

# COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 14 March 2023  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors McKenna (Chairman), Newton (Vice-Chairman), Bartlett, Brindle, Fort, Khadka, Rose, R Webb and Young

*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.*

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## AGENDA

Page No.

1. Apologies for 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 item needs to be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 14 February 2023 - To Follow
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)
10. Question and Answer Session from Local Residents (if any)
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)
12. Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference 1 - 4
13. Reference from Corporate Service Policy Advisory Committee - Utilisation of Housing 5 - 7
14. KCC Community Services Consultation response 8 - 55
15. Purchase & Repair, Temporary Accommodation Acquisition (phase 6) and the Local Authority Housing Fund 56 - 64

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**Issued on Monday 6 March 2023**

**Continued Over/:**

*Alison Broom*

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive**

## **INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC**

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk) by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 10 March 2023). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk) by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 10 March 2023). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email [committee@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committee@maidstone.gov.uk).

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk).

# MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 MARCH 2023 TO 31 MAY 2023

This Forward Plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Executive or Lead Members expect to take and the non-Key decisions that the Executive or Lead Members expect to take during the next four-month period. The plan will be updated weekly for the relevant period and a new plan for a new four-month period, published monthly on the last Friday of the month. This Forward Plan covers up until the end of the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

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 members of the Executive are:

→	 <b>Councillor David Burton</b> Leader of the Council DavidBurton@maidstone.gov.uk 07590 229910	 <b>Councillor John Perry</b> Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Corporate Services JohnPerry@Maidstone.gov.uk 07770 734741	 <b>Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid</b> Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement LottieParfittReid@Maidstone.gov.uk 07919 360000	 <b>Councillor Martin Round</b> Lead Member for Environmental Services MartinRound@maidstone.gov.uk 07709 263447
	 <b>Councillor Simon Webb</b> Lead Member for Housing and Health SimonWebb@Maidstone.gov.uk 07878 018997	 <b>Councillor Claudine Russell</b> Lead Member for Leisure and Arts ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk	 <b>Councillor Paul Cooper</b> Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure PaulCooper@Maidstone.gov.uk 01622 244070	

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 the Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ or accessed from the Council's website: [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Executive which are normally held at the Town Hall, High St, Maidstone, ME14 1SY. The dates and times of the meetings are published on [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk) or you may contact the Democratic Services Team on telephone number 01622 602899 for further details.

**David Burton**  
**Leader of the Council**



<b>Details of the Decision to be taken</b>	<b>Decision to be taken by</b>	<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Key</b>	<b>Exempt</b>	<b>Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation</b>	<b>Documents to be considered by Decision taker</b>	<b>Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated</b>
Purchase & Repair, Temporary Accommodation Acquisition (phase 6) Detailing the number and type of accommodation to be acquired	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	22 Mar 2023	No	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 14 Mar 2023	Purchase & Repair, Temporary Accommodation Acquisition (phase 6)	<b>Alison Elliott</b>  alisonelliott@maidstone.gov.uk
Community Services Consultation response Response to the Kent County Council Consultation on Community Services and its impact on Maidstone residents	Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement	Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement	27 Mar 2023	No	No Open	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 14 Mar 2023	Community Services Consultation response	<b>Anna Collier, Orla Sweeney</b>  annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
Heather House and Royal British Legion site A report seeking approval to enter into contract with contractors for proposed works to Heather House and Royal British Legion Buildings.	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	18 Apr 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 11 Apr 2023	Heather House and Royal British Legion site	<b>Andrew Connors, Alison Elliott</b>  Housing Enabling Officer,  andrewconnors@maidstone.gov.uk, alisonelliott@maidstone.gov.uk

<b>Details of the Decision to be taken</b>	<b>Decision to be taken by</b>	<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Key</b>	<b>Exempt</b>	<b>Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation</b>	<b>Documents to be considered by Decision taker</b>	<b>Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated</b>
Property acquisition for 1,000 affordable homes programme Site Acquisition	Executive	Lead Member for Housing and Health	18 Apr 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 11 Apr 2023  Ward Councillor	Property acquisition for 1,000 affordable homes programme	<b>Shanaz Begum</b>  shanazbegum@maidstone.gov.uk

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**COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**14 MARCH 2023**

**Reference from Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee – Utilisation of Housing**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	18 January 2023
Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	14 March 2023

<b>Wards affected</b>	all
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**Executive Summary**

The Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee has requested that this Committee ask the Executive for a report with any further information as to the nature of any unoccupied properties and their future utilisation.

**This report makes the following recommendation to the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee:**

That the Committee consider the request from the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee to ask the Executive for a report with any further information as to the nature of any unoccupied properties and their future utilisation.

## Reference from Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee – Utilisation of Housing

### 1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Council Tax Base 2023/24 and Collection Fund Adjustment was presented to the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee on the 18 January 2023.

Extract of Minute 94 from the above-mentioned meeting is outlined below:

*The Lead Member for Corporate Services introduced the report and stated that the Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Adjustment were reviewed annually. Specific reference was made to point 3.4 of the report, which set out the calculations applicable to the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 and demonstrated the just under two-percent increased growth in the tax base. The growth in homes within the Maidstone borough was highlighted, alongside appendix 2 and 3 to the report.*

*In response to questions, the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement stated that the Council had collected a higher amount of Council Tax across the 2022/23 financial year than expected, causing a surplus to be brought forward to the 2023/24 financial year. The surplus would be a one-off source of additional funding, with the collection fund adjustment arising out of business rates to be calculated and included within the report presented to the Committee at its next meeting. The predicted non-collection allowance had been based on the information available to the Council; if the figure was estimated too cautiously, this would impact the finances of the Council Tax preceptors that received the majority of the Council Tax collected, such as Kent County Council. Residents were encouraged to apply for Council Tax Support when eligible.*

*In response to further questions, the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement confirmed that an empty home premium could be applied to the Council Tax charged to property owners as an incentive to ensure that any vacant properties were made suitable for occupation. The full Council Tax rate could then be applied if the building remained vacant whilst suitable for occupation. The number of households entitled to a single adult household discount was based on the data available to the Council. Several Members of the Committee expressed concern at the number of vacant properties outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. It was felt that further information should be provided on the contributing factors to the properties' vacancies and the utilisation of those properties. As the utilisation of housing would relate to the Lead Member for Housing and Health's portfolio, the Communities, Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee would be requested to review the matter.*

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That given the number of empty properties noted at the Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee Meeting of 18 January 2023, the

*Communities, Housing and Policy Advisory Committee be requested to ask the Executive for a report with any further information as to the nature of any unoccupied properties and their future utilisation;*

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## **2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND WHY NOT RECOMMENDED**

Not Applicable.

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## **3. REPORT APPENDICES**

None.

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## **4. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, 18 January 2023:

# Agenda Item 14

**Communities Housing and Environment Policy  
Advisory Committee**

**14 March 2023**

## **Response to Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	14 March 2023
Executive	22 March 2023

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Urgent  The deadline for the consultation is 26 March 2023 and in order for Council to meet this deadline and make a response, the decision must be taken as urgent.
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Executive
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Anna Collier, Information, Engagement and Governance Manager Orla Sweeney, Senior Policy and Communities Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Marden & Yalding, Shepway North, East and High Street

### **Executive Summary**

Kent County Council are consulting on proposals which will affect the way in which Community Services are delivered across districts in Kent.

The proposals affect Maidstone with the closure of two Children's Centres and the change in location for Adult Education.

The existing provisions for Public Health Services for Children and Families (which includes Family Hubs), Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities and Gateways will not change for Maidstone as part of these proposals.

In order to make a response to the consultation, the Policy, Engagement and Governance team have evaluated the proposals and their impact on Maidstone residents. An assessment has also been made of the consultation process and supporting data.

As a result, it has been determined that the impact on Maidstone has not been properly evaluated and a response should be made to ensure that Maidstone residents have the access they need to vital community support services.

The main areas that the consultation response seeks to respond to are:

- The impact on vulnerable residents in Marden & Yalding and East Ward
- The wider impact of the proposals on High Street and Shepway North wards (as a result of the closure of the two children's centres).

The consultation questionnaire is aimed at service users so there are limited questions the Council can respond to. It is therefore proposed that the consultation be responded to via email letter which is also permitted. The consultation response will be structured around the consultation questionnaire questions and the Council's concerns are substantiated with data from the 2021 Census and health inequalities data (as shown at Appendix A).

### **Purpose of Report**

To consider Council's draft response to Kent County Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation and any changes that may be required. Recommend to the Executive that the response be submitted s on behalf of the Council.

### **This report makes the following recommendations to the Committee**

1. To consider the Council's draft response to Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation and recommend to the Executive that the response be submitted on behalf of the Council (as outlined at paragraph 2.29-3.31)

## Response to Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation

### 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims in the delivery its strategic plan objectives.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The report recommendations help deliver the achievement of cross cutting objectives: Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Risk Management</b>	Please refer to paragraph 5.1 of the report.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Financial</b>	There is no direct budgetary impact from the Kent County Council proposals described in this report. However, by reducing support for vulnerable families, they are likely to increase budgetary pressure on District Council services including homelessness.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Legal</b>	A failure to respond to the consultation which impacts on Maidstone residents could create reputational issues for the Council and could potentially limit any further steps the Council might wish to take.	Mid Kent Legal Services Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.	Information Governance Officer



<b>Equalities</b>	Whilst the decision isn't the Council's responding to this consultation would be acting in accordance with the Councils Equalities Objectives, in ensuring that the needs of our communities are considered.	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Housing & Inclusion Team Leader
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No impact identified	Insight, Communities and Governance Manager
<b>Procurement</b>	No impact identified	Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 A Community Services Consultation is being undertaken by Kent County Council. It proposes changes to the way it uses its buildings to deliver some community services.

2.2 The reasons, outlined in the consultation documents by KCC, for the proposed changes are to:

- Tackle the rising costs of maintaining its many buildings
- To find savings to balance its budget
- Reduce its carbon footprint to achieve NetZero

Whilst ensuring effective support for residents who need its services

2.3 Services that will be affected in Kent are:

- Children's Centres and Youth Hubs
- Public Health Services for Children and Families
- Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education)
- Gateways

2.4 The proposals affect Maidstone with the closure of two Children's Centres and the change in location for Adult Education (Community Learning and Skills).

2.5 In order to make a response to the consultation, the Communities, Insight and Governance team have evaluated the consultation proposals and their impact on Maidstone residents. An assessment has also been made of the consultation process and supporting data. Discussions have also been held with the Executive to develop the response led by the Lead Member for Communities and Public Engagement.

### How the proposals affect Maidstone

2.6 The table below summarises the impact of the changes for Maidstone. Two 'service types' will be affected in Maidstone; Children's Centres and Youth Hubs and Community Learning and skills Adult Education. There are no other changes proposed to the remaining provisions in Maidstone.

Service Types	Impact for Maidstone	Proposal
Children's Centres and Youth Hubs	Proposed closure of 2 children's centres – 1 in Marden and 1 in East ward	Nearest alternatives for East ward - Sunshine Children's Centre (1.6 miles away) - Greenfields Children's Centre (2.4 miles away)  Nearest alternatives Proposed Community Hub at Cranbrook Library (7.4 miles away in Tunbridge Wells) - Greenfields Children's Centre (8.1 miles away)
Public Health Services for Children and Families	No change	N/A
Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities	No change (current provision to remain at Maidstone House)	N/A
Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education)	Proposed move of Adult Education from Faith Street (High Street ward) to Oakwood House (Bridge)	Moving from a Town Centre location and an area of deprivation to a less accessible location
Gateways	No change	N/A

### Closure of Children's Centres in Maidstone

2.7 The Children's Centres that are proposed to close are in Marden & Yalding and East Ward.

### Marden Children's Centre

- 2.8 The alternative Children's Centre for Marden, as indicated in the consultation document, is Cranbrook Library or Greenfields in Shepway (North). However, the co-location of the Children's Centre in Cranbrook Library is not confirmed, therefore the confirmed alternative Children's Centre for Marden Residents is Greenfields in Shepway North.
- 2.9 We have evaluated the impact of the proposals on Marden residents in terms of actual journey times and options. This is outlined in our response (Appendix A). In summary the two alternative Children's Centres for Marden residents are not accessible by public transport. Journey times by bus and train to Cranbrook Library and Greenfields are unfeasible and walking the distance of 7.4 miles and 8.1 miles respectively is not an option.
- 2.10 We have been told anecdotally that Tonbridge Youth Hub could be an alternative for Marden residents as Tonbridge is accessible by train (22 minutes). However, further investigation has found that Marden station is completely inaccessible for buggies and pushchairs. Car journey times are 20 minutes for both Marden to Cranbrook and Marden to Greenfields.
- 2.11 However, whilst Marden as a whole, isn't an area of deprivation, there are areas which are significantly less affluent. The 2021 Census data tells us that there is significant, growing need in the ward for the affected demographic. This information is detailed at Appendix A and is missing from Kent County Council's Needs Assessment.
- 2.12 The proposals will have a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable, for example, non-drivers in Marden & Yalding will no longer have access to a children's centre. This will have an immediate and longer-term effect on the children and families.

### East Borough Children's Centre

- 2.13 The alternative Children's Centre for East Borough users, as indicated in the consultation document is Sunshine Children's Centre which is an approximate 27-minute walk from East Borough Children's Centre. The other alternative is Greenfields in Shepway which is an approximate 45 to 48-minute walk from East Borough Children's centre.
- 2.14 Whilst both alternative options for East Borough users are more accessible in terms of transport links than Marden, the change is significant.
- 2.15 An issue that needs to be highlighted regarding East Borough Children's Centre and has been overlooked in the consultation is East Borough's location on the periphery of High Street Ward. Its users are not going to be geographically ringfenced to East Ward. Its service users are most likely are mostly to come from High Street ward which is the highest deprived ward in Maidstone borough with significant and growing need in the demographic affected by the proposals.

### Impact on areas of deprivation – High Street Ward and Shepway North

- 2.16 Greenfields’s Children Centre is identified in the proposals as an alternative Children’s Centre for both users of Marden and East Borough Children’s Centres. Greenfield’s is located in Shepway (North), one of the top three deprived Lower Super Output (LSO) areas in Maidstone.
- 2.17 Sunshine Children’s Centre is identified as the primary alternative for users of East Borough’s Children’s Centre. Sunshine Children’s Centre is located in High Street Ward which is the most deprived LSO area in Maidstone.
- 2.18 The existing need and cumulative impact of the proposals on residents in High Street Ward and Shepway North does not appear to have been considered.

### **Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) – Impact of proposals**

- 2.19 Community Learning and Skills (Adult Education) is to be relocated from High Street Ward to Bridge Ward as part of the proposals.
- 2.20 The current location in High Street ward is served well by public transport. The new location can be reached by public transport but would be an additional journey/cost to High Street Ward residents. For users travelling into a central Town Centre location from other areas of the borough, the additional journey cost could be prohibitive to them continuing to access the services.

### **Other Issues Identified/concerns**

- 2.21 The Consultation proposals also asks for comment on the following areas without explaining what this would mean for Maidstone (or other districts):
- Co-location of services
  - Outreach
  - The Family Hub model
  - Accessing Service online
- 2.22 These areas are all mentioned as supporting the current proposals at some point in the future, but the consultation documents do not provide details on how these will be developed, nor does it provide a timeline. The draft consultation response identifies the Council’s concerns that a decision that will have such a significant impact on residents in Maidstone is missing the next steps in terms of identifying alternative service provision and access to service.
- 2.23 An assessment of the consultation process has also been included (in the draft response) as the engagement events being held for Maidstone are both at Sessions House which isn’t in line with the offer for other districts.

## **Recommendation - The Council's Response**

2.24 The impact of the proposals on Maidstone have not been properly evaluated and a response should be made to ensure that Maidstone residents have the access they need to vital community support services.

2.25 The main areas that the consultation response seeks to raise are:

- The impact on vulnerable residents in Marden & Yalding and East Ward
- The wider impact of the proposals on High Street and Shepway North wards (as a result of the closure of the two children's centres).

2.26 The Consultation Questionnaire is aimed at service users so there are limited questions the Council can respond to. It is therefore proposed that the consultation be responded to via email letter which is also permitted. The consultation response will be structured around the consultation questionnaire questions and the Council's concerns are substantiated with data from the 2021 Census and health inequalities data (as shown at Appendix A).

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

3.1 To recommend to the Executive and that the consultation be responded to as at Appendix A.

3.2 To recommend to the Executive that no response be made to the consultation.

3.3 To make an alternative recommendation which may include the addition of further points to include in the consultation response.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The preferred option is outlined at 3.1 of this report, to respond to the consultation and highlight the significant and detrimental impact of the proposal on Maidstone residents and vulnerable groups in Maidstone. This is recommended based upon the findings of the assessment of the proposals and the insights provided by Census and Health Inequality data.

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### **5. RISK**

5.1 The Council has an opportunity to respond to Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation. The proposals will have a significant, detrimental impact on Maidstone residents and are likely to affect vulnerable groups in Maidstone's most deprived wards. Not taking this opportunity to respond to this could cause reputational damage to the Council.

## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

6.1 None

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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 The approved response will be submitted to KCC via email, as the deadline for consultation is the 26 March this will be taken as an urgent decision by the Executive as there will be insufficient time for call in.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix A: Draft Response to Consultation
  - Appendix B: Consultation document Maidstone Design Handbook
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

See Appendix B

## **Maidstone Borough Council's response to Kent County Council's Community Services Consultation**

It is clear that the impact of the proposals on Maidstone has not been properly evaluated and a response should be made to ensure that Maidstone residents have the access they need to vital community support services.

The main areas of the consultation proposals that this response seeks to respond to and highlight is:

- The impact on vulnerable residents in Marden & Yalding and East Ward
- The wider impact of the proposals on High Street and Shepway North wards (as a result of the closure of the two children's centres).

The Council's concerns are substantiated with data from the 2021 Census and health inequalities data.

The Consultation proposals also asks for comment on the following areas without explaining what this would mean for Maidstone (or other districts):

- Co-location of services
- Outreach
- The Family Hub model
- Accessing Service online

These areas are all mentioned as supporting the current proposals at some point in the future, but the consultation documents do not provide details on how these will be developed, nor does it provide a timeline. We are concerned that decisions that will have such a significant impact on residents in Maidstone is missing the next steps in terms of identifying alternative service provision and access to service.

An assessment of the consultation process has also been included as the engagement events being held for Maidstone are both at Sessions House which isn't in line with the offer for other districts.

Our response structured around the consultation questionnaire questions that were available to us to respond to.

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### **Q7. If you think we have missed out any data that should be used, please tell us what it is below.**

Yes, we feel a significant amount of data has been missed.

KCC have made a very clear statement as part of this consultation. It says, "our proposals have been designed by considering where there is greatest need for

our services.” However, the reasons for the proposed changes appear to be primarily about property rather than the need.

The consultation document talks about the needs of residents in each individual ward in Maidstone. The consultation document recognises that there are more deprived wards than others but fails to recognise the impact of the proposals on those wards. [The needs-based assessment](#) that accompanies the consultations identifies High Street Ward and Shepway (North) as two of Maidstone’s most deprived wards.

It is proposed that two children’s Centres will close in Maidstone - in East ward and Marden and Yalding ward as well as the relocation of Adult Education from High Street Ward to Heath Ward

In assessing ‘need’ we are not confident that this has been considered as comprehensively as we would have expected for a number of reasons highlighted below.

### **Proposed closure of Marden Children’s Centre** **Impact on Marden & Yalding residents**

As highlighted in the consultation documentation Marden has high need and poor connectivity. It should be noted that services have already been cut before in rural areas such as bus services – so this is cutting services in an area where services are already considered inadequate.

The alternative Children’s Centre for Marden, as indicated in the consultation document, is Cranbrook Library or Greenfields in Shepway (North). However, the co-location of the Children’s Centre in Cranbrook Library is not confirmed, the alternative Children’s Centre for Marden Residents is therefore Greenfields in Shepway.

The proposals say that **‘96% of Maidstone households would be within a 30 minute public transport catchment of a community services building (3,034 people outside)’**.

We have identified that Marden residents will be disproportionately affected.

The table shown below outlines the actual journey times to alternative Children’s Centres. The most vulnerable residents in Marden will be most affected. Residents who rely on public transport will have a significant journey time and an additional financial burden. It is likely that residents will choose not to make the journey. Additionally there are significant access issues at Marden at station – making train travel with a pushchair almost impossible and therefore traveling by car to Tonbridge the only option.

We have been informed, and therefore have anecdotal knowledge that Tonbridge Youth Hub and Children’s Centre is being suggested as a nearest alternative to Marden residents. However, this is not what is included in the Consultation. Cranbrook library is the primary alternative in the consultation documentation,



despite the co-location of the children's centre not yet being agreed. Greenfields is the secondary alternative for Marden residents.

If Tonbridge is a viable alternative, why is it not included in the consultation documentation?

### Actual Journey times for Marden residents

Alternative options/travel impact	Car	Train	Bus	Walk	Cost implications
Marden to Greenfields (Shepway North, 8.1 miles)	20 mins	1hr 20mins: Train to Headcorn (every 30 mins) plus bus (No.12 – Arriva every 30 mins)	Minimum 40 mins. No.27 followed by 643	N/A	Currently £2 per single bus journey.  Train single Marden to Headcorn £4.70.
Marden to Cranbrook (7.4 miles)	20 mins	1hr. Marden to Staplehurst (every 30 mins). Plus bus - <u>no.5</u> bus (every 30 mins)	50mins (with waiting gap) No.23 ( <del>Nuventus</del> ) & no. 297 (Hams travel) - every 1.5hrs	N/A	Currently £2 per single bus journey.  Marden to Staplehurst train £3.10
Marden to Tonbridge Youth Hub (16.1 miles)	31 minutes	22 minutes (every 30 minutes) plus 9-minute walk	No viable bus alternative	N/A	Train - £6.70 return or £13.20 for two singles

### Data from the 2021 census tells us that in Marden & Yalding:

#### Marden and Yalding ward is not considered to be an area of deprivation but recent census data reveals the ward has significant need.

- There are 1,832 children aged 15 years and under living in Marden and Yalding ward. An increase of 42.2 % compared to 2011 Census.
- There has been a 55.8% increase in the number of 0 – 4 year olds (55.8% increase) and a 147.3% number of 5 – 9 year olds (147.3% increase). This compares to an overall increase in population in Marden and Yalding of 21.6%, suggesting that the number of 0 – 9-year-olds is increasing faster than the rest of the population.
- There has been a 16.3% increase in lone parent households
- Kent County Council predict that the 0 – 5-year-old age bracket will continue to increase in Maidstone, with an average increase across the borough of 10.1% by 2040. The current Census increase suggests again that Marden and

Yalding's younger population is growing significantly quicker than the average predictions for Maidstone.

### **Deprivation**

The Census data allows us to see how many households are deprived and by how many dimensions. There are four levels of deprivation dimensions:

- Education
  - Employment
  - Health
  - Housing
- In Marden and Yalding ward 1,249 households suffering from at least one level of deprivation, an increase of 18.5%. Households of this type, account for 32% of all households in this ward.
  - 10% of households in this ward have no access to a car or van for travelling.
  - There are 585 low-income households, with a total of 377 children. Low-income is defined as claiming welfare support from the Local Authority. Of those households, 207 of them are living below the poverty line, which includes 177 children.
  - 97 of these low-income households have been impacted by Welfare Reforms over the last ten years and are currently (on average) £25.80 worse off each week because of this.

Additionally, Health Inequalities data for Marden (Kent Public Health Observatory) tells us:

- The rates for emergency hospital admissions for children under 19 years are greater for Marden and Yalding than for Maidstone overall at 57 per 10,000 children and young people, compared to 49 per 10,000 for Maidstone overall.

### **Impact of closure of Marden's Children's Centres on areas of deprivation.**

Greenfields's Children Centre is identified in the proposals as an alternative Children's Centre for both users of Marden and East Borough Children's Centres. Greenfield's is located in Shepway (North), one of the top three deprived LSO areas in Maidstone.

The existing need and cumulative impact of the proposals on residents in Shepway does not appear to have been considered.

### **Data from the 2021 census tells us that in and Shepway (North) ward:**

There are 1,901 children aged 15 years and under living in Shepway North ward.

Whilst there has been a decline in the age bracket 0 – 4 years (-11.6%) here has been an increase in the number of 5 - 9-year-olds (8.4% increase).

### **Deprivation**

1,275 households in Shepway are suffering from at least one level of deprivation, an increase of 11.16%. This accounts for 36.9% of all households in this ward.

17% of households in this ward have no access to a car or van for travelling. This equates to 593 households.

There are currently 676 low-income households, with a total of 523 children. Of those households, 293 of them are living below the poverty line, which includes 314 children.

102 of these low-income households have been impacted by Welfare Reforms over the last ten years and are currently (on average) £20.60 worse off each week because of this.

### **In terms of Health Inequalities:**

- The percentage of babies born with a low birth rate is also significantly higher than both Maidstone and Kent percentages, with 6.4% of births being born with a low birth weight (under 2.5kg). This compares to 5.5% in Maidstone and 5.8% in Kent.
- New mothers living in the area are much less likely to breastfeed, with only 46.6% choosing to breastfeed their infants, compared to 59.1% in Maidstone and 58.1% in Kent.
- Obesity in reception aged children (aged 4 and 5 years) is more prevalent, with 12.3% being recorded as obese, compared to 8.5% on average in Maidstone and 9.4% on average in Kent.
- Obesity prevalence also continues into year six children (aged 10 and 11 years) with 23.7% being recorded as obese, compared to 17.2% on average in Maidstone.

### **Proposed closure of East Borough Children's Centre. Impact on East Ward residents**

The alternative Children's Centre for East Borough users, as indicated in the consultation document is Sunshine Children's Centre which is an approximate 27-minute walk from East Borough Children's Centre. The other alternative is Greenfields in Shepway which is an approximate 45–48-minute walk from East Borough Children's centre. Whilst both alternative options for East Borough users are more accessible in terms of transport links than Marden, the change is significant.

An issue that needs to be highlighted regarding East Borough Children's Centre is its location on the periphery of High Street Ward. Its users are not going to be geographically ringfenced to East Ward. Its service users are most likely to come from High Street ward which is the highest deprived ward in Maidstone borough

### **Data from the 2021 census tells us that in East ward:**

- There are 1,649 children aged 15 years and under living in East ward, an increase of 7.7%
- There has been an increase across all the age brackets, but most notably in the 5–9 year old bracket, which increased by 10.7%
- The 0–4 year old bracket increased by 10.0%.
- Overall, the total population of East Ward increased by 5.1% in between censuses, which suggests that the population of 5-9 year olds is increasing faster than the rest of the population.
- The number of lone parent families (with dependent children) living in East ward has increased by 1.61% (insert numbers and compare with housing stats etc from Housing to follow)

### **Deprivation**

- 1,886 households in East Ward are suffering from at least one level of deprivation, an increase of 7.46% Whilst this is only a small increase, this number of deprived households accounts for 50% of all households in this ward.
- 19.4% of all households living in East ward have no access to a car or van. This is 723 households.
- There are currently 540 low-income households, with a total of 240 children. Of those households, 186 of them are living below the poverty line, which includes 90 children.
- 86 of these low-income households have been impacted by Welfare Reforms over the last ten years and are currently (on average) £25.20 worse off each week because of this.

### **Additionally, Health Inequalities data for East ward (Kent Public Health Observatory) tells us:**

- The data suggests that obesity in children is an issue in the East ward. East ward has a greater proportion of reception age children measured as obese at 10.8% compared to 9.4% in Kent overall and a greater proportion of children at year 6 (10-11 years) also measuring as obese at 18.5% compared to 18.0% in Kent.
- East ward has a greater proportion of live births where the child has a low weight (2500 grammes or less) at 5.9% compared to 5.8% for Kent.

### **Impact of closure of East Ward Children's Centre on areas of deprivation.**

Sunshine Children's Centre is identified as the primary alternative for users of East Borough's Children's Centre. Sunshine Children's Centre is located in High Street Ward which is the most deprived LSO area in Maidstone.

The existing need and cumulative impact of the proposals on residents in High Street Ward does not appear to have been considered.

### **Data from the 2021 census tells us that in High Street ward:**

- 2,298 children aged 15 years and under living in High Street ward, an increase of 20.7%
- There has been an increase across all of the age brackets, but most notably 5–9-year-olds
- 0–4 year olds increased by 10.0% and the 10–15 year old bracket increased by 15.5%.
- Overall, the total population of High Street Ward increased by 22.9% which suggests that the population of 5–9-year-olds is increasing faster than the rest of the population.

Kent County Council predict that the 0 – 5-year-old age bracket will continue to increase in Maidstone, with an average increase across the borough of 10.1% by 2040 (which is in line with census data predictions)

There are 397 lone parent families (with dependent children) living in High Street ward, an increase of 3.39%.

### **Deprivation**

There are 1,843 households suffering from at least one level of deprivation, a significant increase of 31.17% compared to 2011 (1,405). This accounts for 31.6% of all households in this ward.

32.1% of all households living in High Street ward have no access to a car or van. This is 1,637 households.

There are currently 1,183 low-income households in High Street ward, with a total of 685 children. Of those households, 467 of them are living below the poverty line, which includes 360 children.

239 of these low-income households have been impacted by Welfare Reforms over the last ten years and are currently (on average) £30 worse off each week because of this.

### **Health Inequalities data for High Street Ward (Kent Public Health Observatory) tells us:**

- The data suggests that obesity in children is an issue in the High Street ward. High Street ward has a greater proportion of reception age children measured as obese at 10.8% compared to 9.4% in Kent overall and a greater proportion of children at year 6 (10-11 years) also measuring as obese at 22.9% compared to 18.0% in Kent.
- There are 110 more premature deaths per 100,00 people (under 75 years) in the High Street ward compared to in Kent overall. The rate for the High Street ward is also significantly greater than that for Kent at 427.4 deaths per 100,000 population compared to 280.2 for Maidstone overall.
- Males in High street ward have a life expectancy of 2.6 years less than Kent overall.

### **Proposed relocation of Community Skills and Hubs**

The current provision is moving from an established location in the borough's highest area of deprivation (High Street Ward) to Health ward.

The current location in High Street ward is served well by public transport. The new location can be reached by public transport but would be an additional journey/cost to High Street Ward residents. For users coming into a central Town Centre location from other areas of the borough

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to supporting vulnerable residents to ensure no one is left behind. On 25 January 2023, The Council's Executive agreed the Poverty should be included as an additional protected characteristic. Poverty will be included as part of the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment, supporting decision making.

It is clear that the impact of these proposals will make vulnerable people in Maidstone more vulnerable.

The consultation proposals appear arbitrary and to have a rigid geographical focus (i.e. the physical, ward location of the existing building rather than the locality it supports).

The population of Maidstone is growing and the proposals are not considering the unidentified and unfulfilled need.

The impact on areas of high deprivation as a result of the current proposals regarding Children's Centres is significant. The lack of consideration that has been given to the impact of the proposals for High Street ward in particular is deeply concerning.

Kent County Council predicts that the 0 – 5 year old age bracket will continue to increase in Maidstone, with an average increase across the borough of 10.1% by 2040.

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### **Q9. What do you think is important for us to consider when co-locating services?**

Early conversations with district Councils to identify opportunities and sites for co-location is important.

It is disappointing that this hasn't taken place in advance of or as part of the development of current proposals. It is extremely worrying that the alternative service provision for users of Marden Children's Centre is co-location at Cranbrook Library and this is not yet confirmed.

*(We could mention specific options for co-location – such as Trinity House in High Street Ward and others??)*

We feel that information is missing from the proposals that would provide valuable insight such as primary school outcomes for the affected wards and the wards impacted by the closures and the number of SEN (D) plans in place. We would welcome

**Q10. If you have any comments you would like to make about delivering services through outreach, please tell us below.**

Similarly, to co-location – working with districts to identify opportunities.

It is unclear from the proposals how outreach will change in Maidstone, how it will impact service delivery in Maidstone as the current consultation is only outlining changes to property which for Maidstone is the closure of two children's centre and the relocation Adult Education.

Maidstone Borough Council would welcome early opportunity to work with KCC on identifying the needs of vulnerable residents and the way in which they engage with services to ensure that services are accessible to them.

**Q12. What is important to you when accessing services online?**

It is unclear from the proposals which services are being considered.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the types of services that can be delivered online and the risks to vulnerable groups such as mothers and small children who benefit from face-to-face contact and engagement with trained staff, particularly around safeguarding matters.

We feel that there is a lack of assessment or consideration of digital inclusion. This extends well beyond broadband speed and in to the affordability of both WiFi/Internet access and devices which allow people to access services reliably online.

If services can't be accessed online due to digital inclusion, it places a burden on other organisations i.e. districts groups and organisations across the Voluntary and Community Sector.

We are engaging with KCC on its digital workstreams but have little evidence of how this project has been taken into account supports changes in service delivery – i.e. the proposals in this consultation.

**Q15. What do you think is important for us to consider when we transition to the Family Hub model?**

The consultation proposals do not outline what a Family Hub model would affect services in Maidstone and how the model will affect current services.

It is important to consider services users – in terms of current and future need. This should be data led and consultative to understand what services local people need and how they want to access them. This process should remain under review. There needs to be processes in place for information sharing with district so it remains legal but doesn't present a barrier

KCC should be working closely with its district Councils on co-location opportunities

Integrated care board at KCC – its priorities – what is the impact of its proposals??

**Q19. Please tell us if there are any other options you think we should consider, or if you have any other comments you wish to make about the proposals in this consultation.**

Yes, we feel that more could be done in terms of engagement with Maidstone to ensure that the needs assessment accurate and data led. The impact of the proposals on areas of deprivation has not been considered; High Street Ward and Shepway North have been completely overlooked (explain as above in first - impact)

In terms of the EqIA completed as part of these proposals, there is no information on any direct promotion of this consultation to targeted groups i.e. centre users. Previous research with these groups is referred to in the EQIAs and EQIAs states that gaps in the data will be filled through this consultation process e.g. religion.

The recent census data (2021) should be used to evaluate need, not only in the wards where the children's centres are closing (Marden & Yalding and East) but in the wards that will be most impacted by the decisions. For example, East Borough Children's Centre is its location on the periphery of High Street Ward. Its users are not going to be geographically ringfenced to East Ward. Its service users are most likely are mostly to come from High Street ward which is the highest deprived ward in Maidstone borough



**Q20. We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity. Please add any comments below.**

Yes, we feel that more could be done in terms of engagement with Maidstone to ensure that the needs assessment accurate and data led. The impact of the proposals on areas of deprivation has not been considered; High Street Ward and Shepway North have been completely overlooked (explain as above in first - impact)

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# COMMUNITY Services Consultation Design Handbook

Maidstone Locality



# COMMUNITY Services Consultation

## Design Handbook



**Alternative Formats:** If you need this document in an alternative format, please email [alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk) or call 03000 421553 (text relay service number: 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

# Kent County Council (KCC) is running a consultation to find out what you think about proposals for a new way of accessing community services.

Please read the accompanying full consultation document.

The **services included** in these proposals are:



**Community Services** for Adults with Learning Disabilities.



**Community Learning and Skills**  
(Adult Education)



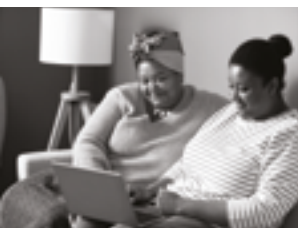
**Children's Centres and Youth Hubs**  
(Open Access services)



**Public Health Services** including Health Visiting and Counselling for children and young people.



**Gateways**  
(Buildings where multiple services, both Council and partners, are delivered. People can also get help to access other services, i.e. help to complete Blue Badge application forms)



# Key to the design handbook

This document tells you about the design process we have used and **what that means at a district level.**



**Local Area Overview** – gives a snapshot of key needs data and the basis for the proposal.



**Data** - Full data packs are available as an appendix to the consultation document.



**Buildings and Outreach** – maps will illustrate the proposed changes. The icons are not site specific but placed within the ward to show how they are spread across the district.

Where and when we deliver outreach is based on need and demand and won't always be in the same places.

**Ward Maps** - Kent is made up of 271 wards which are small sub-divisions of the county's 12 districts and we have used them to map the likelihood of need for our services.



**Digital** - this delivery method is considered universal to ensure Community Services are accessible and gain maximum reach.



**Co-location** - we are proposing to have more than one service located from our buildings where possible. Nothing has been decided yet and we are still carrying out studies to decide if these would work practically.



**Transport** - We have used transport data to check our design places community buildings within 30-minutes on public transport from households in Kent.



# Why are we suggesting change?

We are facing a number of challenges and we are **looking ahead to secure positive outcomes for our residents** in the years to come.



- ✓ **Reduce the high costs** associated with maintaining a large number of buildings.
- ✓ **To find savings** so that we can balance the budget.
- ✓ **To meet the commitments we made** in our Net Zero action plan by 2030.
- ✓ **To provide effective support** to residents in need of our services.

**To address these challenges** we are proposing to **reduce our estate and to co-locate services**.

## The Needs Framework

We are committed to providing effective support to residents in need of our services, so this is at the forefront of any proposals for change.

We have considered a range of data to **understand the challenges faced by communities** across the county. We call this the **Needs Framework**.

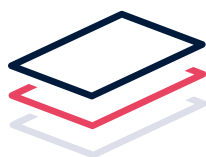
We then used this as a tool to identify, consider and propose change with services through workshops and regular discussions.







# Data



## How we have used data

We started by looking at a variety of indicators of need across all the wards in the county. We looked at specific combinations of indicators for each service\*.

\*The exception to this is Gateways which were placed last in the design, once we had identified the need for multiple services.

### Indicator

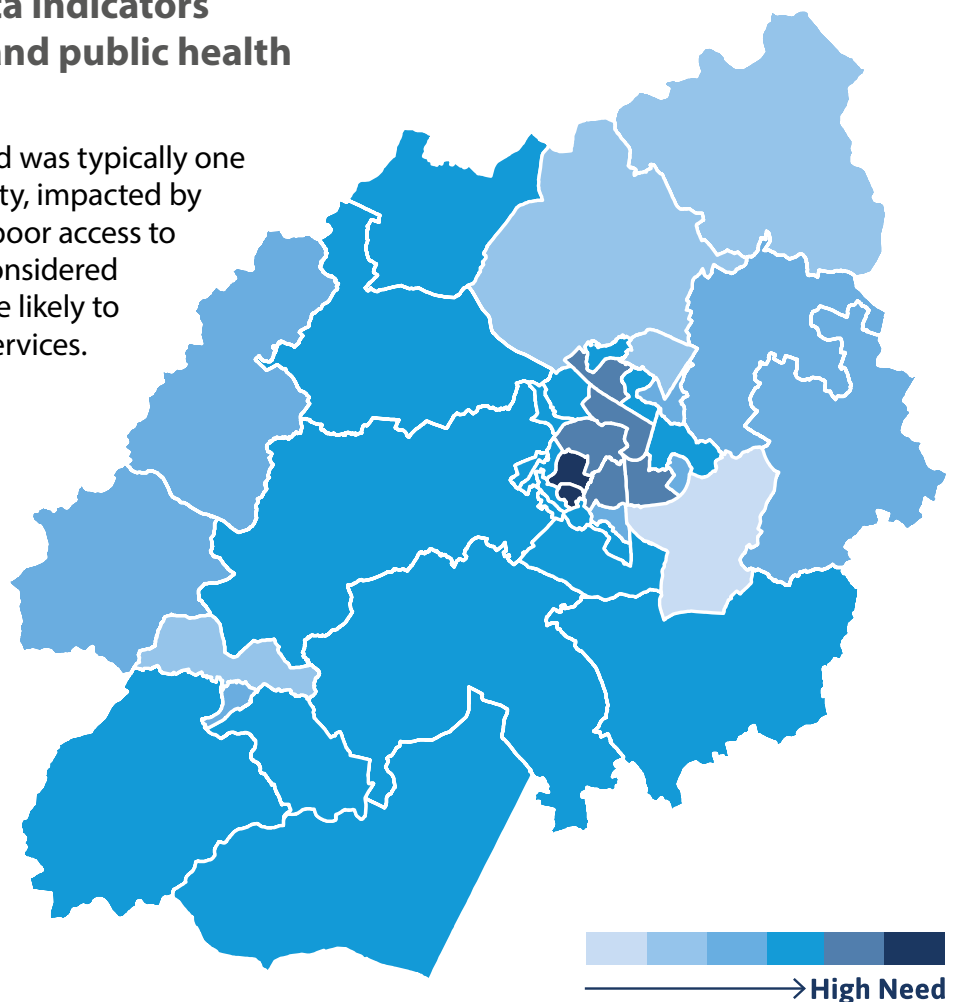
Indicator	Open Access	Public Health	Community Learning and Skills	Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Deprivation affecting children and older people.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long term unemployment.	✓	✓	✓	
Ethnic diversity.	✓	✓	✓	
Educational attainment.	✓	✓	✓	
Long term illness and disability.				✓
% of ward population aged 0-15.	✓	✓		
Reception age children who are overweight or obese.	✓	✓		
Deliveries to teenage mothers.	✓	✓		
Low birth weight infants.	✓	✓		
Over 65s living alone.			✓	
Population increase.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Population Density.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Exclusion.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport Connectivity.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Broadband Speed.	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Data

**Service specific** consideration of the data  
By considering data sets for each service, we can see **where need is highest at a ward level**.

**This example** uses data indicators for children's services and public health in Ashford.

A ward considered as high need was typically one that had high population density, impacted by high levels of deprivation and poor access to transport or the internet. We considered that in these areas, residents are likely to need more support from our services.





# Data

This example shows you what the data tells us about Ashford

We built a view of each of Kent's 12 districts:

## Ashford



- **Ashford is a large geographical area** which is urban with significant rural classification, meaning access for some areas can be challenging. **Stanhope has the highest population density. Kingsnorth Village & Bridgefield, Godinton and Repton** wards have all seen high population growth.



- **Broadband speed** in most areas of Ashford is better than or the same as the UK average.



- **92.7% of households** in Ashford are currently within 30 mins of one of our buildings using public transport.



- **21% of Ashford's population is aged 0-15 years** of age. Just over 25% of the population is aged 60 and over. **Tenterden North** has the highest proportion of over 60's but the lowest proportion of children.

**2.5% of Ashford's 18-65 year old population is estimated to have a learning disability.**

**Ashford** has a population of **132,752** according to the 2021 census with estimations of this increasing to around **169,000 by 2040.** 38



- **Aylesford & East Stour, Beaver, Bockhanger, Stanhope and Upper Weald** wards are all measured as having areas of high deprivation correlating with long term unemployment levels. Ashford is however **under the long-term unemployment national average.**



- **68% of Ashford falls into the high digital user category,** highlighting an appetite for digital and the **ability to engage with digital services.**



- In the 2018/19 Academic year, **66% of Ashford pupils** achieved a standard pass in **Maths and English GCSE,** which is the Kent average.



Ashford district has **39 electoral wards.**



## How we have considered the people that use our services

Services added a **final layer of information about the people who already use our services** and how they access them. We identified some of the following indicators:

Indicator	Open Access	Public Health	Community Learning and Skills	Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Numbers of adults with learning disabilities in each district.				✓
Forecast population of 0-5 year olds in 2040.	✓	✓		
Children whose main language is not English.	✓	✓		
Children with Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).	✓	✓		
Children eligible for Free School Meals.	✓	✓		
0-19 social care referrals.	✓	✓		
Children in care.	✓	✓		
Children with Fixed Term Exclusions.	✓	✓		
Young people known to the Youth Offending team.	✓	✓		
Early help episodes.	✓	✓		
Service demand data.	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Using the framework

## The Needs Framework

The Needs Framework was the starting point for the proposals but it does not provide a perfect formula for decision making. The proposals set out in this document are the result of many months of refinement following collaborative workshops and meetings between service teams, the KCC property team and a dedicated project team.

The result of our work was a holistic view of needs which was used as the basis for conversations with service teams about how our existing buildings could meet the identified needs.

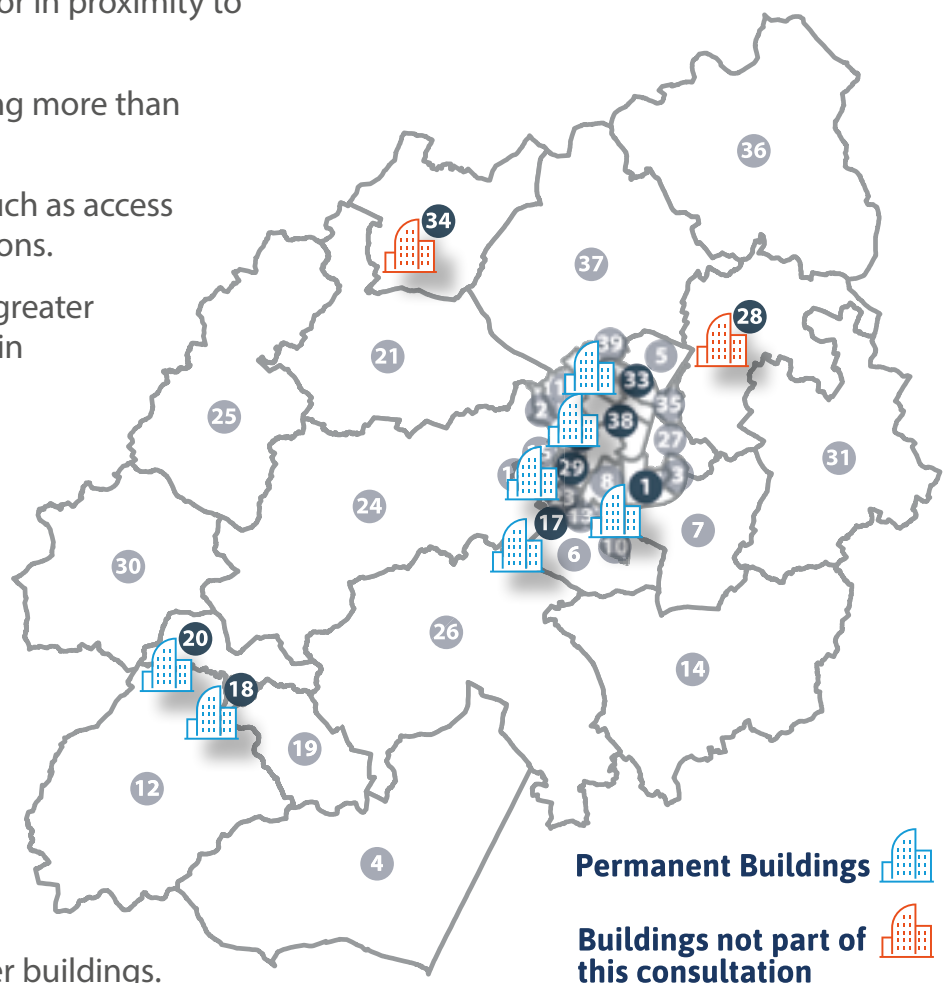


# Using the framework

A further key step in the development of our proposals was to look at practical considerations relating to our estate. Through ongoing conversations with both service teams and the KCC property team, we continued to consider whether the proposed network of permanent buildings would meet the identified need.

## Factors we considered when reviewing our estate:

- What buildings we currently have in wards with the highest need.
- Whether there is a suitable building in a neighbouring ward.
- Whether a building is in a good location with access by public transport or in proximity to shops or other services.
- The potential for co-locating more than one service.
- Any building constraints such as access issues or required adaptations.
- Maintaining a percentage greater than 85% of residents within 30 minutes travel time on public transport to one of our buildings.
- Whether the number of buildings supports the number of service users we currently have in an area.
- Whether outreach could be a more effective way of meeting the identified need.
- Whether there is capacity to host outreach from other buildings.





Our work so far has led us to propose working from **fewer permanent buildings**, meaning that some of our buildings would close.

We also want to **co-locate more of our services**, meaning that more than one service would be available from the buildings you might visit.

However, we don't just deliver our services from permanent or fixed locations. We have ambitions to **develop our outreach and digital offers**, to enhance our resident experience and and future-proof access to our services.

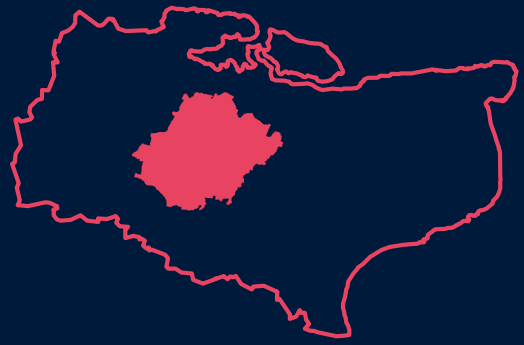
Now that you've read about the design process we have used, we will show you what that means in your district.



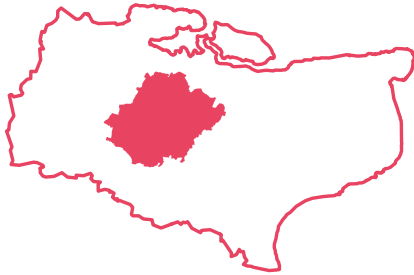


# Maidstone

Locality Design



# Maidstone



● **Maidstone** is mainly urban classification and over a third of wards are within a rural and fringe setting, which means there is mixed accessibility. High Street and East wards are two of a few areas of high density. **Park Wood, Harrietsham & Lenham, Heath, Marden & Yalding and Sutton Valence & Langley wards have seen the highest population growth** for the District.



● **Broadband speed** in most areas of Maidstone **is better than or the same as the UK average.**



● **96% of households** in Maidstone are currently **within 30 mins of one of our buildings** on public transport.



● 25% of Maidstone's population is aged 60+ while 20% is aged 0-15. **Barming & Teston and North Downs wards have the highest 60+ age group. Park Wood has the largest 0-15 year old population** in the District with the lowest percentage of the over 60 cohort in that ward. **2.4% of Maidstone's 18-65 year old population** is estimated to have a **learning disability.**

**Maidstone** has a **population of 175,781** according to the 2021 census with estimations of this **increasing to around 204,000 by 2040.**



● **High Street, Park Wood, Shepway North and Shepway South wards** are all measured as areas of **high deprivation. Shepway South ward** also has **high levels of unemployment.** The Maidstone district is below the long-term unemployment national average age.



● The majority of the locality falls into the **high/very high digital use category (72.6%)** This means they have the skills and devices to access the internet.



● In the 2018/19 Academic year, **68% of Maidstone pupils** achieved a standard **pass in Maths and English at GCSE** compared to 66% in Kent.

Maidstone district has **26 electoral wards.**



# Maidstone district by ward

Maidstone district has **26 electoral wards**.

---

**1** Allington

---

**2** Barming and Teston

---

**3** Bearsted

---

**4** Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton

---

**5** Boxley

---

**6** Bridge

---

**7** Detling and Thurnham

---

**8** Downswood and Otham

---

**9** East

---

**10** Fant

---

**11** Harrietsham and Lenham

---

**12** Headcorn

---

**13** Heath

---

**14** High Street

---

**15** Leeds

---

**16** Marden and Yalding

---

**17** North

---

**18** North Downs

---

**19** Park Wood

---

**20** Shepway North

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**21** Shepway South

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**22** Staplehurst

---

**23** Sutton Valence and Langley

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**24** Coxheath and Hunton

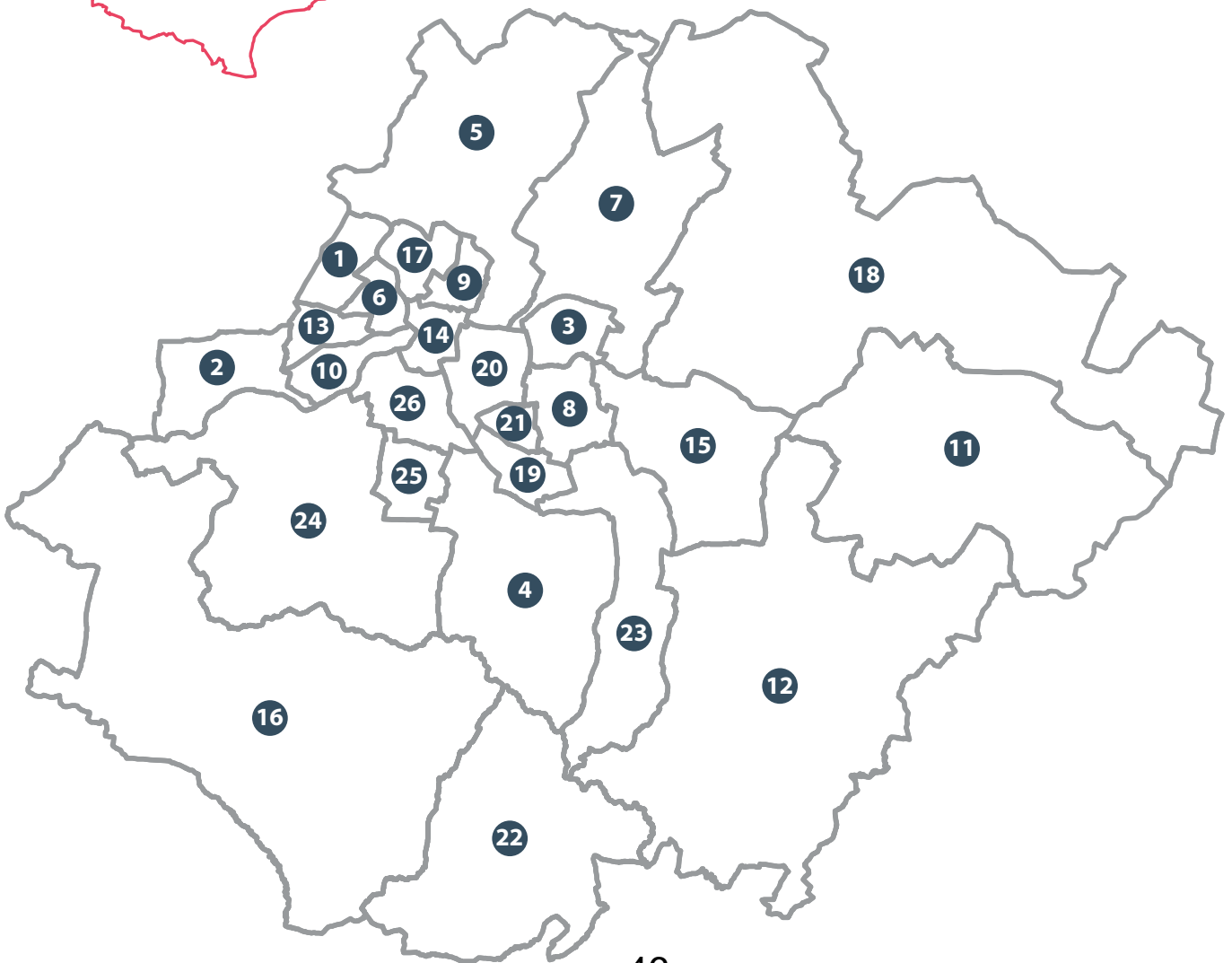
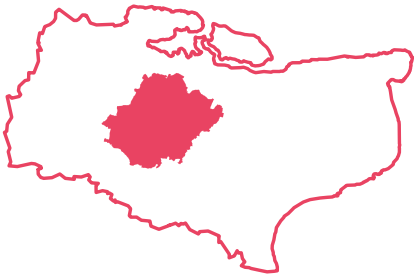
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**25** Loose

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**26** South

# Maidstone




# Buildings we are proposing to deliver services from in Maidstone

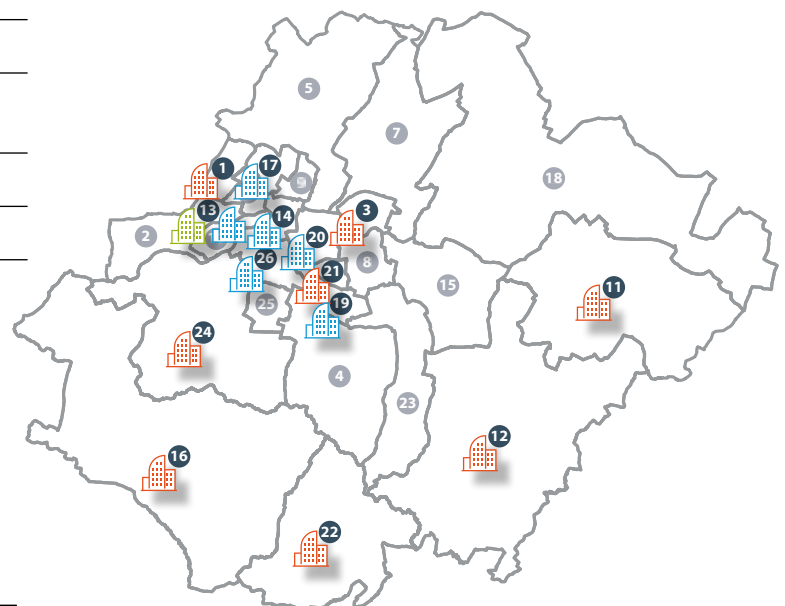
Ward.	Building.	Proposed future use.
<b>Proposed Community Hubs</b>		
<b>13 Heath.</b>	Oakwood House.	Community Learning and Skills, Registration (and coroners).
<b>17 North.</b>	Kent History & Library Centre.	Library and Gateway.
<b>Family Hubs</b>		
<b>13 Heath.</b>	West Borough Children's Centre.	
<b>14 High Street.</b>	Sunshine Children's Centre. Info Zone (Youth centre).	
<b>19 Park Wood.</b>	The Meadows Children's Centre.	
<b>20 Shepway North.</b>	Greenfields Children's Centre.	
<b>Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities</b>		
<b>26 South.</b>	Maidstone House.	
<b>Libraries</b>		
<b>1 Allington.</b>	Allington Library.	
<b>3 Bearsted.</b>	Madginford Library. Bearsted Library.	
<b>11 Harrietsham and Lenham.</b>	Lenham Library.	
<b>12 Headcorn.</b>	Headcorn Library.	
<b>16 Marden and Yalding.</b>	Yalding Library. Marden Library.	
<b>21 Shepway South.</b>	Shepway Library.	
<b>22 Staplehurst.</b>	Staplehurst Library.	
<b>24 Coxheath and Hunton.</b>	Coxheath Library.	

## Maidstone district by ward

Permanent Buildings 

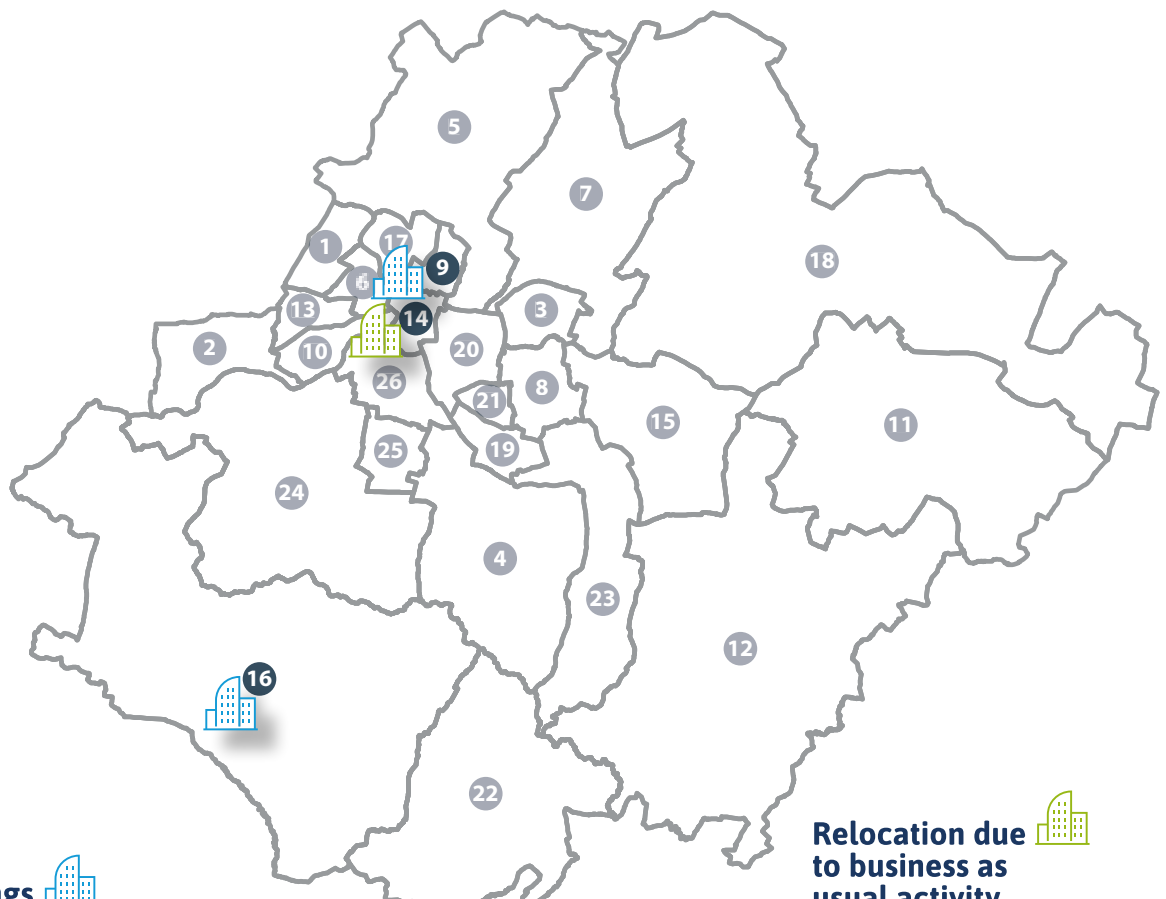
Buildings not part of this consultation 

Relocation due to business as usual activity 



# Buildings we are proposing to leave in Maidstone

Ward.	Building.	Potential Outcome.	Nearest alternative.	Distance Miles.
<b>Children's Centres and Youth Hubs</b>				
<b>9 East.</b>	East Borough Children's Centre.		Sunshine Children's Centre.	1.6
			Greenfields Children's Centre.	2.4
<b>16 Marden and Yalding.</b>	Marden Children's Centre.		Proposed Community Hub at Cranbrook Library (Tunbridge Wells).	7.4
			Greenfields Children's Centre.	8.1
<b>Community Learning and Skills</b>				
<b>14 High Street.</b>	Maidstone Adult Education Centre.		Reopening at Oakwood House.	1.1
	Maidstone Adult Education Centre Skills Centre Plus.		Reopening at Oakwood House.	1.5



Maidstone district by ward

Permanent Buildings 

Relocation due to business as usual activity. 

## How need has informed the design in Maidstone

Our proposals have been based on data and evidence, including service user needs, transport and broadband connectivity.



**1 Detling and Thurnham have lower levels of need**, and therefore a **digital offer** will be a good primary delivery method, giving residents the ability to **engage with services online** as well as for those in **rural areas** such as **Barming and Teston**.



**2 High Street, Park Wood and Shepway North** are areas of **Maidstone** where there is a **high concentration of children impacted by deprivation**. Family Hubs would operate from permanent buildings in these wards.



**3 Marden & Yalding ward, Shepway South and Coxheath & Hunton have high need and poor transport connectivity**. Family Hubs, Health Visiting Service and other multiagency community partners will deliver **outreach to those with identified needs** in these wards.



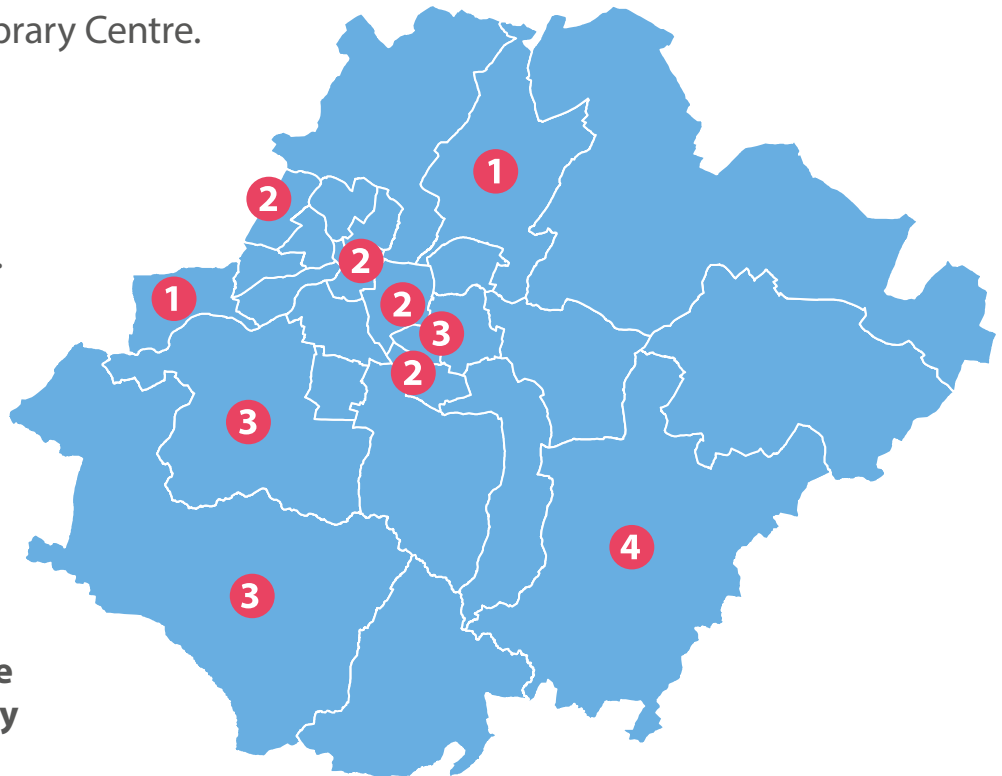
**4 Headcorn's population is increasing**, it does have some **good transport links** enabling people to access services in other wards however there are some places where this is an issue, and with **poor Broadband speeds** in the area and **digital access** a challenge a **Start for Life outreach offer will be made here for families**.





By working better together, services **could deliver outreach** in the following buildings:

- Allington Library.
- The Meadows Children’s Centre.
- Greenfields Children’s Centre.
- Shepway Library.
- Coxheath Library.
- Kent History and Library Centre.
- Lenham Library.
- Maidstone House.
- Staplehurst Library.
- Madingford Library.
- Headcorn Library.
- Yalding Library.



We are also looking to explore future opportunities to **share buildings with partners including the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector** who can also support localised need e.g. Foodbanks.



# Access to our buildings

Being able to access a community building for support, even if not the specific service they need, will be **key for helping** to connect the most **vulnerable groups in Maidstone**.



In the future, Maidstone would have **2 community hubs that house more than one service. As well as: 5 Family Hubs, 9 Libraries, 1 Centre for Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities.**

## Maidstone community hubs

### Service.

Community Learning and Skills, Registration (and coroners).  
Library and Gateway.

### Building.

Oakwood House.  
Kent History & Library Centre.

## Access to a community building

### Total Maidstone Households.

75,287

% of Maidstone Households Within 30 Minute Public Transport Catchment of a community services building.

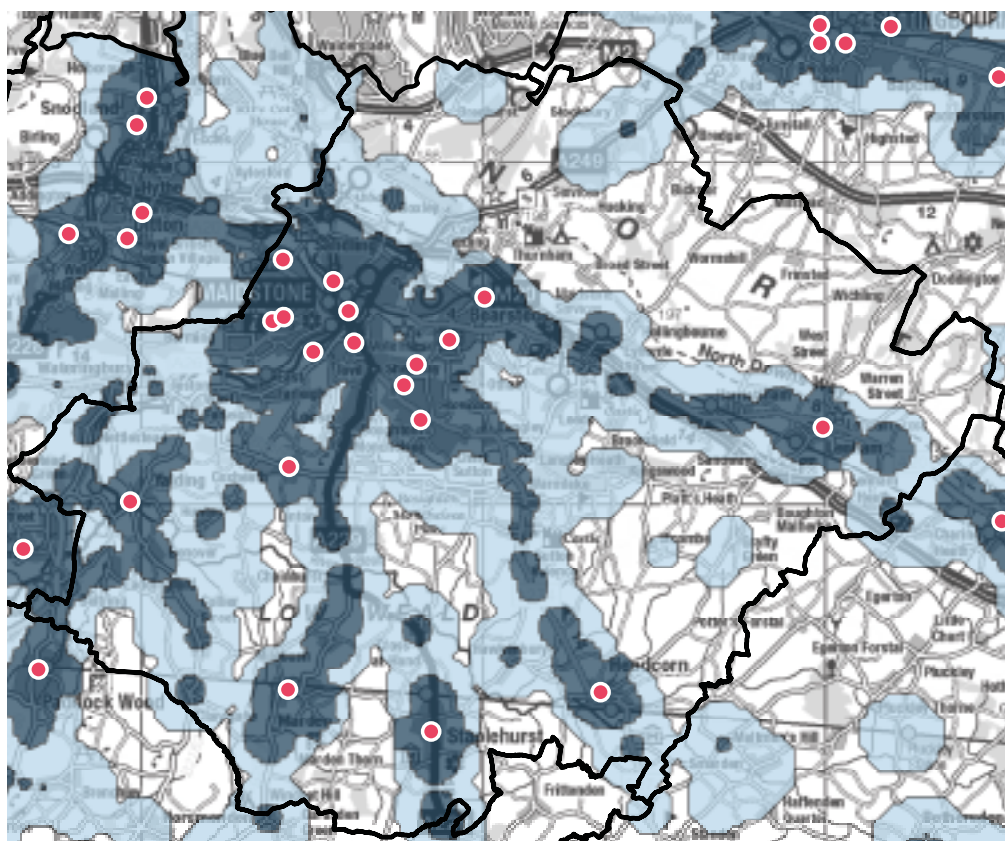
96%

Maidstone Households Within 30 Minute Public Transport Catchment of a community services building.

72,253

Maidstone Households Outside 30 Minute Public Transport Catchment of a community services building.

3,034



Building

0-15 minutes travel on public transport

15-30 minutes travel on public transport

## How could services be delivered in Maidstone?

We want our model to be **flexible to the demands and needs of the community**, making it sustainable for the future.



### Examples of current outreach in Maidstone:

**Joint activities** take place with **Golding Homes** and **The Princes Trust** such as **family fun days** that include parenting support, healthy lifestyles and advice and guidance services.

**Joint programmes** delivered with **Community, Learning and Skills** such as 'Creative Paperwork's delivered from the locations including **Maidstone Islamic Centre**.

Local parks are used as spaces to deliver **activity programmes and events** for children and families throughout the year.

We know that **young people** can't always get to designated youth hubs in the evenings so we offer **detached youth work** in those areas where young people live.

**Public health** services use space at **Headcorn, Coxheath** and **Molehill Copse Clinic** to deliver services like **Infant feeding, child health clinics and developmental checks**.

**Community Learning and Skills** use space at **33** different locations for outreach, such as **Barming Primary School** to deliver **Family Programmes** and **RBLI Community Hub** to deliver **Neighbourhood learning** in Deprived Communities.

**Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities** has over 70 clients in **Maidstone** - they already use **Maidstone YMCA** for Boccia as well as using existing permanent buildings such as **libraries** for delivering **activities**.

**Please note** outreach points are subject to demand, need and resources, the above is a representation of what could be delivered in Maidstone.

*Erin lives in Bearsted and works in a care home on the outskirts of town. She is a confident digital user and often does her shopping, bookings and banking online. Erin has completed several online learning courses including one to enhance her digital skills in the workplace.*



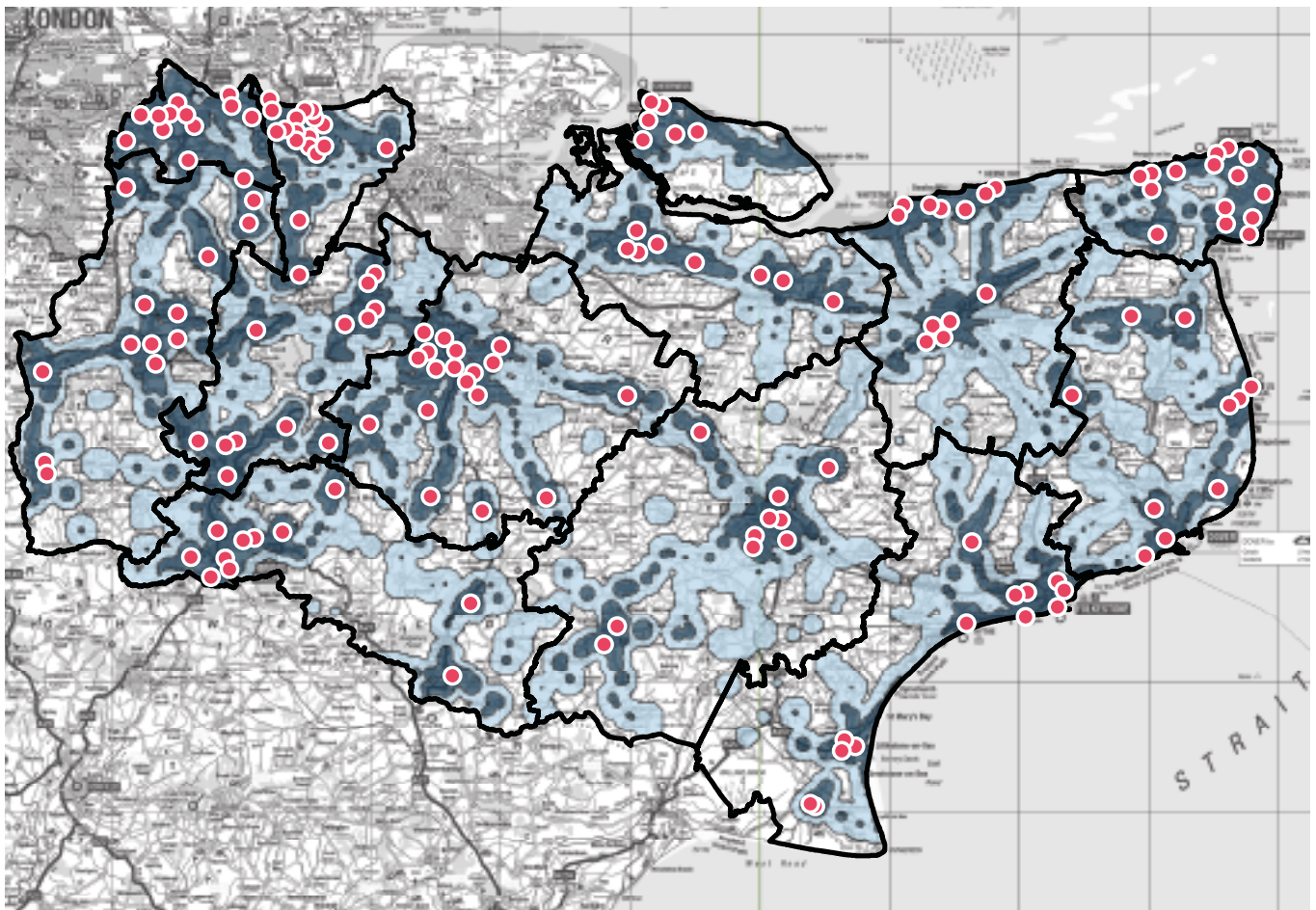
# Kent wide



## Access to our buildings

Being able to access a community building for support, even if not the specific service they need, will be **key for helping** to connect the most **vulnerable groups across the county**.

**97% of Kent households will be within 30 minutes travel time of at least one of our buildings**, using public transport.



Building 

0-15 minutes travel on public transport 

15-30 minutes travel on public transport 



**COMMUNITY**  
Services Consultation

Design Handbook

Maidstone Locality





# Agenda Item 15

**Communities, Housing & Environment Policy  
Advisory Committee**

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

## **Temporary Accommodation Acquisition (phase 6) and the Local Authority Housing Fund**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities, Housing & Environment Policy Advisory Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Executive	22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2023

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	EXECUTIVE
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Alison Elliott, Development Project Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	ALL

### **Executive Summary**

There is £32m allocated within the capital programme agreed by Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 for a further (6<sup>th</sup>) phase of investment in purchase and repair properties for use as Temporary Accommodation to help alleviate homelessness. This paper sets out the number and type of accommodation to be acquired.

The £32m budget for Temporary Accommodation is profiled over three years in the programme, agreed by Council last week - £12 million in 2023/24, £12 million in 2024/25 and £8 million in 2025/26. There is also an underspend within the capital programme for Temporary Accommodation of £3.8m, which equals a budget for 2023/24 of £15.8m.

The report also details the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) that makes £2.5m of grant funding available to the Council by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities that can be used to supplement this overall program.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

**This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendations to the Executive:**

1. That the Director of Regeneration and Place be given delegated authority to determine the exact size, quantum and type of temporary accommodation required; and
2. That the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Health, to purchase properties as determined by the Director of Regeneration and Place in Recommendation 1, for use as temporary accommodation up to the total value of £15.8m in 2023/24; and
3. That the Council participate in the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) in accordance with its allocation set out in the report, and for the Director of Regeneration and Place to finalise the deployment of these monies in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing; and
4. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be authorised to negotiate and complete all necessary legal documentation and formalities to give effect to these recommendations.

**1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the corporate objectives around Homes & Communities. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 3.	Head of New Business & Development
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	By supporting those who are homeless and vulnerable to have access to appropriate accommodation, which is of a decent standard the report addresses the issues of deprivation and social mobility.	Head of New Business & Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	Already covered in the risk section.	Head of New Business & Development
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings within the capital programme and so there is no need for new/additional funding for implementation of this project. The financial saving from investment in acquiring properties, in terms of reduced spend on nightly paid accommodation, means that borrowing for this purpose is sustainable.	Senior Finance Manager (Client Accountancy)
<b>Staffing</b>	The work towards completing any property purchases will be established using existing staff resources within the New Business & Development Team and Mid-Kent Legal Services.  External on-costs will be incurred in respect of delivering the program – consultants appointed for the property identification, valuation, survey.	Head of New Business & Development
<b>Legal</b>	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of these Acts.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning



	<p>The Council has a general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation.</p> <p>Section 20(1)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to acquire land to be used for the benefit, improvement or development of their area; or for the purpose of discharging the Council's functions.</p> <p>Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out in the Constitution and the statutory provisions referred to above.</p>	
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team
<b>Equalities</b>	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone.	Policy & Information Manager
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will have no impact on Crime and Disorder. The Community Protection Team have been consulted and mitigation has been proposed	Head of Service or Manager
<b>Procurement</b>	Officers have contracts in place for external consultants to assist with the project  All were appointed within procedure rules.	Head of New Business & Development & Section 151 Officer
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered.</p> <p>Additional properties as part of MBC's portfolio will increase the energy consumption and therefore CO2e produced by the additional properties purchased. The additional properties will be added to the decarbonisation plans currently being</p>	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

	formulated to ensure they, along with all MBC assets, are in line with our Net Zero commitments by 2030.	
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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The success achieved in providing Council owned temporary accommodation has been reported previously to the CHE Committee since starting the programme in 2017. The success of phases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 has increased the Council's portfolio by 50 units. These properties are used to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households and rough sleepers.

2.2 Properties purchased so far are:

No of Properties	No. of Beds
2	1
22	2
21	3
4	4
1	4 bed - HMO
Total 50	

2.3 The Purchase & Repair programme provides a more cost-effective solution for the Council than nightly paid accommodation. The average cost of nightly paid accommodation is:

No. of beds	Cost per night (£)
1	40
2	55
3	60
4	70+

2.4 Purchasing and maintaining the asset is more favourable to the Council to be able to sustain control over the stock, with the net rents chargeable largely covering the cost of financing the portfolio. It also provides better accommodation for applicants, as our temporary accommodation is of good quality, self-contained and located within our Borough boundary.

## 2.5 Rent charge for properties within the housing portfolio

No. of beds	LHA Rental income (£)
1	149.59
2	187.56
3	224.38
4	287.67

- 2.6 This report makes recommendations to source further properties for temporary accommodation to meet the additional demand, using the approved budget of £12m for 2023/24 plus the underspend of £3.8m brought forward from previous phases of the Purchase & Repair Programme. There are further amounts in the capital programme of £12m in 2024/25 and £8m in 2025/26 for temporary accommodation and member approval will be sought to release these amounts in due course.
- 2.7 Data suggests that accommodation ranging from 1 to 4-bedroom properties would best suit the Council's needs. It is therefore proposed that the budget of £15.8m is used to purchase approximately 80 more properties with a target unit mix of: 30% 1-bed, 10% 2-bed, 25% 3-bed and 35% 4-bed.
- 2.8 DMS & Clairglow will whenever possible, undertake the necessary safety checks, carry out any refurbishment, undertake the gas safety testing and any works to the heating systems on the properties purchased.
- 2.9 Furthermore, all Councils were awarded monies by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in the form of Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to provide homes for households from both Ukraine and Afghanistan. This is a nationwide £500m fund, but Maidstone's allocation for 22/23 and 23/24 totals £2,473,597 to provide 17 homes, which can be delivered through a wide variety of means. The objectives of this fund are as follows: -
- Ensure recent humanitarian schemes (Afghan and Ukraine schemes) which offer sanctuary, via an organised safe and legal entry route to those fleeing conflict, provide sufficient longer-term accommodation to those they support.
  - Support areas with housing pressures which have generously welcomed substantial numbers of Ukrainian refugees so that these areas are not disadvantaged by increased pressures from these arrivals on the existing housing and homelessness systems.
  - Mitigate the expected increased pressures on local authority homelessness and social housing resources which arise from the eligible cohort (as defined in the programme prospectus) as sponsorship/family placements/bridging accommodation arrangements come to an end by increasing the provision of affordable housing to those in the cohort who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in bridging accommodation;
  - Utilise accommodation solutions to enable effective resettlement and economic integration of the eligible cohort;
  - Reduce emergency, temporary and bridging accommodation costs;
  - Deliver accommodation that as far as possible allows for the future conversion of housing units to support wider local authority housing

and homelessness responsibilities to UK nationals (i.e., after usage by this cohort ends);

- Reduce impacts on the existing housing and homelessness systems and those waiting for social housing.

2.10 The LAHF provides a lot of flexibility as to how these homes can be delivered, refurbishment of existing Council owned stock, purchase of second-hand stock, or purchase or development of new stock. The aim of the LAHF is to provide settled accommodation at below market rents (80% of market rent capped but capped at the Local Housing Allowance) to households displaced from those two countries, with the Council in control of the allocation process too. Should this specific need ever dissipate, the properties can be let to other households in housing need, or the properties sold, and the grant returned or recycled.

2.11 The grant rates are very attractive at 40% of total unit cost for 1,2 & 3 bed units and 50% for 4 bed units, plus an extra £20,000 for each unit too.

2.12 It is felt that the LAHF can be closely aligned to the Council's intended Purchase & Repair Programme which is aimed at providing Temporary Accommodation more generally, i.e. those households that will be assisted by the LAHF will already be experiencing (or about to be) a high level of housing need within the borough and so would likely be requiring housing support from the Council in one guise or another.

2.13 Therefore, the LAHF could take as much as 20% of the Purchase & Repair Program but will add a further c £2.5m to the £16.3m investment pot.

2.14 The Council is not obliged to accept these monies but the recommendation from Officers to the Cabinet to this point is that the Council should. Accordingly, the DLUHC Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into, but the Council can withdraw or reduce its level of participation at any stage.

2.15 The Council did not receive its indicative allocation until 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023 and the program was not signposted prior to this, and the proposed deadline of delivery of the units is 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

2.16 More generally, the Council has a very large capital program focused on housing development and acquisition (Temporary Accommodation, Affordable Accommodation and Private Rented Sector (PRS) Accommodation), so in theory the Council could allocate some existing TA and PRS accommodation already in our portfolio towards the LAHF, as it would evidently be "backfilling" the loss of these units through our current capital programs. There could be an opportunity here to bring any long-term void Council owned TA or PRS stock back into use.

2.17 Therefore, the case to participate is both compelling on financial grounds, given the attractive grant rates available, and that these are households that the Council would likely be assisting in one guise or another regardless of our participation.

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### 3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1: Continue with the Purchase & Repair Program into phase 6, to increase the Council's portfolio of Temporary Accommodation properties with additional 1 – 4-bedroom units within the agreed budget of £15.8m.
  - 3.2 Option 2: Continue with the Purchase & Repair Program into phase 6, to increase the Council's portfolio of Temporary Accommodation properties with additional 1 – 4-bedroom units within the agreed budget of £15.8m, and supplement this by participating in the LAHF too.
  - 3.3 Option 3: Do nothing. Officers do not purchase any further properties, with an increased financial risk to the Council in providing nightly paid accommodation.
- 

#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option 2, as stated in paragraph 3.1 above, is recommended. This will ensure that further properties are sourced increasing the Council's portfolio of Temporary Accommodation in the most cost-effective manner, and the overall program is supplemented with grant monies from DLUHC
- 

#### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
- 5.2 If ultimately the need for the properties were to diminish in time for their intended use, they could be converted to PRS housing within Maidstone Property Holdings Limited or sold.

#### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 To date the project has been very successful and well received by Members
- 

#### **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 Subject to the decision made by the Executive, Officers will proceed with the investment activity.
  - 7.2 Each property being considered for purchase will be approved on a case-by-case basis (in consultation with the Lead Member) and be in accordance with the relevant temporary accommodation standards and acceptance criteria. Ward Councillors will also continue to be notified of the Council's intention to purchase any property that falls within their ward.
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

None

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Purchase & Repair, Temporary Accommodation Acquisition -**24<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

Purchase & Repair, Temporary Accommodation Acquisition –  
**2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021**