

Improvement Plan 2013-16

Maidstone Borough Council has been recognised under previous inspection regimes as providing good quality value for money services. However, we want to be even better, offering the services that people want for a cost they think is good value. *In 2010* the Government announced its plans to reduce public spending by 25% and reduce the national deficit. **The Council has to save around £2.9m over the next three years,** which is a substantial reduction in the budget we have to spend on providing services for local people, at the same time that the number of potentially vulnerable people requiring some of those services, like housing advice and Housing and Council Tax Benefit, is increasing.

The Strategic Plan details the priorities and priority outcomes for Maidstone until 2015 and how these will be delivered. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out what the Council will spend and when and where savings will be made. In order to deliver the Strategic Plan and MTFS the Council is undertaking various pieces of work and projects to improve value for money and quality of customer service, and this must be aligned with the Council's strategic objectives and Medium Term Financial Plan. This improvement work makes up the building blocks that will make Maidstone a better council.

This plan explains the key workstreams for the Council's improvement journey, the drivers for improvement as well as priority services and projects for improvement. It will allow work to be planned, sufficiently supported and monitored to ensure savings needs and the improvements required for the Council to meet its priority outcomes are delivered.

Objectives

It is important that the Council delivers services that are value for money and that residents are satisfied with. We must make savings and maximise income where we can but also be flexible enough to take opportunities as they arise, including those that come from external influences like changes in legislation. Therefore, the objectives of the improvement journey are:

1. A reduction in net cost, through making savings or increased income
2. Improving or maintaining quality: ensuring we deliver excellent services, which means delivering what is promised to agreed standards
3. Identifying and responding to opportunities aligned with the Strategic Plan

Improvement workstreams

The Council's Improvement Plan is corporate and involves a number of different workstreams, which are owned by different officers in the organisation. Those workstreams identified as most important are:

- 1. Incremental improvement** (Head of Change and Scrutiny) – making good use of performance and financial information and good business planning, *including responding to recent recommendations from an Internal Audit review of performance management*, to enable service managers to make small changes to enable continuous improvement in the services their teams provide.
- 2. Asset management** (Asst Director of Environmental & Regulatory Services) – making the best use of what we have in terms of buildings and land and management of our use of water, gas, electricity and petrol/diesel. It is important we know what assets we keep and what we want to sell or transfer to others, and that we actually dispose of those assets we no longer require. This is essential in terms of providing capital income and ensuring services are delivered to residents in the best way. This may mean that we transfer assets to others, including community groups, to enable them to deliver more services in the future. It may also mean that we look to make savings by sharing accommodation with other organisations.
- 3. Transformation** (Head of Business Improvement) – larger changes to ensure key outcomes are delivered effectively and efficiently. Making good use of unit cost information and benchmarking to consider different ways of delivering services, for example using shared services to gain economies of scale and increase resilience, and using business improvement techniques to improve processes. This includes working with other organisations and residents to deliver shared goals as well as different teams within the Council working together better. We may also work with public service providers and local people to redesign services and pool budgets through Community Budgets. More internal and/or external support to make these improvements may be required.
- 4. External challenge** (Head of Change & Scrutiny) – using information and challenge from residents and critical friends to improve services. This includes complaints information, feedback from local people, peer reviews, nationally driven change like the welfare reform changes and Overview & Scrutiny reviews.

These workstreams and the whole Improvement Plan are underpinned by the following enablers:

- **Organisational culture** (Head of HR) – creating an organisational culture where there is permission to experiment and time to learn and where all officers and members are engaged and are able to give their feedback and ideas. Improving collaboration between different parts of the organisation, ensuring that change is well managed and there is the capacity and capability to deliver the required outcomes.
- **Good information and knowledge management** (Head of Business Improvement) – *modernising our information governance and systems architecture to ensure we make more efficient, secure and smart use of*

information we gather about our customers. *In addition*, making use of other customer insight, like Mosaic Public Sector, to create and deliver messages that people hear and understand and which cause them to make positive changes in behaviour.

- **Councillor assurance** – leadership and involvement of elected members in shaping, implementing and monitoring the progress and outcomes of policies and projects.

Other important tools for improvement are:

- Procurement
- Use of technology

Priority services and projects for improvement

In order to ensure we can deliver our priority outcomes in the Strategic Plan and savings in the MTFs it is important to make changes in the following service areas. The list of service areas below is in order of priority for improvement, from highest priority to lowest. These improvements may be to deliver savings, improve the quality of a service or respond to an opportunity that may arise.

1. Waste & Recycling – ~~procuring~~ *implementing* a new waste contract with other Kent authorities, working to achieve the target of 50% recycling by 2015 *and launching our commercial waste service*

2. ICT – sharing our ICT service with local authority partners

3. Hazlitt Arts Centre – ~~investigating options for governance and implementing the chosen option~~ *for delivery* to ensure value for money

~~**Parking Transport Management** – completing our Transport Strategy and implementing this~~

4. Planning – ~~developing the synergy between Planning and Economic Development to improve the prosperity of the borough, and being ready to respond to any change in legislation that would allow us to set our own planning fees~~ *and sharing the Planning Support function with local authority partners*

5. Economic Development – *ensuring we have clear deliverable priorities for achieving growth through economic development and regeneration by adopting a Regeneration and Economic Development Plan and putting in place the resources and skills required to deliver this*

6. Revenues and Benefits – embedding the shared service, preparing for the national welfare reforms and exploring different ways of delivering the service for the future

- 7. Housing** – ensuring we can respond to the increased need for homelessness services, preventing homelessness wherever possible, enabling the provision of more housing and ensuring that there is a supply of decent, affordable and accessible housing, including in the private rented sector
- 8. Corporate Support** – *investigating whether our Print services could be a viable commercial service and/or whether our Corporate Support services could be shared with local authority partners*
- 9. Environmental Health** – *creating resilience in the expertise required by sharing the service with our local authority partners*
- 10. Finance** – building a service that supports the Council make informed strategic financial management decisions, manage and control budgets and commit and measure resources and investigating how this service could be delivered in the future
- 11. Building Control** – re-designing the service, diversifying work to undertake more trading rather than statutory work and looking to both public and private sector partners to investigate and develop a model for delivery for the future

(This table has been superseded by the chart shown at appendix 2)

The following table shows our top priorities for the next three years:

| 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Waste & Recycling | Waste & Recycling | Customer Services delivery |
| Customer Services delivery | Customer Services delivery | Revenues & Benefits |
| Revenues & Benefits | ICT | Housing |
| ICT | Revenues & Benefits | Building Control |
| Hazlitt Arts Centre | Housing | |
| Planning | Finance | |
| Parking Transport Management | | |

As well as work in particular service areas there are a number of other important projects that need to be undertaken in each of the improvement workstreams:

- **Customer services delivery** (including Gateway, Contact Centre and Corporate Support) – becoming more customer-centric, engaging better with our residents and designing, *adopting and delivering* a *our new* sustainable model of customer services delivery for the long term

- **Integrated Transport Strategy** – *adopting our Integrated Transport Strategy and delivering this to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support the development proposed by the Core Strategy and to address some existing traffic congestion issues*
- **Cross organisational collaboration**– exploring and establishing new ways of commissioning and delivering services with other agencies and organisations to improve outcomes, increase efficiencies and reduce cost. To review and revise existing governance and funding arrangements including pooled budgets to maximise the use of resources in service delivery
- **Future Use of the Town Hall** – looking at the future use of the Town Hall, including the former Tourist Information Centre facility at the front of the building, with a view to maximising the income potential from the building. Exploring potential uses including both commercial and community use to achieve the best rate of return and usage whilst not competing with local businesses
- **Major assets review** - reviewing the Council’s assets as part of the Asset Management Plan, which seeks *and expanding our commercial property portfolio* to ensure that the Council’s property portfolio is managed in a way to support *the delivery of* the Council’s 3 key priorities. *Major sites such as King Street and Medway Street are being considered for a joint vehicle arrangement with other Kent authorities. King Street car park, Medway Street car park and Park Wood industrial estate are key assets. King Street car park will be demolished and a surface level car park constructed, whilst we seek opportunities for redevelopment of the site. Medway Street is a major revenue provider and any development will need to reflect this. The current market will not provide the returns necessary but this will continue to be reviewed.* We will work with the tenants of Park Wood industrial estate to invest in and improve the estate, which generates considerable income for the Council, mostly through ground rents
- **Community asset transfer** - establishing an effective mechanism and approach for supporting the transfer of community assets where this is appropriate, demonstrating value for money and maximising their use
- ~~**Management & Admin recharges review**~~ – ~~establishing and implementing a simplified, transparent time and cost efficient recharges model that supports informed decision making at all levels of the organisation and enables effective assessment of alternative service delivery models~~
- **Corporate peer review** - a peer challenge involves officers and members from other authorities acting as critical friends, making recommendations on where we could do things better. We are going to use this method to look at our corporate governance and take advice on any improvements we can make

- **More proactive use of Covalent** – embedding the use of Covalent, our performance management software system, so that managers and key officers in the organisation use it to effectively monitor performance, service delivery and risk
- **Other shared services and Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) work** – working with partners, in particular our MKIP local authority partners, to establish closer working arrangements and partnerships in more services.

This is how the priority services and projects for improvement fit in with the 4 improvement workstreams:

| Asset management | Incremental improvement | Transformation | External challenge |
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| Future use of Town Hall Community asset transfer Major assets review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King Street • Medway Street • Park Wood <i>Integrated Transport Strategy</i> | More proactive use of Covalent Management & Admin recharges review <i>Economic Development</i> | Customer services delivery Waste & Recycling ICT Finance Housing <i>Corporate Support</i> <i>Environmental Health</i> Other shared services and Mid Kent Improvement Partnership work Cross organisational collaboration | Revenues & Benefits Planning Parking Transport management Hazlitt Arts Centre Building Control Corporate peer review |

Appendix 2 shows when we plan to carry out this work over the next three years.

More detail on the work to be undertaken on the priority service areas in the Transformation and External challenge workstreams is in Appendix 1.

Governance and Monitoring

The Cabinet own the Council's improvement journey and the Chief Executive is ultimately accountable for delivery of the Improvement Plan. Political leadership is provided by the Leader and the Cabinet. A head of service is responsible for each of the workstreams and enablers that make up the improvement journey detailed above. The Leader, Chief Executive and the appropriate heads of service make up a group that will monitor progress against plan to ensure that any as yet unknown opportunities that would provide greater benefit than the work already planned are not missed and that the services and projects for improvement are re-prioritised as necessary as a result.

This plan will be updated annually to the same corporate planning timetable as the Strategic Plan and MTF5. A progress report will be compiled and sent to Cabinet 6 months after the adoption of the Improvement journeyPlan.

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Future plans for priority service areas in Transformation and External challenge workstreams

| <u>Service area</u> | <u>Longer term</u> | <u>Medium term 2014-16</u> | <u>2013/14</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Waste & Recycling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling 50%+ • New open book waste contract • Refresh strategy in 2015 • <i>Work with SE7 groups of local authorities on maximising the value of waste as a resource</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review staff structures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implement new contract</i> • <i>Maximise recycling over 50% will be achieved</i> • <i>More processes on-line</i> • <i>Implement the commercial waste contract</i> |
| Customer Services delivery (including Contact Centre, Gateway & Corporate Support) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced cost of provision • Greater range of partner provision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect effect of welfare reforms • <i>Make best use of Gateway building</i> • <i>Investigate possible models of customer service delivery across MKIP partners</i> • Reflect effect of waste contract • Determine use of break clause in Gateway contract in 2 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Begin to implement improvements towards our new model of customer service delivery</i> • <i>Agree customer charter and customer care policy following customer centricity review</i> • <i>Implement online forms development or forms package following go live of website</i> • <i>Select other voice activated call assistants if effective</i> • <i>Improve Gateway offer to attract paying partners</i> |
| ICT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fully integrated ICT partnership</i> • <i>Reduce data centres from 3 to 2</i> • <i>Real time replication back up solution in place to off site data centres</i> • <i>Review operational ICT shared service and consider new models for</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>At least 5 service based applications consolidated and moved into the MBC data centre.</i> • <i>Consolidated telephony across all partners</i> • <i>Master data management strategy in place</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ICT Audit function to be streamlined across all partners</i> • <i>Finance, Planning and Environmental Health systems to be consolidated</i> • <i>Procure new shared helpdesk software</i> • <i>Collaborative Mobile phone and Multi function device contracts awarded</i> • <i>Complete Information audits across 3 partners</i> • <i>Agree and introduce Cloud Strategy</i> |

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| | <i>delivery</i> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree and introduce Desktop strategy • Good systems architecture to ensure efficient and secure use of data |
| Hazlitt Arts Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant theatre that people want to go to • Cut subsidy by 50%+ • Increased community participation and involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different governance structure — 2013/14 • Run more like a business • Link to Museum on education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to preferred option put in place performance monitoring arrangements • If the tender process is not successful it will be necessary to increase revenue and reduce cost as set in the Operational Review |
| Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore other opportunities of sharing expert advice</i> • Making sure vision including leisure and business opportunities is delivered in a sensitive way • Effects of Local Development Framework — less planning enforcement — so could move resources to deal with increased levels of development • Skills development — more negotiation and selling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any procurement and other efficiency actions as identified by the Planning Support shared service manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure and implement new ICT system • Shared Planning Support Services (if agreed) — shared service manager to be appointed, structure and processes to be implemented |
| <i>Economic Development</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery of Regeneration and Economic Development Plan</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery of Regeneration and Economic Development Plan</i> • <i>Report on progress</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adopt the Regeneration and Economic Development Plan and begin to deliver actions</i> • <i>Review skills and resources required to deliver the plan</i> |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore options for lower priority projects for economic development to be delivered by other services</i> |
| <i>Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery of the ITS</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agree any addendum to the ITS that might be required</i> • <i>Delivery of the ITS</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adopt Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS)</i> • <i>Further review of P&R operation to determine strategy for new bus contract</i> |
| Revenues & Benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop wider shared service or pursue commercial opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure and change through welfare reform • Decide if we take the saving or use the capacity for income generation • Determine <i>and tackle any</i> effect of Council Tax reforms e.g. possible reduced collection rate • Opportunities through business rate reforms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Responding to the anticipated issues in collection through the Local Council Tax Delivery Scheme and changes to empty properties</i> • <i>Working with key partners to provide residents affected by welfare reform changes with money and debt advice</i> • <i>Reviewing the staffing and structure of the revenues and benefits service to reflect the changing role</i> |
| Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality housing that people want and is accessible to the whole community • Affordable housing delivered to strategy – challenges in achieving this • Good private sector market with choice • Good housing advice that prevents homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare reforms – manage effects on private sector • Improved working with registered providers and private sector landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implement new allocation scheme & monitor impact</i> • <i>Draft and consult on new Homelessness Strategy</i> • <i>Develop a new Affordable Housing supplementary planning document to support the Core Strategy</i> • <i>Review the Housing Strategy following adoption of the Core Strategy</i> • <i>Develop services to respond to the unintended consequences of welfare reform</i> • <i>Implement the revised Empty Homes Strategy</i> • <i>Ensure the new Home Improvement Agency service meets the needs of vulnerable households</i> |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bring forward opportunities for the Council's new investment initiative</i> • <i>Identify & purchase a suitable for use as emergency temporary accommodation</i> • <i>Adopt new grant policy for housing assistance programme</i> |
| <i>Corporate Support</i> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implementation and embedding of any changes in working practices</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Investigate working with Maidstone Prison on Printing</i> • <i>Embed savings and other benefits from the print and post room solution</i> • <i>Investigate viability of Print Room commercialisation</i> • <i>Investigate the possibility of providing services for other partners</i> |
| <i>Environmental Health</i> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shared service and new working practices embedded</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decision made on sharing the service with local authority partners</i> • <i>New staff structure introduced</i> |
| Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the business make informed decisions, manage budgets, commit and measure resources • Investigate model of delivery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Embed the single</i> ICT system across Mid Kent Improvement Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete work on shared service proposal and implement MKIP decision</i> • <i>Improvement to work on statement of accounts through up-skilling staff</i> • <i>Improvements to support for commercialisation through staff training and development</i> • <i>Implementation of credit card module and roll out of greater use of credit cards for small purchases</i> |
| Building Control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model of delivery – trading arm doing work on behalf of private companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify work – less statutory, more trading account • Develop and take advantage of <i>commercial or</i> partnership opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implement way forward – consider commercial opportunities</i> • <i>Continue to break even</i> • <i>Channel shift completed</i> |