if they don't.

Community Safety

Residents said that drug dealing and taking were a significant problem. Although the police were at first reluctant to accept the level of drug dealing identified by residents, following meetings with the police, three high profile raids were undertaken in quick succession in the summer of 2010 and pressure on drug dealers has since been maintained. Measures to address street drinking, intimidation of adults to buy alcohol for under age drinkers and drinking at the park have however, had limited success and further action and education is needed.

Healthy living and leisure activities

A significant number of issues raised by residents were already catered for in Park Wood, but people simply didn't know what was available. The problem wasn't so much duplication as fragmentation of services. To help residents find out what's available and where, MBC has published a What's On Guide and distributed it from community venues in July to October. It is already being reprinted so that every household will have a copy. New residents will receive a copy via a Welcome Pack provided by their estate agent or landlord.

Unemployment

Another key issue was unemployment. The charity Tomorrows People set up a job club and re-located their operations and a training programme for 16-19 year olds to Park Wood, all of which continue to this day. They also run a programme called Families Matter Most for people dealing with long-term unemployment. Golding Homes have recently employed an employment advisor who is working alongside Tomorrows People to expand their job club. A fact finding visit took place to Mid Kent College in September meeting with the Principle and Vice Principles for both Maidstone and Medway campuses to explore more joined up working. A follow up visit is planned to KCC's new Senacre Community and Skills Centre on 14th and 18th November.

Next steps – from neighbourhood planning to management

Resulting from a review carried out with MBC's Policy and Performance Team between April and July this year, a new programme of neighbourhood management is being trialled to maintain or increase the momentum as we approach the second year of the five year plan. This will include:

- Monthly visits to Park Wood by the Mobile Gateway to bring services and information direct to residents,
- Bi-monthly 'grime busting' estate inspections and
- Listening Days visiting community activities to update residents and get feedback.
- The whole plan – is being put onto a shared data base to ensure that regular updates can be fed back to residents and problems identified and addressed.
- Environmental improvements are being made by MBC to its land adjacent to the parade of shops and at Heather House.

All in all, many teams from across the council, partner organisations, local groups and residents have contributed and responded to the challenge of the Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan. A lot has been learnt, there have been set backs, some real change has been brought about as well, but there is still a lot to do. What is most encouraging, is that new resident groups such as Parents is the Word and R-Shop are emerging, getting organised, gaining confidence and taking the initiative. Overleaf is a list of the key issues identified by residents through the Planning for Real process that have already been either fully or partly addressed on the basis of 'you said, we did'.

You said	We did
1. Security cameras / CCTV needed. View is that existing CCTV is insufficient or does not work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV checked. Deficient CCTV removed from parade and pole re-wired ready for new camera. Two other camera's checked and confirmed to be operating. • Currently exploring whether to re-deploy mobile camera from Joy Wood with Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council's support, or else to buy new camera as part of environmental improvements.
2. Drug dealing/drug taking problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although police were at first reluctant to accept the level of drug dealing identified by residents, following meetings between the Cabinet Member and the police, three high profile raids were undertaken in quick succession in summer 2010 and pressure on drug dealers has been maintained.
3. Night noise and rowdiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new streamlined approach to neighbour noise has been agreed by MBC Environmental Health with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), a leaflet produced and promoted to residents. RSLs are being encouraged to use their full range of sanctions from loss of points to Notice of Seeking Possession to tackle persistent offenders.
4. Football pitches wanted over summer holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football goals turned 90^o over summer to allow turf to recover, but football to continue.
5. Bullying problem - This was raised most frequently as an issue around the Parade, play areas and in the cul de sacs rather than schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAYDAG¹ funded community football programme on Wednesday nights extended from 1.5 to two hours and split into two sessions for pre-teens and 11-16 yr olds. • Extra funding found by MBC to run inside Heather House during winter. • New provider Kick Kent commissioned from September 2011 to focus on behaviour, relationships (bullying) and team work. • First inter-estate tournament took place in October half-term.
6. Permanent youth provision needed including: Youth theatre / Recording studio / rehearsal room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC Youth Service stepped in to support the youth café at Fusion in 2010, organised a youth and community day in August 2011 and starts detached youth work in autumn 2011. • Be Free play activities for younger children commissioned by MBC took place at the park from April to September 2011. • MAYDAG commissioned further younger (6-13) play provision through Play Place starting October 2011 until 31st March 2012.
7. Playgrounds for Under 5's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new play area was installed at Heather House/the park at the end of 2009. Golding Homes is now installing a new play area on the Island Site between Wallis Avenue, Hollingworth Road and Brishing Lane.

¹ Maidstone Youth Development Action Group – Sub-group of Safer Maidstone Partnership

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<p>8. Litter problem / broken glass</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular litter picks were held with residents and Tomorrow's People 'Working It Out' programme around parade, at park and at Heather House throughout 2010. Tomorrow's People have continued to carry these out in 2011 in the vicinity of Heather House. The cleaning frequency of the play area was increased, and Scarab street cleaning machinery utilised, to coincide with play activities sponsored by the Big Lottery over the summer of 2011 but this is an on-going problem.
<p>9. Illegal dumping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents in rubbish dumping hot-spots written to reminding them of their responsibilities and collection days, problem has reduced but needs constant vigilance owing to high turn over of residents in housing above parade of shops.
<p>10. Clean up needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of street cleanliness stepped up from every sixteen months to quarterly • Traditional 'barrow' woman now patrolling parade of shops, pavements and alleyways increased from once to three times a week. • Increased cleaning of play areas and parks and emptying of bins. MBC and Golding Homes have made significant steps towards resolving disputed responsibilities over ownership and cleaning of public land. • Increased enforcement against litter and dog mess at the parade and park led to seven fixed penalty notices being issued earlier this year. Increase in penalties from £50 to £75. Foul Play campaign launched in Park Wood on 24th May 2011. • The threat of enforcement by MBC Environmental Health against rubbish dumping has resulted in lock-ups at rear of shops being secured and rubbish dumping drastically reduced. • Two new bins installed on Wallis Avenue (October 2011).
<p>11. Dog mess problem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptying of dog waste bins by contractors checked to ensure they are meeting their service level agreements. • Proposal to scrap dog waste bins and encourage residents to use litter bins shelved.
<p>12. School crossing patrol/ Zebra crossings, accident spots, blind spots</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two zebra crossings were installed and although subject to initial problems with electrical supply are now fully functioning. Site meetings were held with the ward member, residents and KCC Highways to address issues of compliance, signage and positioning. The signage issues have been acknowledge and addressed. The crossings now appear to be providing safe crossing of the roads for elderly residents and children.

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<p>13. Damp and condensation problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents have been encouraged to contact their landlord in the first place and then MBC's Housing Condition team if they feel they are not getting re-dress. Fusion is organising a drop-in surgery as part of their Staying Safe Month in November 2011.
<p>14. Tenants and residents association to be set up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although a new resident's association did emerge 2010 it sadly folded in January 2011. However, on-going support is being given to R-Shop (Bulk Buy Group) and to the new group Parents is the Word including a community chest grant of £900. The Mobile Gateway visits and Listening Day (next 15th November) are being developed as an alternative to engage with and listen to resident's issues.
<p>15. Improve Heather House and other community facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fusion has teamed up with Golding Homes to increased its presence on the parade of shops by taking on adjacent property 5, Park Wood Parade. Tomorrows People's Families Matter Most and Job Shop now providing a 5 day a week service to residents. The Tuesday afternoon sexual health clinic has been re-located to this more private venue.
<p>16. Local job information point / Job Search Club / support for people seeking work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Job Shop was started by Tomorrows People on Tuesday mornings before the action plan was even formally adopted. Golding Homes have now recruited an employment advisor who is working with Tomorrows People to expand the job shop to two mornings a week. Tomorrows People also run Families Matter Most on three days a week supporting residents to gain confidence and return to employment Tomorrows People also run Working It Out at Heather House for 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training.
<p>17. Cookery Classes wanted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratatouille's cooking course at Fusion on Wednesdays and Little Stirrers at the Meadows Children's Centre for children and their parents.
<p>18. After Hours School Club</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New 8-12 year olds activity club jointly commissioned by MBC and KCC Children's Preventative Services and funded by West Kent NHS started in September at New Line Learning run by Kent and Medway Groundwork Trust.
<p>19. Stop smoking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared service and cross referrals with Meadows Children's Centre.
<p>20. What's On?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of issues raised were already catered for in Park Wood, but people simply didn't know what was available. A What's On Guide has been published by MBC listing sixty different activities/clubs and distributed in July, August, September and October. It is now being revised to fill gaps identified by residents and groups through a feed-back form. Reprint just about to be published and delivered to every household.