

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 21 JANUARY 2014**

**REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Report prepared by Louise Taylor**

**1. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 31 March 2012 to 1 April 2013**

**1.1 Issue for Consideration**

1.1.1 To consider the findings of the Annual Monitoring Report 31 March 2012 to 1 April 13, and to approve the document attached at Appendix A to this report for publication on the Council's website.

**1.2 Recommendation of Head of Planning and Development**

1.2.1 That the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the Annual Monitoring Report 31 March 2012 to 1 April 13, and recommends that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development approves the document (attached at Appendix A) and it be published on the Council's website.

**1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) is prepared in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. It is also a corporate document that is not exclusive to planning.

1.3.2 Maidstone's AMR focuses on monitoring those indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and those that are essential for the monitoring of policies in the local plan. Thus, the AMR comprises:

- An introduction to the Annual Monitoring Report;
- A Maidstone Profile, which demonstrates the wider demographic, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the borough;
- Key Monitoring Indicators, which monitor policies set out in the local plan and they address local issues. A series of indicators monitor the success of the policies in the local plan. The key

indicators monitored in the AMR focus on housing, economic development, the built and natural heritage and transport. The progress of neighbourhood planning in the borough is also monitored. Green Flag Awards and development management statistics have been introduced into the section this year.

- Local plan progress, which includes a review of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) to assess the progress of the timetable for the production of the local plan and identifies any changes required, and a list showing actions taken by the Council under the duty to cooperate;
- A Glossary of Terms to assist the reader with the acronyms used throughout the document.

1.3.3 The AMR draws on a wide range of data from the following sources:

- The 2011 Census, which has become available over the last year
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014
- Kent County Council demography
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Government's Neighbourhood statistics website
- The Environment Agency
- Statistics relating to housing, Gypsy and Traveller and economic development planning permissions are collected, monitored, surveyed and reported by the Spatial Policy department.
- Statistics and information are also compiled by the wider planning department and different departments throughout the council.

1.3.4 The AMR collates and describes statistics for a wide range of topic areas. The key findings from each section of the document are summarised below:

#### Maidstone profile summary

1.3.5 Maidstone Borough's population was recorded as 155,143 in the 2011 Census, made up of 51% females and 49% males. The largest population group is aged 40-49. Over the past ten years the average level of net migration has been an in-migration of 1,271 people per annum.

1.3.6 The ONS has changed the way crime statistics are presented and recategorised offence types. These categories have been defined within the document. In Maidstone Borough the number of violent crimes without an injury increased by 16% and the number of violent

- crimes with an injury fell by nearly 9%. In Park Wood is that levels of antisocial behaviour have fallen by 30% and violent crime has reduced by 40%.
- 1.3.7 The number of people claiming job seekers allowance fell by 16.7% between 2012 and 2013 and the percentage of residents claiming job seekers allowance in Maidstone remains lower than in Kent and Great Britain. Maidstone Borough has a youth unemployment rate of 4.4% which is lower than the national average of 5.8%
- 1.3.8 The average earnings of residents in Maidstone is higher than Kent and similar to the South East, but the income of people who work in Maidstone is about £5,000 lower than residents who commute to work elsewhere. Commuting flows are highest between Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone and Medway.
- 1.3.9 GCSE results have improved, and show a greater achievement in students gaining 5 or more subjects at grades A\* to C. The highest level of qualification of all residents aged 16 and over was recorded in the Census 2011. In Maidstone, a quarter of residents have at least a degree level of qualification.
- 1.3.10 Maidstone's urban wards contain areas with high levels of deprivation. Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Area Action Plan work carried out in Park Wood and a residents' perception survey revealed positive results. A number of recommendations have been made for the continuation of work in Park Wood and the roll out of Neighbourhood Action Planning across the borough, starting with Shepway North and South wards, this commenced in April 2013.
- 1.3.11 During 2012/13 house prices have increased but the price of flats has remained constant. House sales have decrease from 2,096 in 2012/13 to 1,987 in 2012/13. An income of £40,600 is required to buy a low priced property in Maidstone town and an income of between £57,100 and £67,100 is required to buy a low price property in the rural areas of the Borough. In contrast an income of £14,800 is required for a social rent property anywhere in the Borough. The mean household income in the Borough is £42,000.
- 1.3.12 The Len Valley has been recently designated as a new Local Nature Reserve.

#### Key monitoring indicators summary

- 1.3.13 The most revealing key housing indicator this year is the fact that Maidstone Borough does not have a 5 year housing land supply. The South East Plan (2009) set a target for Maidstone Borough of 11,080 dwellings for 2006/07 to 2025/26. A recent Court of Appeal case (St

Albans v Hunston Properties, 20 November 2013) has clarified that it is not acceptable to use the South East Plan housing target for assessing five year housing land supply. Housing requirements for the purpose of calculating a five year supply should be the full, objectively assessed needs for housing which is an unconstrained figure. Recently the Strategic Housing Market Assessment has found that the borough's objectively assessed need for is 19,600 new dwellings between 2012/13 to 2030/31 (although this has not been approved yet by the Cabinet). The borough council is now working in cooperation with other local authorities to assess whether the housing need can be met before setting a housing target to cover the plan period 2011/12 to 2030/31. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has identified possible sites for housing and employment and these sites will be subject to public consultation with the local plan as a whole in 2014. It is important to allocate new housing land as soon as possible to minimise the risk of inappropriate development.

1.3.14 On 1 April 2013, the Council has a 4.2 year housing land supply when assessed against the South East Plan target of 11,080 dwellings for the period 2006/07 to 2025/26. The Council has a 2 year housing land supply when assessed against the objectively assessed need of 19,600 dwellings between 2011/12 to 2030/31.

1.3.15 85% of dwellings were completed on previously developed land during 2012/13, the high levels of housing completions on previously developed land are not expected to continue. As a result of the moratorium on the release of greenfield housing sites allocated in the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 being revoked in March 2013, the number of planning applications for dwellings on greenfield sites has increased. Maidstone Borough is also vulnerable to inappropriate development on greenfield sites being approved at appeal because of the lack of a 5 year housing supply. It is therefore important to establish a 5 year housing land supply and to adopt a local plan with housing land allocations, in suitable locations, as soon as possible.

1.3.16 Maidstone continues to make best use of its available land, 80% of dwellings were constructed at densities in excess of 30 units per hectare. Of all planning permissions granted in 2012/13, only 34% of dwellings were affordable units, below the 40% target specified on policy AH1. The decrease in affordable housing permissions and completions indicates a decline in the viability of affordable housing in current market conditions. 79% of affordable units completed fell into the social rent category, against the policy target of a minimum of 60% of all affordable housing units built. Eight local needs affordable dwellings were granted planning permission during 2012/13.

- 1.3.17 There has been a net gain of employment floorspace in the borough overall. 63% of employment floorspace was completed on previously developed land, this compares to 72% in 2011/12 and 88% in 2010/11. This downward trend is a cause for concern as it shows that regeneration is not occurring at the rate it has done previously. Overall, there has been a net loss in the total amount of completed floorspace for town centre uses during 2012/13, within the defined town centre boundary and throughout the borough.
- 1.3.18 During 2012/13 the Environment Agency objected to 10 planning applications on flood defence grounds and only one of these was granted. The approval was subject to conditions to ensure that flood risk is minimised.
- 1.3.19 Mote Park has received a Green Flag award for the first time, as well as being voted third in the country in the Green Flag People's Choice Awards 2013.
- 1.3.20 This year Loose and Headcorn parish councils have begun work on their neighbourhood plans and Harrietsham parish council has consulted on their draft plan. The Council has a dedicated web page to keep the public informed of the progress of all neighbourhood plans.
- 1.3.21 Development Management statistics revealed that 88% of applications were dealt with within statutory timescales. The Council had a success rate of 76% in defending refusals at appeal, the highest success rate in the last 5 years.

#### Local plan progress summary

- 1.3.22 The local plan progress section highlights the large amount of work that has been carried out on the local plan and its evidence base over the last year. The Local Development Scheme indicates that Regulation 18 (Preparation) public consultation on the Maidstone Borough local plan would take place in October/November 2013. This consultation did not take place as scheduled because two key workstreams were highlighted as critical to ensuring a robust evidence base to support the local plan at public consultation, namely the Strategic Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA/SEDLAA) and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Once analysis of this work is complete the council will be in a position to finalise the local plan in draft form for public consultation in Spring 2014.
- 1.3.23 Under the Council's duty to cooperate (set out in the Localism Act 2011), discussions have been held with partner organisations to consider joint approaches to plan making and to communicate on cross-boundary and county-wide issues, including but not limited to

adjoining authorities, infrastructure providers, the development industry and Kent County Council.

1.3.24 Overall the AMR has proved to be an invaluable tool, used to monitor local planning policies but also to record historic indicators that assist the public in understanding the profile and achievements of the borough. It is a compendium of statistics and information for Maidstone.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Although guidance on preparing Annual Monitoring Reports has been withdrawn by the government and the duty to submit the document to the Secretary of State has been removed, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 the Council is still required to produce a monitoring report for local people on locally determined key issues.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.6 The AMR monitors the success of a range of policies that impact on corporate objectives set out in the Maidstone Community Strategy 2009 – 2020 Your community, Our priority refreshed July in 2013 and the Strategic Plan.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 There are no risks arising directly from this report. The AMR describes the risks associated with not having a 5 year housing land supply and an up to date local plan. It conveys how risks to delays in the local plan timetable can be mitigated.

1.8 Other Implications

1.8.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	

- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management


1.8.2 Financial and staffing – there are general costs involved in the production of the AMR, such as printing, but these can be accommodated within the LDF budget. The AMR has been produced within the existing staff structure.

1.9 Relevant Documents

None

1.9.1 Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Monitoring Report 2012/13

1.9.2 Background Documents

None

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

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

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This is a Key Decision because: .....

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Wards/Parishes affected: .....

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