

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**13 June 2012**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Report prepared by Overview and Scrutiny Officer**

#### **1. The Council as a Business Review**

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

1.1.1 To consider the recommendations within 'The Council as a Business? Review' report attached at **Appendix A**.

##### **1.2 Recommendation of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member agrees the following recommendations:

1. That a cross party, Member led, budget working group be established and meet at the appropriate critical times in the budget making process;
2. That procurement and legal sections are shared with outside organisations, especially within the public sector as a starting point from which a business section can be developed that can take on other businesses interests;
3. That the Council set up a 'work hub' facility for small businesses utilising space that is not used in Maidstone House or the Gateway. Printing and other resources including mentoring in areas of in-house expertise could be provided for a fee;
4. That an event organiser is sought and Mote Park is let for big festival events on a similar scale to the Radio 1 Big Weekend. The viability of establishing an events team should be investigated;
5. That the Council investigate the opportunity presented by the Environment Agency with the introduction of a compulsory 'boat MOT' called the BSS (Boat Safety Scheme). Existing staff could be trained to provide BSS checks, providing a service to boat owners, but also working to improve safety on the river;

6. That the Council's evaluates its facilities and assets i.e. land and buildings with a view to hiring them out for future use to generate an income;
7. That the Council develops a marketing model for hiring out its assets and utilising empty space for advertising that includes fees and charges and terms and conditions of use. This should be advertised widely and information included on [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk);
8. That the Council address the potential for hiring out the Town Hall in conjunction with events held in Jubilee Square;
9. That the Willington Street Park and Ride Site, currently closed on Sundays, is rented out to a private organiser for Boot Fairs;
10. That there is a renewed emphasis on what Maidstone has to offer in terms of Tourism to maximise its financial benefits to the borough; and
11. That the Council finds a more cost effective way of charging for small fees and fines so that the significant numbers of small amounts that are written off (e.g. stray dog fees) are reduced; and the Council is enabled to charge for all the statutory fees it is entitled to.

### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 At its meeting on 7 June 2011, the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out a review that explored the financial restraints faced by the Council and how savings could be achieved in a more innovative manner. The focus of the review diversified to include the evaluation of 'businesslike' operations within the Council and opportunities that demonstrated a businesslike approach in the delivery of Council services and the use of Council assets. The Committee also recognised the importance of the correlation of its work programme with the Budget Strategy.
- 1.3.2 The Committee carried out face to face questionnaires with residents at a public event and conducted formal and informal interviews with internal officers, local business people and other local authorities. A survey was designed and sent to all staff and Councillors and public and calls for evidences were made via social media and the local press. Members visited the Print Shop at Her Majesty's Prison, Maidstone to understand the working practice and ethos behind a public sector organisation competing with the private sector. The Committee considered a wide range of desktop research and explored current thinking on public sector income generation.

1.3.3 Having considered the evidence, the Committee approved a wide range of recommendations for income generating opportunities, focusing on a business like attitude towards utilising the Council's assets. The Committee's long term commitment to engaging fully with the Council's medium term financial strategy in order to continue to make tangible financial recommendations as part of its remit, is reflected in the recommendations made.

Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.3.4 The Cabinet Member could decide not to endorse any of the recommendations within the "Council as a Business?" report, however the recommendations are based on evidence from a range of sources and support the Council's objectives with regard to ensuring "effective, cost effective services are delivered across the borough", as outlined at 1.4.

1.4 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.4.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2011-2015 lists "corporate and customer excellence" as key priorities. The recommendations within the report contribute to the fulfillment of these objectives.

1.5 Risk Management

1.5.1 The Recommendations contained within the report will need to be risk assessed as part reviewing whether they should be accepted or not.

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	X
4.	Social Inclusion	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	X
9.	Asset Management	X

1.7 Appendices

Appendix A - Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
"The Council as a Business? Review";

Appendix B - Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
"The Council as a Business? Review Evidence Pack";

**NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED**

Is this a Key Decision?      Yes            No     

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this an Urgent Key Decision?      Yes            No     

Reason for Urgency

N/a