

PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Monday 29 January 2024
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), Cleator, Conyard, Mrs Grigg (Vice-Chairman), Jones, Kimmance, McKenna, Spooner and Trzebinski

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

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|--|---------|
| 1. Apologies of Absence | |
| 2. Notification of Substitute Members | |
| 3. Urgent Items | |
| 4. Notification of Visiting Members | |
| 5. Disclosures by Members and Officers | |
| 6. Disclosures of Lobbying | |
| 7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information | |
| 8. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 January 2024 | |
| 9. Forward Plan Relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference | 1 - 7 |
| 10. Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update | 8 - 28 |
| 11. Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group | 29 - 39 |

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on 25 January 2024). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

Issued on Friday 19 January 2024

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899**.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Blackmore (Chairman), Cleator, Conyard, Mrs Grigg, Jeffery, Kimmance, McKenna, Spooner and Trzebinski
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Paul Cooper, Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

99. MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Committee observed a minute's silence to mark the sad passing of Mrs Marion Ring, a former Mayor of Maidstone between 2019 to 2021, and Local Ward Member for Shepway North between 2003 to 2023.

100. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jones.

101. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Jeffery was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Jones.

102. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that there were two urgent updates, to Item 10 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029 – Capital Programme and Item 11 – Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan, which contributed to the items considerations.

103. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

104. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

105. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

106. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

107. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

108. FORWARD PLAN RELATING TO THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference, be noted.

109. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024 TO 2029 - CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report, stating that the two capital schemes within the Committee's remit for the next municipal year related to the previous Medway Street Car Park decision and Greening and Lighting Strategy, as part of the Town Centre Strategy (TCS). The urgent update included a reduced figure for the latter, as until the TCS had been approved it was difficult to include which projects would be coming forward.

The Bridges Gyratory System had been removed from the capital programme as additional grant funding had been received, with finalised designs in place; the project was awaiting Kent County Council approval.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member stated that whilst the Integrated Transport Strategy may require elements of capital funding, it was to be funded through the Council's revenue budget. The funding allocated to Medway Street Car Park included the provision of electric vehicle charging points, but it was hoped that the scheme's total cost was less than the £195,000 allocated.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET: That

1. The capital programme 2024/25 onwards as set out in Appendix B to the report, be agreed; and
2. It be noted that agreement to recommendation 1 above will be subject to the prudential borrowing limit which will be recommended to Council as part of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.

110. STAPLEHURST CONSERVATION APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report and outlined the urgent update provided. No adverse comments had been received from the Parish Council or Local Ward Members.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER: That

1. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Staplehurst Conservation Area be approved for public consultation;
2. Delegated powers be given to the Head of Development Management to undertake the necessary statutory requirements to undertake public consultation for the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan' and

3. The following work streams be explored (in accordance with the draft Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan report attached at Appendix 1 to the report):
 - a. An Article 4 Direction;
 - b. A Design Code centred on the Staplehurst Conservation Area; and
 - c. Extending the boundaries of the Staplehurst Conservation Area.

111. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 6.46 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 JANUARY 2024 TO 30 APRIL 2024

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key and non-key decisions which the Cabinet or Cabinet Members expect to take during the next four-month period.

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

1. Results in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £250,000; or
2. Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough

The current Cabinet Members are:

 <p>↵ Councillor David Burton Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910</p>	 <p>Councillor Paul Cooper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070</p>	 <p>Councillor John Perry Cabinet Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741</p>
 <p>Councillor Claudine Russell Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Councillor Patrik Garten Cabinet Member for Environmental Services PatrikGarten@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 807907</p>	 <p>Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid Cabinet Member for Housing and Health LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000</p>

Anyone wishing to make representations about any of the matters listed below may do so by contacting the relevant officer listed against each decision, within the time period indicated.

Under the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution, a Key Decision or a Part II decision may not be taken, unless it has been published on the forward plan for 28 days or it is classified as urgent:

The law and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key and part II decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in the Forward Plan.

Copies of the Council's constitution, forward plan, reports and decisions may be inspected at Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the [Council's website](#).

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Cabinet which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on the [Council's Website](#), or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number **01622 602899** for further details.

or

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Cabinet Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>River Medway Basin Task Force</p> <p>To provide information to Cabinet about the costs and benefits of setting up a River Medway Basin Task Force for consideration so that Cabinet can decide if they want to set up a Task Force</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	24 Jan 2024	No	No Open		River Medway Basin Task Force	<p>Karen Britton</p> <p>karenbritton@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
<p> Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group</p> <p>A report on the options to for the successor to the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership.</p>	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	30 Jan 2024	Yes	No	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 29 Jan 2024	Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group	<p>Tom Gilbert</p> <p>tomgilbert@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	7 Feb 2024	No	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update	<p>James Wilderspin</p> <p>Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
7						29 Jan 2024 Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 30 Jan 2024 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 5 Feb 2024 Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 6 Feb 2024		jameswilderspin@maidstone.gov.uk
<p>Over-arching Conservation Management Plan</p> <p>The over-arching Conservation Area Management Plan has been drafted to address concerns that there was limited guidance on conservation areas that</p>	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	Not before 6 Mar 2024	Yes	No	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024	Over-arching Conservation Management Plan	<p>Janice Gooch</p> <p>JaniceGooch@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
do not have either a conservation area appraisal or management plan.								
Town Centre Greening and Lighting UK Shared Prosperity Fund ∞	Leader of the Council	Leader of the Council	Before 15 Mar 2024	Yes	No	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024	Town Centre Greening and Lighting UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Katie Exon, Jennifer Stevens Head of Property and Leisure, Head of Environmental Services & Public Realm katieexon@maidstone.gov.uk, jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk
3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024 Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory	3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Paul Holland, Adrian Lovegrove Head of Finance paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
6						Committee 5 Mar 2024 Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Mar 2024 Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Mar 2024		
Community Infrastructure Round 1 Process Review and Round 2 Bid Prospectus and Programme Report on the 1st round of CIL bidding and revised prospectus for the 2nd round of bidding with timetable/programme	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	20 Mar 2024	Yes	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024	Community Infrastructure Round 1 Process Review and Round 2 Bid Prospectus and Programme	Rob Jarman, Carole Williams Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk, carolewilliams@maidstone.gov.uk
Key Performance	Cabinet	Leader of	20 Mar	No	No	Housing, Health	Key	Carly Benville,

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>Indicators</p> <p>Key performance indicators are reviewed annually. This report proposes the KPIs for the period 2024/25.</p> <p>10</p>		the Council	2024		Open	<p>and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 30 Jan 2024</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 6 Feb 2024</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 5 Feb 2024</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024</p>	Performance Indicators	<p>Anna Collier</p> <p>carlybenville@maidstone.gov.uk, annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee

29 January 2024

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	16 January 2024
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	29 January 2024
Housing, Health, and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	30 January 2024
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	5 February 2024
Communities, Leisure, and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	6 February 2024
Cabinet	7 February 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Anna Collier Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	James Wilderspin, Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This is the biannual report on the implementation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. The last update report was published in July 2023.

This report includes updates on (i) the Council’s decarbonisation progress in achieving Net Zero by 2030, (ii) updates on the new strategic direction for targeting net zero

housing and transportation, and (ii) key achievements and an overview of each action's status of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan (**Appendix 1**).

Purpose of Report

Recommendation

This report asks Committee to consider the following recommendations:

1. That the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee recommended to Cabinet to note the strategic considerations for tackling net zero borough wide and action plan updates shown at **Appendix 1**.

Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Update

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve all its priorities.</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>Delivering the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan supports the achievement of the Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected cross cutting objective. It also supports cross cutting objectives of Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved as delivery of actions have the opportunity to improve the health of residents in the longer term and reduce residents' energy costs.</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Risk Management	<p>Already covered in the risk section (see paragraph 5)</p>	<p>Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance</p>
Financial	<p>The specific costed proposals will be funded from within existing budgets. Future changes to policies and strategies will need to be assessed to understand the impact to ensure they remain affordable during the year and in future years as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer & Finance Team</p>

Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Legal	Local authorities have a duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 in exercising their functions to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Council's Biodiversity and Climate Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the statutory duty.	Legal Team
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes. Some individual actions may have implications in the future and the appropriate review and documentations will be completed as required	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No implications	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Procurement	Some actions will have implications and the appropriate procurement exercises will be undertaken	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The updates in this report and recommendations will support the continued implementation of the	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. The last update was July 2023.
- 2.2 Since the last update report, officers have explored options to focus the Council’s Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy in discussion with Cabinet and with consideration to PACs feedback over the achievability and impact of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan. These included ways forward in achieving net-zero housing borough-wide, progressing sustainable integrated transport, solar energy generation investment, local energy action plans, and biodiversity enhancements.
- 2.3 The largest emission sources in the borough are from domestic electricity and gas consumption which accounts for nearly one third (32%) of total CO2e emissions in Maidstone Borough (216ktCO2e in 2021), and transportation which accounts for 52% of total CO2e emission in Maidstone Borough (354ktCO2e in 2021).
- 2.4 The focus and priorities of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy has changed to areas where reducing the largest impacts of the Borough’s carbon emissions can be made.
 - I. Net Zero Housing - Progress with looking at how the Council can improve the condition of domestic homes, looking at gaps and how we add value through the potential new energy officer role, while also looking at the Council’s own buildings and growing housing stock.
 - II. Sustainable Integrated Transport - To focus on ‘future focused transport innovation workshop’ for Councillors to develop a shared vision, expand awareness of innovative transportation solutions, enabling long-term sustainable transport planning, and building political commitment for environmentally friendly transportation, with preliminary work to bring data/inputs from a variety of stakeholder views (including young people) to the workshop for consideration.
 - III. Develop a ‘Parking and Borough wide EV strategy’ - to explore partnerships, provisions for on street infrastructure, that align with national climate goals, reduce range anxiety and stimulate the EV market, and look for opportunity to combine it with the town centre lighting strategy to include on street EV chargers.
 - IV. Renewable Energy - to maximising the renewable energy generation on MBC estate.
 - V. Create a Planning policy framework for solar farms in the local plan - creating zoning for renewable energy generation for longer term policy and allocated land as part of the local plan review process.

2.5 A summary of progress for the five areas are outlined in this report.

MBC Decarbonisation

2.6 The Council has set an ambitious net zero by 2030 with substantial financial commitment already set aside. As outline in [Appendix 2](#) of the July 2023 Action Plan Update report, the most substantive impact the Council can directly have on reducing Carbon Emissions are of its own operations, buildings, fleet, and contracts.

Carbon Footprint

2.7 The Carbon Footprint of the council’s buildings and fleet is updated twice a year using automated energy data by Laser Energy. The Council’s dashboard is used to calculate MBC’s scope 1 and 2 emissions (Reporting on scope 3 emissions is still under investigation). This process helps to identify priority building upgrades and fleet replacement priorities, enabling officers to accurately monitor progress/changes in carbon emissions of the Council. The dashboard also shows the Boroughs historic emissions by sector, which support officers on Borough wide priorities in keeping with the National Government’s 2050 Net Zero commitment.

2.8 The Council’s total CO2 emissions for scope 1 and scope 2 have decreased overall by 10.4% when comparing financial year 2021/22 to 2022/23. Scope 1 decreased by 15.1% and scope 2 increased by 3.7%. In both years, the largest source of scope 1 emissions is from the Maidstone Leisure Centre, accounting for 51.1% off total emissions. The second largest cause of emissions is Maidstone House (17.6%).

2.9 The emissions produced from our Depot’s fleet/vehicles was not available for tracking until January 2022, therefore data is missing for the most part of FY 2021/22. However, in 2022/23, the largest cause of emissions was the heavy-duty waste collection vehicles used for our Commercial Waste service.

Figure 1: The Council’s Carbon Footprint Summary



Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Application

- 2.10 Officers have committed considerable time to preparing and submitting large scale bids for public sector funding to decarbonise the Council's estate as it is in the direct control of the Council.
- 2.11 In November officers submitted a largescale bid for Phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for £3,126,536 to retrofit Maidstone House. Included in the bid were provisions for developing detailed designs, upgrading the heating system, replacing the glazing, fully insulating the building, upgrading all the lights to LED, and installing Solar PV on the Link business terrace roof. The preparation of this bid included a complex and technical set of documents and schematics, energy saving calculations, costing and quotes evidence, project management programme, and risks register. The submission of the bid is a first come first serve organised by [Salix](#), where applicants need to submit a bid as soon as the portal opens to be in for a chance to be considered. Officers were able to submit the application in under 4 minutes and are currently replying to technical queries and developing the project programme with Salix. Members will be notified should we be successful with the grant application.

Fleet Decarbonisation

- 2.12 The Depot has undergone substantial upgrades to ensure it has the capacity to transition to an electric fleet in line with a direct aspect in the Council's control to reduce emissions from the fleet. The electricity capacity of the Depot was increased by 277kVA by connecting to a nearby substation with minimal ground works needed. The increased capacity has enabled the installation of an additional x10 EV chargers in October 2023, bringing the total to 31 plug in charging points installed at the Depot.
- 2.13 There is now sufficient capacity to charge the growing number of EVs on site for the medium term, which currently stands at 11 EVs with 2 more ordered for 2024, out of a total of 65 vehicles in the fleet (replacement vehicles are selected as per the [Green Fleet Strategy](#)).

Domestic Housing Net Zero

- 2.14 Domestic electricity and gas consumption accounts for nearly one third (32%) of total emissions (216ktCO₂e in 2021). The UK government's aim is to have 600,000 heat pumps a year being installed by 2028, just 55,000 were installed in the UK in 2022. In regard to Action 2.1 to "Explore grants schemes for residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation, and low carbon heating systems," Officers have now completed a net zero scenario for existing housing across the borough, using Parity Projects software. The scenario can be used to develop a cost-effective retrofit programme that aligns with the Borough's carbon reduction targets and gives the Council pathways for every property in the borough to identify the lowest cost route to Net Zero.
- 2.15 The domestic housing net zero scenario shows an average mean cost of £23,400 per house for achieving net zero across the borough, and a mean of £7,800 per house to achieve a minimum Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) C rating. These findings can be used to target specify parts of the borough for investment, or heat pump prioritisation, and can be assessed in

terms of low-income and priority areas. Officers will use the scenario data to develop strategies, identify energy-efficient retrofitting opportunities, and create strategic areas to support Net Zero domestic housing across the borough, seek partnerships, and open up opportunities for large scale funding to support residents reduce their utility costs.

Transportation Net Zero

2.16 Across Kent, Carbon emissions are generally maintaining a downward trend in terms of tonnes of CO₂ per capita. Across North Kent transport emissions comprise the largest component (39%) of emissions followed by domestic (29%). Across the borough of Maidstone, carbon emissions have steadily decreased from 1044ktCO₂ in 2005 to 677ktCO₂ in 2021. Carbon emissions from transport in Maidstone have showed a slower rate of decline, reducing from 442ktCO₂ in 2005 to 354ktCO₂ in 2021.

2.17 In respect to Action 1.5 to “Deliver an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for the borough that provides sufficient EV charging infrastructure” there are currently 66 public charge points in Maidstone and 27 of these are 50 kWh devices. On a per population basis, Dartford has the highest rate of provision in North Kent with 73.6 EV charge points per 100,000 people, whilst Maidstone has 37.3 EV charge points per 100,000 people. Plug-in vehicle ownership is steadily increasing in Maidstone. The zero-emission vehicle mandate requires 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold in England to be zero emission by 2030, increasing to 100% by 2035. Maidstone is expected to require 1,377 public EV charge point sockets by 2030 and 2,735 by 2035 to meet the increase in demand from zero emission vehicle users.

2.18 In respect to Action 1.1 to “Update the Integrated Transport Strategy, and work towards a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan” Kent County Council (KCC) is currently consulting on the Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP). The KCWIP is part of the Government’s Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan process. It has a 10-year timeframe but is a ‘living document’ subject to regular review. At present Maidstone Borough Council is preparing for the development of its own LCWIP to cover the Borough. This will be complementary to the KCWIP when it is developed and support the delivery of the active travel actions in Maidstone’s Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.

2.19 The Quality Bus Partnerships has been replaced with Local Bus Focus Groups. Establishing a new Local Bus Focus Group as outlined in the KCC structure within the BSIP, would align with Action 1.8 to “Actively participate in Quality Bus Partnership and ensure that the borough’s infrastructure is bus friendly” as well as supporting several actions in the plan to reduce borough carbon emissions and pollution, while supporting public transportation.

Other Achievements in the Action Plan

Climate Emergency UK Scorecard of the implementation of MBC’s Action Plan

2.20 In October 2023, Maidstone Borough Council was [scored joint 35th place out of 186 Councils](#), and 3rd in Kent on the implementation of our Action

Plan. Climate Emergency UK (CEUK) has assessed all UK Councils on the actions they've taken towards net zero. This is a second phase update on CEUKs 2021 scoring of [Councils Plans](#). Scores across the country were low with the district average score of 29% with Maidstone scoring 35%.

2.21 In summary, MBC has been recognised for its actions and has scored well relatively to other authorities, however several actions were inaccurately scored or missed by CEUK and the full breadth of MBC progress is not completely captured by this scoring. For more information please see CEUK's [Press Release](#). Officers will take these scores on board as part of prioritising aspects of the Action Plan that scored poorly.

Maidstone's Eco Hub

2.22 The Eco Hub hosted 14 events and talks to raise awareness and create positive behaviour change on climate action, energy efficiency, sustainable living, biodiversity loss, and the cost of living crisis, and partnered with over 24 local sustainable businesses, community groups, and charities.

2.23 1,926 visitors came into the Eco Hub over 17 opening days, with an average of 113 users per day. This is a 121% increase in users of the Eco Hub in 2023 when compared to the 2022 pilot project.

2.24 In partnership with The Mall Maidstone, Officer's entered Maidstone's Eco Hub for the '[best local authority/private sector partnership](#)' Revo award, and Maidstone's Eco Hub is one of three projects that was shortlisted for this national award.

2.25 Officers in the climate change team also worked with the communications team, waste team, and welfare officers to run a community support roadshow which visited three locations in the Borough to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis.

Solar Projects

2.26 Officers have identified seven potential solar PV projects on Council buildings to maximise the renewable energy generated on these buildings for direct use by the Council cutting utility bills and reducing the Council's carbon emissions with a relatively fast payback period for investment (outline in Appendix 2 of the July 2023 Action Plan Update report). Progress on these projects includes:

- Submission of the PSDS bid to include provision for a 16 kWp solar PV array to be installed on the Link Building business terrace roof, combined with green roof. Pending success of bid.
- Preplanning advice to install a 122kWp solar PV canopy over the Mote Park Car Park to be private wired and used to reduce costs of the Leisure Centre. Pending Preplanning advice.
- Investigation into doubling the existing 60 kWp array on the Parkwood Depot roof top to private wire for use of the depot, charge the growing number of Electric Vehicles in the fleet. Pending Investment / Council Decision.
- Lockmeadow Leisure Complex has the largest capacity of MBC properties for solar PV instillation of 995 kWp over 4 roof locations. Pending Council Decision.

LED light upgrades

2.27 Upgrading to LED lighting can have a substantial decrease in utility costs and generally have a very fast pay back period. Several MBC buildings have now been upgraded to fully LED lighting, including:

- The Depot's lights have all been replaced in November 2023 to LEDs.
- Maidstone House Lights have all been replaced with LEDs during the summer 2023.
- The Crematorium Chapel lights have all been replaced with LED lights in Autumn 2023.
- The Elephant House Cob Tree, all the lights have been replaced with LEDs.

2.28 Parking Services remain committed to 100% LED lighting in MBC car parks by the end of 2025. Lamps are being replaced with LED lights as and when they require replacement.

Tree Planting and Rewilding

2.29 Officers are continuing to seek partnerships for tree planting and rewilding projects. In Autumn 2022 and spring 2023 the Council' planted 5,800 trees as part of several partnerships with landowners and Parish Councils ([details here](#)). This planting season, officers have identified a number of potential projects and partners with an estimated 6,000 trees to be planted in Spring 2024. Officers are also supporting the preparation for mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which came into law in January 2024, to find alternative funding for continued tree planting and rewilding projects.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund

2.30 Climate Officers have led the organisation and distribution of the Rural England Prosperity Fund. MBC was allocated £539,728 to spend between April 2023 and March 2025 to be awarded to projects for rural communities across the borough. Officers supported applicants and supported the panel with technical inputs. Phase 1 of the funding saw grants awarded as listed below:

- Staplehurst Free Church (SFC) which received £45,000;
- Teston Parish Council which received- £45,000
- Hollingbourne Parish Council - phase 1 funding £22,466 / phase 2 funding allocation of £16,906
- Boxley Parish Council - phase 1 funding £22,466 / phase 2 funding allocation of £32,532

2.31 Officers are now in the process of rolling out the second phase of funding, open on Monday 27th of November to Monday 22nd of January 2024, and supported applicants through a free Introductory webinar held on Wednesday 6 December to highlight key information, provide details of phase one's successful projects, and answer any questions, as well as through the [Sustainable Business Directory](#) that showcases an array of eco-businesses to support upgrades and retrofits.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 That the Planning Infrastructure Economic Development Committee Policy Advisory Committee receive these updates every six months and are recommended to note updates on implementation to ensure ongoing progress towards tackling net zero borough wide.
- 3.2 The Committee could ask to receive an update more or less frequently. However, this is not recommended as less frequently wouldn't offer the oversight and more regular updates wouldn't allow sufficient time for substantial work to be undertaken.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee recommended to Cabinet to note the strategic considerations for tackling net zero borough wide and action plan updates shown at **Appendix 1**.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 Responding to the climate emergency is a key corporate risk. Ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the Action plan is a key mitigation as the annual review of the action plan is ensures continued accountability.
- 5.2 Understanding the costs associated with achieving net-zero and allocate resources effectively, prioritise initiatives, putting appropriate capacity to seek funding, and set realistic targets and timelines.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Policy and Resources Committee adopted the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan on 21st October 2020. Progress has been regularly reported to Policy Advisory Committees and the Cabinet.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Continue to update the implementation of the Action Plan, monitor progress, and updates to members.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix 1:** Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan Implementation Status

Biodiversity and Climate Change *Successes*

Placed Joint
35th
186 Councils

on the implementation of our Action Plan
by Climate Emergency UK and
placed second in Kent



Carbon reduction in scope
1 and 2 emissions from
2021/22-2022/23



Largely due to a reduction
in emissions from the
Leisure centre.



of our fleet upgraded to EV's

54



Officers and elected members
carbon literacy trained
with 3 more training days
booked for early 2024



Climate change newsletter
subscribers doubled in 2023

31

Plug in charging points
installed at the depot



Maidstone residents installing solar panels on
their property through the 2023 Solar Together
Scheme compared with the 2022 scheme.

4

Community organisations provided funding
for carbon reduction projects through the
Rural England Prosperity Fund,
with an expected eight more organisations
to be awarded funding in 2024



1,926

Visitors to Maidstone's
Eco Hub



500

Eco Bags given to
Maidstone residents



6,000

Trees to be planted
in winter 2023/24

Our main offices,
Maidstone House,
the Depot,
and the Crematorium
upgraded to fully LED



£3,126,536

of funding bid for to retrofit Maidstone House



Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
Active Travel and Green Transportation							
Action 1.1 Update the Integrated Transport Strategy, and work towards a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to prioritise walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Alison Broom William Cornall Rob Jarman Karen Britton Mark Egerton Tom Gilbert	Business as usual. In September 2023 a report was taken to PIED PAC (06/09/23) on the Council's response to the KCC Consultation on Local Transport Plan 5. It stated that a review of the Integrated Transport Strategy should be commenced and cover the period to 2050. No timeframe to commence this work was given. Funding has been secured for the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the Borough and the work is currently out for tender. If the tender is successful this work aims for completion in July 24. Fundamental review of the ITS will be undertaken upon completion of the Local Plan Review.	NA	Early 24	Across timeline to 2030	On track
Action 1.2 Deliver policies that enable infrastructure for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low carbon transportation, Active travel, and that Facilitates high quality public transport connectivity in new developments and existing communities. 	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Alison Broom William Cornall Rob Jarman Karen Britton Mark Egerton Tom Gilbert	From Authority Monitoring report 2022-23: Indicator M48: Projects remain on track to be delivered within the broad time periods identified within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. In total 18% of the actions within the ITS have been rated as red in terms of delivery, with the remainder being 27% amber and 55% green. This has meant there has been a minor increase in red actions due to worsening delivery in the past year. This is felt to be a temporary anomaly caused by changes in Government policy around public transport areas, such as buses, and general low recovery in bus patronage following the Covid-19 pandemic. It is the ambition of the Council to undertake a full review of the Integrated Transport Strategy following the Local Plan Review. Partial updates have been proposed as part of the Local Plan Review.	Percentage change of low carbon transportation, active travel, and public transport	2017	Across timeline to 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
Action 1.3 Identify low carbon transportation, active travel, and public transport indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation of sustainable transport policies.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Alison Broom William Cornall Rob Jarman Karen Britton Mark Egerton Tom Gilbert	See response to Action 1.2.	Percentage change of low carbon transportation, active travel, and public transport	2017	Across timeline to 2030	On track
Action 1.5 Deliver an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for the borough that provides sufficient EV charging infrastructure to support the transition to EVs and reduces range anxiety, with consideration of changing and new emerging technologies.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Jen Stevens	Waiting for KCCs review and guidance before starting development of Maidstone Borough EV Strategy, which is expected to be delivered later in 2024. EV public charge points have increased slowly compared to national average in Maidstone. 37 devices in Oct 2019 to 66 devices in January 2023 below the 55.7 average for England. This is 37.3 Devices per 100,000 people in Maidstone compared to Folkestone and Hythe have 106.3, Dartford have 73.6, and Dover have 70.3 Devices per 100,000 people.	Total devices in Maidstone: 66 Devices per 100,000 people: 37.3 below the 55.7 average for England Total 50kWh or rapid devices: 27	Late 2024	2025	On track
Action 1.6 Facilitate a move to electric taxis by providing nine rapid charge points in total by 2025, and twelve rapid charge points by 2030.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore Lorraine Neale	Officers are working with KCC to look at the feasibility of installing a further 2 rapid charging points at Sittingbourne Road car park. Investigation with Swarco is ongoing to look at cost electrical connection work to see if the location is within budget. If the project goes ahead the legal agreement will be the same terms as with the Pudding Lane chargers. It is also suggested that one of the 2 bays served by the charger is open for general public access, and one is reserved for taxis. If Sittingbourne Road car park chargers are installed this would bring total to 4 of required 9 by 2024.	Number of Electric Vehicle Charging Points Installed	2023	9 by 2025 12 by 2030	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
	And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee						
Action 1.7 Work with the taxi trade to find solutions to licencing that will encourage gradual business led shift to EVs' and promote greener accreditation and campaigns to support taxi trade to move to EVs.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Claudine Russell Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore Lorraine Neale	This is a joint Kent project and Kent Taxi Licencing meetings continue to be held every quarter. Officers are supporting KCC with developing district net zero plans in terms of target/deadlines/progress for taxis in relation to EVs. Solutions under investigation, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A switch that all new taxis licenced should be Euro 6 compliant, need to follow government guidance so that drivers are subject to changes in requirement at the same time by all licencing offices, so drivers don't switch where they licence. • Requirement for new and reregistered taxi must be euro 6 compliant. • Green taxi scheme for modest incentive, 	Number of EV taxi	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track
Action 1.8 Actively participate in Quality Bus Partnership and ensure that the borough's infrastructure is bus friendly.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic	Tom Gilbert Duncan Haynes	The Council has been informed that KCC are no longer supporting Quality Bus Partnerships and are promoting the development by Boroughs of Local Bus Focus Groups. The Council is actively investigating the development of a successor organisation to the Quality Bus Partnership with a	Improvement in Borough Air Quality	n/a	Across timeline to 2030	Action to be revised

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
	Development Policy Advisory Committee		<p>decision to be taken by members in the new year the 'Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group' report going to PIEDPAC 29-1-2024.</p> <p>The air quality action plan has now been agreed by cabinet – Environmental Health officers and William Cornall are due to meet the area manager for Arriva to discuss the makeup of the Arriva fleet which has improved recently and the potential to ensure that the least polluting buses are routed on upper stone street (the AQMA).</p> <p>This Action will be updated when a way forward is determined.</p>				
Generating Renewable Energy							
Action 3.1 Ensure Sustainability DPD as part of larger Development Plan requires on-site renewables on all types of new developments and identify indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Rob Jarman Karen Britton Mark Egerton Thom Hoang	<p>The Planning Team are leading on the development of the Design and Sustainability Development Plan Documents. The timeframe and details for this action are dependent on the completion of these documents.</p> <p>The latest DPD version included the following draft policies which meets this action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - D&S DPD SB1: Sustainable Design and Construction Overarching Requirements - D&S DPD SB2: Minimising Greenhouse Gas emissions in New Development - D&S DPD SB3: Passive Design of Buildings <p>There is no further update at this stage.</p>	Percentage of onsite renewable energy generation in new developments 10% adopted standard	2022	Adoption expected 2025	On track
Adapting to Climate Change							
Action 5.1 Deliver policy as part of design and sustainability DPD and future Development Plan evolution for long term climate change adaptation in new developments to flooding, heatwaves, and	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy	Rob Jarman Mark Egerton Thom Hoang	<p>The latest DPD version included a set of draft policies which meet this action.</p> <p>There is no further update at this stage.</p>	NA	2022	2025	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
drought and ensure longer term climate impacts are being considered as part of planning and policy decisions. Identify indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation.	Advisory Committee						
Enhancing and Increasing Biodiversity							
Action 6.1 Monitor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to adopted 20% standard.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Mark Egerton Thom Hoang	Within the emerging LPR, Policy LPRSP14A (Natural Environment) contains a requirement for 20% BNG subject to other considerations. Once adopted, this requirement regarding the 20% BNG will be monitored.	Percentage of planning applications meeting Biodiversity Net Gain 20% adopted standard	2024	Across timeline to 2030	Not yet due
Action 6.2 Ensure sustainable urban drainage schemes (SuDS) maximise biodiversity potential.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Mark Egerton Thom Hoang	Within the emerging LPR, Policy LPRSP14C (Climate Change) contains a requirement for SUDS provision. The draft Policy ON5 (Sustainable Drainage Systems) in the emerging D&S DPD goes further and contains requirements to maximise biodiversity potential of SUDS.	Percentage of planning applications meeting Biodiversity Net Gain 20% adopted standard	2024	Across timeline to 2030	Not yet due
Action 6.3 Develop Supplementary Planning Documents for Garden community and other strategic development sites that ensure are exemplar for biodiversity and deliver semi natural open space.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Mark Egerton Thom Hoang	This work will take place following the adoption of the Local Plan Review. It is intended that SPDs are produced for the key strategic development sites once the LPR is adopted.	NA	2024	Across timeline to 2030	Not yet due

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
29 Action 6.4 Enhance and expand wetland coverage across the Borough to support nutrient neutrality, flood prevention, and enhance biodiversity.	Councillor David Burton And Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee And Councillor Patrik Garten Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	Mark Green Rob Jarman James Wilderspin	Officers are preparing to go out to tender for specialist expansion and desilting of several MBC wetland and pond areas (see July report for further details). Works in parks and on MBC land is planned to commence in autumn 2024. Officers are working with South East Rivers Trust (SERT) to identify funding, and partners with Ashford Council to expand the " Bring back the Beult " project to introduce wide scale water retention and nature based solutions to the Upper Medway catchment. Senior officers have met with SERT and further meetings are to be held with Alsford Council to determine project and funding scope.	Water quality	2022	2025	In progress
Action 6.5 Implement a Nature Recovery Strategy, linking habitat restoration and creation to improve flood protection and water quality.	Councillor Paul Cooper Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	Rob Jarman James Wilderspin	The LNRS is being developed as part of the MS4N (Making Space for Nature) initiative which government has funded KCC to deliver. The current timeframe is that the LNRS will be developed by December 2024, with the required consultation with neighbouring authorities and public consultation taking place in 2025. Officers are working with KCC and other districts to agree priorities for nature's recovery, map the most valuable existing areas for nature, map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals, and identify locations where the	NA	2025	Across the timeline to 2030	Not yet due

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
			<p>creation or improvement of habitat is most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment.</p> <p>As part of this officers are investigating supporting the delivery of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which came into law in January 2024, by identifying where delivery under this new policy will have the most impact.</p> <p>A BNG working group comes together each month at MBC, and is currently developing plans and a business case for MBC offsite provision in the borough.</p>				
<p>Action 6.6 Work with local farms and landowners to deliver landscape scale biodiversity initiatives Nature Recovery Strategy – including reconnection of habitats, floodplain restoration, reduced chemical inputs and reintroduction of lost native species.</p>	<p>Councillor Paul Cooper</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee</p> <p>And</p> <p>Councillor Claudine Russell</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Rob Jarman</p> <p>James Wilderspin</p> <p>Gemma Bailey</p>		NA	2025	Across the timeline to 2030	Not yet due
Making our Estate Carbon Neutral							
<p>Action 7.6 Deliver 100% LED lighting in MBC carparks.</p>	<p>Councillor Paul Cooper</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure,</p>	<p>Jeff Kitson</p>	<p>Parking Services remain committed to 100% LED lighting in MBC car parks by the end of 2025. Lamps are being replaced with LED lights as and when they require replacement.</p>	NA	2022	2025	On track

Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
	And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee						

Agenda Item 11

Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee

29 January 2024

Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	29 January 2024
Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development	Following Maidstone Joint Transportation Board 13 th February 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development
Lead Head of Service	Karen Britton (Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development)
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tom Gilbert (Principal Planner, Strategic Planning)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

In 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy. This brought about changes to the way buses are regulated within England at a local level. In Kent this has led to the production and adoption of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Enhanced Partnership Agreements by Kent County (KCC) Council who are the responsible body.

Resulting from these changes a new structure of interaction between the Local Transport Authority (KCC) and bus operators was created. One of these changes is the termination of Borough/district Quality Bus Partnerships., The proposal is for these to be replaced by Local Focus Groups administered by the boroughs/districts rather than KCC, but still with KCC attending.

This report summarises the changes and proposals for the future.

Purpose of Report

Recommendation to Cabinet Member

This report makes the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development

1. That the committee recommends the creation of a Local Bus Focus Group to allow for interaction & work on strategic issues (for example: bus infrastructure improvements and wider strategy/policy updates) with bus operators.

Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities and may contribute to the delivery of infrastructure associated with the first priority.</p>	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected. <p>The report recommendations support the achievements of the four, cross cutting objectives by ensuring that plans from the County authority do not materially harm the council’s ability to achieve these objectives.</p>	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Risk Management	Covered in the risk section.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Head of Finance

Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting on the recommendations is within the Council’s powers as set out in the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017. Maidstone Borough Council is not a local transport authority under the Act, however, it is a statutory consultee. The arrangements proposed will allow Maidstone Council to work appropriately with the local transport authority. 	Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals. 	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation has no immediate impact on budget headings or expenditure in the current year. 	Karen Britton – Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Establishing a new Local Bus Focus Group as outlined in the KCC structure within the BSIP, would align with Action 1.8 of the Council’s Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan to “Actively participate in Quality Bus Partnership and ensure that the borough’s	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer Manager

	infrastructure is bus friendly” as well as supporting several actions in the plan to reduce borough carbon emissions and pollution, while supporting public transportation.	
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report sets out the changes that are taking place to bus regulation in Kent and recommends how Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) can take this forward.
- 2.2 Since the Transport Act 1985 bus operations within England have been deregulated and privatised. There are some routes run by subsidy from the Local Transport Authority (LTA), which is Kent County Council (KCC).
- 2.3 The traditional role of Maidstone Borough Council is responsible for the provision of infrastructure, such as bus signage and shelters in the Borough.
- 2.4 Since 2013 Local Authorities including Maidstone have also received funding to support local bus services or related infrastructure through the Local Authority Bus Subsidy (Revenue) Grant. This year Maidstone Borough Council has received a funding allocation, which will be used towards: :
- Further reinvestment in Maidstone bus Station.
 - Incentives to bus operators to upgrade their fleet in the borough.
 - Any actions that may result from interaction with the bus companies.
- 2.5 In March 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy on the back of the Bus Services Act 2017. This strategy set out a new approach to buses within local transport authority areas. This allowed for the creation of Enhanced Partnerships or franchising. In Kent the responsible body, which is the local highways authority (KCC) chose the enhanced partnerships and associated Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) model. The KCC BSIP was published in October 2021.
- 2.6 Up until this point Maidstone Borough Council has had two roles:
- Infrastructure (i.e. bus signage and shelters)
 - Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs)
- 2.7 QBPs were created by the Transport Act 2000 and a QBP has been operating in Maidstone since 2000 and was administered by Kent County Council as the Local Transport Authority. It included officers and members from the Borough Council and Local Transport Authority (Kent County Council), plus bus operators. The remit of the QBPs was to act as a forum between the LTA, MBC and the bus companies and focused on service reliability, accessibility, technology, and development. QBPs are not within the formal Enhanced Partnership framework and indicated in the Kent BSIP to be replaced by Local Focus Groups (see figure 2).

What is the New System?

2.8 As indicated in para.2.4 above, a new system has been created consisting of Enhanced Partnerships and BSIPs. Below is a timeline of the stages so far.

- 1. Publication of first version of Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) (October 2021)**
- 2. Publication of draft Enhanced Partnership Notice and Scheme Plans (January/February 2022)**
- 3. Enhanced Partnership Schemes came into effect (1 April 2022)**

2.9 A BSIP is a strategic document on how the LTA (KCC) and bus operators will work to achieve the goals of the National Bus Strategy. The intention is that the BSIP will provide a framework for delivery. The BSIP also acts in part as a bidding document for future funding available through the National Bus Strategy.

2.10 In Kent KCC created an enhanced partnership. From April 2022 Kent has been split into three scheme areas: east Kent, west Kent and Kent Thameside. Maidstone is within the west Kent area. It is intended that the partnership will last for 5 years 2022-27 and then be renewed.

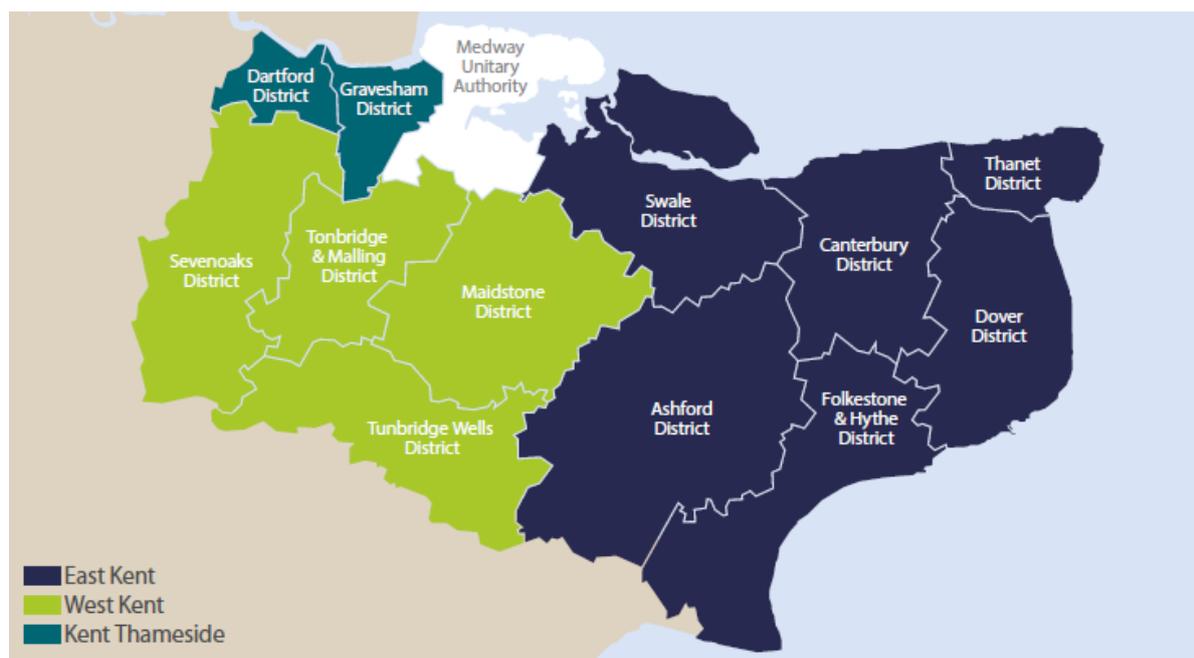


Figure 1. Enhanced Partnership Scheme Areas

2.11 The new structure is set out in Figure 2 below which comes from the adopted KCC BSIP.

Enhanced Partnership Board (Countywide)	EP Scheme(s) Monitoring Group (One for each EP Scheme)	Network and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships (One for each EP Scheme)	EP Scheme(s) Passenger Charter Group (One for each scheme area)	Enhanced Partnership Local Focus Group (One for each District)
Reps				
TBC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport (Lead)	KCC Public Transport (Lead), bus operators in the scheme area, district councils, Kent Highways, KCC Environment and Air Quality, schools rep, Kent and Medway CCG, Passenger Focus	KCC Public Transport, bus operators in the scheme area, KCC Highways, district councils	Independent host, KCC Public Transport, bus operators, schools reps, Passenger Focus, Bus Users UK, bus users and public	KCC Public Transport, KCC District Transport Planner, District Council – Planning & Parking Enforcement, bus operators
Role				
Executive Board to oversee the success and fitness for purpose of the EP Plan, EP schemes and downward governance structure prompting review and revision where necessary	Review compliance to EP Schemes targets, identify and review progress of initiatives and service development needs, address feedback from passenger charter groups	Support for bus operation through network management and schemes development (parking enforcement, roadworks management, bus priority measures etc.)	Presentation of EP Schemes compliance, review of passenger charter targets and customer satisfaction, input to EP Schemes Monitoring Group and feedback from 'the floor'	(replaces QBPs): District input to EPs, planning matters, service development
Meeting frequency				
6 monthly	3 monthly	3 monthly	6 monthly	3 monthly

Figure 2 KCC BSIP Meeting & Governance Structure

2.12 Under the new enhanced partnership/BSIP model KCC have disbanded the QBPs (see figure 2.). They are proposing to replace them with a Borough/District lead organisation called 'Local Bus Focus Groups'. KCC are still proposing to be part of these groups, however they do not propose to organise and administer them. Their proposal is for these groups to still be a forum between the Borough/District, the LTA and bus operating companies, but the format for these groups is being left to the Boroughs/Districts to decide and run.

2.13 At present the following districts/boroughs have set up new Local Bus Focus Groups:

- Ashford Borough Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Swale District Council
- Thanet District Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

2.14 Dartford Borough Council are currently in the process of finalising arrangements for a group.

2.15 A sample agenda of these meetings includes reports on patronage, bus infrastructure improvements and wider strategy/policy updates (Local Plans)

OPTIONS

2.16 Having reviewed the proposals in the BSIP and held discussions with KCC, officers propose three options, in no particular order:

- The creation of a Local Bus Focus Group managed by Maidstone Borough Council
- The inclusion of bus operators within a new transport group managed by Maidstone Borough Council
- Not to set up a new group, but to use the Network and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships forum (use an existing group within the BSIP framework) (see figure 2).

2.17 Below is a discussion of these options.

Local Bus Focus Groups (LBFG)

2.18 The advantages to the creation of a LBFG are:

- there is a set format and structure and they have been set up by other LPAs.
- Such a group would allow for Maidstone to have strategic level input on Maidstone specific issues within the current bus regulation structure.
- If there is any future central government funding to be distributed, it appears that the council will be in a better position to benefit from it as this is anticipated to be the structure it is to be distributed through. The format and membership is decided by MBC as the host of the meetings

2.19 The disadvantages are:

- Any new group is to be administered by MBC rather than KCC as was the case previously with the QBPs.

Create a new alternative group

2.20 At present, the adopted Maidstone Walking & Cycling Strategy 2011-2031 is monitored by an officer sustainable transport group which meets once a quarter to review opportunities for delivery of sustainable transport schemes. It includes officers from MBC and KCC Active Travel and Transport Innovations Teams. It is proposed that the membership of this group could be widened to include bus operators and members as it falls within the sustainable transport umbrella and could be renamed the 'Integrated Transport Group', to reflect the wider Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy. The downside is that bus issues could be diluted, less input into the new bus regulation structure and strategic issues more difficult to discuss.

Network and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships

2.21 Within figure 2 two other structures are listed that are presently operating to which the Borough Council is listed as a partner. At present the Borough

Council has only been invited to the EP Schemes Monitoring Group. However, if the Borough Council was invited to the Punctuality Improvement Partnership those issues that fall within the remit of the Local Bus Focus Group would be covered. As such there would be no duplication. However, these are officer groups with no member input and lack a strategic focus.

PREFERRED APPROACH

- 2.22 It is proposed the Council set up a Local Bus Focus Group as outlined in the KCC structure within the BSIP. This meeting would be 6 monthly, rather than every 3 months and meet only if there is business to be discussed. It would involve the Cabinet member for Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development with reports provided to the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board where relevant.
- 2.23 It is felt appropriate to keep the structure and agenda of this group at a strategic level as illustrated in figure 2 and to avoid levels of detail with regards to service level issues (i.e. punctuality). It is felt that this is appropriate as these issues can be dealt with through other mechanisms; for example: the Network and Punctuality Improvement Partnership, the Passenger Charter Group as outlined in figure 2 or through direct contact with the bus operators themselves.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1: The Borough Council through the Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Cabinet member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development creates a new Local Bus Focus Group for the Borough. Plus, the Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development, in consultation with the with the Cabinet member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development, be given the authority to commit the monies received from Authority Bus Subsidy (Revenue) Grant in accordance with the grant funding agreement refer to paragraph 2.4.
- 3.2 Option 2: The Borough Council brings together the bus operators and members with the existing officer sustainable transport group to form a new group.
- 3.3 Option 3: The Borough Council does not set up a new group but relies on existing formalised structures, such as KCCs PiPs and EP Schemes Monitoring Group.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1:
- 4.2 The Borough Council through the Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development in consultation with the Cabinet member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development creates a new Local Bus Focus Group for the Borough. Plus, the Head of Spatial Planning & Economic Development, in consultation with the with the Cabinet member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development, be given the authority to commit

the monies received from Authority Bus Subsidy (Revenue) Grant in accordance with the grant funding agreement refer to paragraph 2.4. It is felt that this allows the Council the space to raise strategic issues it may have and not lead to the dilution of these if it was part of a wider geographical or structural group.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risk associated with the recommendation, including the risks should the Council not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk management Framework.
 - 5.2 If agreement is secured, per the recommendations, then we are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 N/A
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 It is programmed that this report will be taken to the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board Meeting on the 13th of February 2024 for consideration. Feedback from that meeting and this will then be collated before a final decision is taken by the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Planning & Economic Development.
 - 7.2 At the 6th of September 2023 Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development Planning Advisory Committee meeting it was advised that the Council would like to start work on an refresh of the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy (agenda item 45). This strategy would set out the strategic objectives for transport within the Borough including buses. The Council still propose to pursue this work and foresee that the proposed Local Bus Focus Group would be part of a structure to enable the Council to achieve the objectives set out in any future strategy.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- N/A
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) (October 2021) - [National Bus Strategy - Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan \(amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com)

- Kent Enhanced Partnership Plan And West Kent Enhanced Partnership Scheme (April 2023) - [9131b1c7152ea236b8c123cca6866098 West Kent EP - Apr.23 variation DfT.pdf \(amazonaws.com\)](#)