

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 19 September 2023  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors English (Chairman), Cannon, Mrs Blackmore, Cleator (Vice-Chairman), Conyard, Hastie, Hinder, Clark, Eagle, Munford, Round, S Thompson and Webb

*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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4. Notification of Visiting Members	
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**Issued on Monday 11 September 2023**

**Continued Over/:**

*Alison Broom*

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive**

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## **PART II**

**To move that the public be excluded for the items set out in Part II of the Agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reasons specified having applied the Public Interest Test.**

### **Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description**

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## **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 15 September 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 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on Friday 15 September 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 the [Council's Website](#).

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 AUGUST 2023**

##### **Attendees:**

<b>Committee Members:</b>	<b>Councillors English (Chairman), Mrs Blackmore, Cannon, Cleator, Conyard, English, Forecast, Hastie, Jeffery, Jones, Kimmance, Munford and Webb</b>
<b>Cabinet Members:</b>	<b>Councillors Burton, (Leader of the Council), Perry (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services) and Russell (Cabinet Member for Communities, Arts and Leisure)</b>
<b>Visiting Members:</b>	<b>Councillors Cox and Naghi</b>

##### 51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clark, Eagle, Hinder, Round and S Thompson.

##### 52. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor Forecast for Councillor Round
- Councillor Jeffery for Councillor S Thompson
- Councillor Jones for Councillor Eagle
- Councillor Kimmance for Councillor Clark

##### 53. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that there was an urgent update to Item 12 – Cabinet Forward Plan because an updated version of the document had been published on 11 August 2023, and would support the Committee in its pre-decision scrutiny.

##### 54. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

The following Visiting Members were present for Item 14 – Receipt of Call-In – Relevant Procedure (Strategic CIL Assessment & Spend):

- Councillors Burton, Perry and Russell as Cabinet Members and Councillor Naghi as one of the Members that submitted the call-in request.

For Item 15 – Receipt of Call-In – Relevant Procedure (Archbishops Palace):

- Councillors Burton, Perry and Russell as Cabinet Members and Councillor Cox.

55. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

56. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

57. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That Item 16 – Exempt Appendix to Item 15 – Receipt of Call-In – Relevant Procedure (Archbishops Palace) be taken in private due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

58. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2023

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

59. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

60. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from Local Residents.

61. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members.

62. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Principal Democratic Services Officer stated that an additional issue had been submitted for decision in September 2023, concerning the Council's response to the Kent County Council public consultation on the Kent Community Warden Scheme, following the Committee's previous interest in the matter.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the Council's response to the Kent Community Warden Scheme.

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman stated that the Committee Work Programme would be reviewed in detail at the next meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

64. RECEIPT OF CALL-IN - RELEVANT PROCEDURE (STRATEGIC CIL ASSESSMENT & SPEND)

The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and stated that the Committee was being asked to consider the call-in request received against the Cabinet decision made, which were shown respectively at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report. The options available to the Committee were outlined.

Councillors Naghi, Munford and English outlined their reasoning for calling-in the decision. The issues raised were that:

- The Linton Crossroad Junction (LCR) was the second most dangerous in Kent and that the junction improvement should take place to improve safety and mitigate road congestion;
- Safety was not discussed enough by the Cabinet in its deliberations, with the urgent update provided to the Cabinet at its July 2023 meeting referenced;
- The Linton Crossroads Improvement scheme (the scheme) was part of the infrastructure delivery plan (IDP), within the adopted local plan (2017);
- The funding had been collected for the scheme, which could be delivered by Kent County Council's Highways department following engagement with and by that authority's design and delivery teams; and
- There was concern over the collection of monies that were not then used on road improvement schemes.

In referencing the Cabinet's decision at appendix 2 to the report, it was stated that the scheme was ready for implementation whereas other schemes were not. The Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee (PIED PAC) had supported allocating funding to the scheme and had recommended a time-delivery clause on the funding's provision, to enable the funds to be returned should the scheme not be delivered by the infrastructure provider.

The Leader of the Council addressed the Committee to outline his reasoning for the decision and stated that:

- The Cabinet had a lack of confidence in the scheme's delivery, given the performance of KCC Highways and that the authority already held funds for other improvement schemes that had not been used;
- The proposed LCR scheme was not currently ready for delivery;
- KCC were consulting on a different Linton Crossroads improvement scheme at the time of the Cabinet's decision, that was not the scheme bid for and would cost a different amount. It was unusual to make a decision on the matter when there was an ongoing public consultation;

- The safety of the junction was important, but some of the incidents shown in the cluster map of the urgent update at appendix 3 to the report were outside of the proposed scheme area, and the improvements from the proposed scheme would be marginal; and
- Other road improvement schemes could be progressed, with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) process currently being reviewed.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts stated that it was the provision of funding, as opposed to the scheme itself that had been rejected. It was reiterated that other road improvements scheme were required, such as in Coxheath and the Fountain Lane improvement scheme that could be re-visited and developed by KCC.

In response to questions:

- The Director of Regeneration and Place stated that the grant agreements between the Council and infrastructure providers would include delivery milestones. This would allow the funding to be returned and re-allocated if a scheme was not progressing. As the schemes submitted to the CIL bidding process were generally not well developed, only four had been recommended for funding approval; and
- The Head of Development Management stated that they did not know if KCC highways and the landowners had had detailed discussions on the proposed scheme. KCC had only submitted the M20 Junction 7 Signalisation and Linton Crossroads schemes to the CIL bidding process and had stated that the latter was delivery ready. The considerations made in testing a scheme's reasonableness were outlined, including delivery within five years.

KCC had indicated that the Fountain Lane junction improvement scheme did not achieve the cost benefit ratio required to progress the scheme, whereas the Linton Crossroads scheme does. KCC would be able to use compulsory purchase powers if required, as the highways authority.

In response to comments, the Leader stated that:

- The proposed scheme was not currently deliverable; the land purchases required could take a long time to finalise and the CIL funding could be directed to other schemes that were more deliverable;
- Having met with KCC recently, a cost-benefit analysis had not taken place for the Linton Crossroads scheme as it was not a requirement given the schemes small size. Pre-application discussions were ongoing with the relevant landowners, but the lands availability was not confirmed;
- The decision made gave the Council greater control of the CIL funds; as should the LCR scheme continue to be developed by KCC and become delivery ready, the funding could be provided. If an alternative scheme was delivery ready earlier, the funding could be directed to that scheme; and
- The Cabinet would receive a report on the CIL process by November 2023, which the Committee able to conduct pre-decision scrutiny if it wished to.

During the discussion, several Committee Members stated that whilst the Fountain Lane junction required improvement, additional funding would be needed to progress the scheme, that it required property purchases, and had not been an option included within the Cabinet agenda papers. It was felt that the LCR scheme should take place to improve the safety of the junction, given the number of incidents at the location, its proximity to the local school and lack of pedestrian controls at the local bus stop. The PIED PAC's support and recommendations on the matter were reiterated, alongside the consultant's advice and that the junction improvement was within the Council's IDP. The second scheme design being consulted on was stated to require the same funding allocation.

Some Members expressed concerns on the LCR scheme, as it differed to that being publicly consulted on and the land purchases required had not been agreed, which would take time. There were other schemes that could be progressed by KCC, with it stated that the Cabinet decision made allowing for greater control and flexibility in use of the CIL funding. There were questions raised on whether the design submitted would address the safety concerns at the site and the surrounding road network.

Overall, the Committee felt that the Cabinet should give further consideration to the LCR scheme, particularly on improving safety, the project's feasibility including land delivery, and whether a time-restricted funding provision could be used.

**RESOLVED:** That the matter be referred back to the Cabinet to:

- a. Reconsider the issues around the Linton Crossroads Junction Improvement scheme, in particular concerning pedestrians and road safety, land delivery and the feasibility of delivering the project and consider whether there should be a claw-back mechanism; and
- b. Consider what action can be taken in conjunction with prospective future rounds of CIL bids, in bringing forward the Hart Street and Fountain Lane – Hermitage Lane Junctions.

65. RECEIPT OF CALL-IN - RELEVANT PROCEDURE (ARCHBISHOPS PALACE)

The Principal Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and stated that the Committee was being asked to consider the call-in request received against the Cabinet decision made which were shown respectively at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report. The options available to the Committee were outlined.

**RESOLVED:** That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified, having applied the Public Interest Test:

**Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description**

Item 16 – Exempt Appendix to  
Item 15 – Receipt of 'Call-In' –  
Relevant Procedure, Archbishops  
Palace

3 – Financial/Business Affairs

The Chairman outlined the reasoning for calling-in the decision.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services gave assurance that the financial information as contained within the exempt appendix to the report was robust, and the Leader of the Council stated that the decision made was to develop plans for the site's use, as opposed to a final decision. The plans would contain the details relating to the proposal.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts referenced the building's monthly maintenance costs, which could be mitigated by using the building. All three Cabinet Members emphasised the importance of the building as a historic site.

During the discussion, questions were asked on the financial information generally, the costs relating to the commercial kitchen and whether any alternative options had been considered. In response, the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement explained the financial information in detail and stated that the project was viable for the Council to undertake. The Interim Strategic Property Consultant outlined the proposed kitchen's cost, alternatives considered, proposed location within the site and confirmed that it was required to support the site's use as a wedding and events venue.

The Committee returned to open session at 9.24 p.m.

Having been provided with additional information on the matter, the Committee felt that no further action was required, and that the original decision should be implemented. The Committee wished to continue having oversight on the matter and would conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the selection of a site operator ahead of the Cabinet's decision in November 2023.

**RESOLVED:** That Option 1 of the report, to agree that no further action is required, be approved.

Note: Councillor Munford left the meeting at 8.38 p.m. ahead of the private discussion, with Councillor Cox sitting as Substitute.

66. EXEMPT APPENDIX TO ITEM 15 - RECEIPT OF 'CALL-IN' - RELEVANT PROCEDURE, ARCHBISHOPS PALACE

**RESOLVED:** That the item be considered alongside Item 15 – Receipt of 'Call-In' – Relevant Procedure – Archbishops Palace.

67. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 9.26 p.m.

Note: The Committee adjourned for a short break between 7.34 p.m. to 7.40 p.m.

# MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

## FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 SEPTEMBER 2023 TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

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:

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

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.

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

<b>Details of the Decision to be taken</b>	<b>Decision to be taken by</b>	<b>Relevant Cabinet 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>
<p>Maidstone Local Plan Review: Proposed Main Modifications and Minor Changes</p> <p>Report seeking authority from Cabinet via PIED PAC to consult on the Local Plan Review Inspector's 'Main Modifications' as part of the ongoing Independent Examination. Various other matters to be published at same time and report sets these out too.</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	20 Sep 2023	No	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 18 Sep 2023	Maidstone Local Plan Review: Proposed Main Modifications and Minor Changes	<p><b>Mark Egerton, Erik Nilsen</b></p> <p>markegerton@maidstone.gov.uk, ErikNilsen@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>
1st Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Sep 2023	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 11 Sep 2023	1st Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	<p><b>Paul Holland</b></p> <p>paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

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<p>Waste Crime Fixed Penalty Notices</p> <p>Review of the value of the FPNs for waste crime offences following the Government's increase in the maximum value.</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services	20 Sep 2023	No	No Open	Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 7 Sep 2023	Waste Crime Fixed Penalty Notices	<p><b>Jennifer Stevens</b></p> <p>Head of Environmental Services &amp; Public Realm</p> <p>jenniferstevens@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2029 - Saving Proposals</p> <p>10 Proposals and Fees and Charges</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Sep 2023	Yes	No Open	<p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Sep 2023</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Sep 2023</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 7 Sep 2023</p>	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2029 - Saving Proposals and Fees and Charges for CS PAC.	<p><b>Mark Green, Adrian Lovegrove</b></p> <p>Director of Finance, Resources &amp; Business Improvement, Head of Finance</p> <p>markgreen@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@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
						Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 11 Sep 2023  Overview & Scrutiny Committee 19 Sep 2023		
<p>Public consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme (KCWS)</p> <p>Kent County Council are currently undertaking a public consultation on the provision of Kent Community Wardens. In order to meet financial pressures there is a proposal to significantly reduce the wardens. This is likely to significantly impact on vulnerable residents who are supported by this well established service.</p>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Before 29 Sep 2023	Yes	No	Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 7 Sep 2023  Overview & Scrutiny Committee 19 Sep 2023	Public consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme (KCWS)	<p><b>Martyn Jeynes</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:martynjeynes@maidstone.gov.uk">martynjeynes@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>

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MBC Housing Management Policies  Views are sought on a range of housing management policies that will inform officers and tenants of the Council's new affordable housing portfolio.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	2 Oct 2023	No	No Open	Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 7 Sep 2023	MBC Housing Management Policies	<b>John Littlemore</b>  Head of Housing & Regulatory Services  johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk
Air Quality Action Plan  Air quality action plan developed as a result of revised air quality management area	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services	25 Oct 2023	No	No Open	Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 10 Oct 2023	Air Quality Action Plan	<b>Duncan Haynes, Stuart Maxwell</b>  duncan.haynes@midkent.gov.uk, stuart.maxwell@midkent.gov.uk
Town Centre Strategy – Consultation Report  A report on the next stage of the Town Centre Strategy	Cabinet	Leader of the Council	25 Oct 2023	No	No Open	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 18 Sep 2023	Town Centre Strategy - Consultation Report	<b>Karen Britton, Alison Broom</b>  karenbritton@maidstone.gov.uk, alisonbroom@maidstone.gov.uk

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Maidstone Leisure Centre - Operator Contract  A report on Maidstone Leisure Centre	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	25 Oct 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 3 Oct 2023	Maidstone Leisure Centre	<b>Mike Evans</b>  mikeevans@maidstone.gov.uk
Consideration of a proposal to extend and improvement works to Medway street carpark	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	25 Oct 2023	No	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 11 Oct 2023	Consideration of a proposal to extend and improvement works to Medway street carpark	<b>Katie Exon</b>  Head of Property and Leisure  katieexon@maidstone.gov.uk
Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25  Each year the Council is required to review it's annual localised Council Tax Reduction scheme. The report is required to go to Cabinet with a final approval by Full Council prior to 11 March.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	25 Oct 2023	Yes	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 11 Oct 2023	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25	<b>Zoe Kent</b>  Interim Head of Revenues & Benefits  zoekent@swale.gov.uk

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<p>Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill:</p> <p>Consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	25 Oct 2023	No	No Open	<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 4 Oct 2023</p>	<p>Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms</p>	<p><b>Jennie Cullern, Tom Gilbert</b></p> <p>JennieCullern@Maidstone.gov.uk, tomgilbert@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
<p>Property Acquisition for 1000 Affordable homes programme</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	25 Oct 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	<p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 10 Oct 2023</p> <p>Notification to ward members and briefing Cabinet and Lead member for HHE PAC</p>	<p>Property Acquisition for 1000 Affordable homes programme</p>	<p><b>Chris Nixon</b></p> <p>ChrisNixon@Maidstone.gov.uk</p>
<p>Property Acquisition</p> <p>The Council has an ambitious housebuilding programme that is funded via the Council's adopted Capital Programme. The development strategy for</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	25 Oct 2023	Yes	No Part exempt	<p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 10 Oct 2023</p>	<p>Property Acquisition</p>	<p><b>Rachael Bennett, Philip Morris</b></p> <p>RachaelBennett@Maidstone.gov.uk, philipmorris@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

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the programme was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in January 2022, and the proposal is consistent with delivering that strategy.						Notification to Ward members and briefing to Executive and Lead Member to PAC		
<p>Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour relating to dogs Updating our enforcement tools</p> <p>The current Dog Control PSPO expires on 20th October. PSPOs have to be renewed every 3 years. A public consultation has been undertaken on a number of updated measures to tackle a range of issues, including fouling, dogs out of control and areas where dogs should be excluded or kept on a lead.</p>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Before 28 Oct 2023	Yes	No	Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 7 Sep 2023	Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour relating to dogs Updating our enforcement tools	<p><b>Martyn Jeynes</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:martynjeynes@maidstone.gov.uk">martynjeynes@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>

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16 2nd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	22 Nov 2023	No	No Open	<p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 7 Nov 2023</p> <p>Planning Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 8 Nov 2023</p> <p>Housing Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 14 Nov 2023</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2023</p>	2nd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	<p><b>Paul Holland, Adrian Lovegrove</b></p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

<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>
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	22 Nov 2023	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 7 Nov 2023	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	<b>Anna Collier, Orla Sweeney</b>  annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk
<del>Housing Revenue Account</del>  The report sets out the options for management and financial accounting of the 1,000 new affordable homes.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	22 Nov 2023	Yes	No Open	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 15 Nov 2023	Housing Revenue Account	<b>John Littlemore</b>  Head of Housing & Regulatory Services  johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk

## Maidstone Borough Council

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme, 2023-24 Municipal Year

<b>Review Title &amp; Objectives</b>	<b>Expected Start Date</b>	<b>Issue Type</b>	<b>Relevant Officer/s</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
<u>Enforcement</u>  To focus on Environmental and Waste Crime Enforcement	October 2023	Committee Review	Jen Stevens, Head of Environment and Public Realm.  Additional Officers to be identified.	From October 2023 – tbc.
<u>Health Inequality</u>  To: - focus on the impact of poor-quality housing on health inequality - increase understanding of health inequalities across the borough	To be confirmed.	Committee Review	Alison Broom, Chief Executive,  John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services  Senior Public Health Officer	To be confirmed.
<u>Water Management Cycle – Second Stage Review</u>  To review the remaining elements identified by the working group through its first review.	July 2023.	Committee Review	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement  Uche Olufemi, Emergency Planning & Resilience Manager  Karen Britton, Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development	July – to be confirmed 2023.  Formal Report – November 2023 (estimated).

<b>Review Title &amp; Objectives</b>	<b>Expected Start Date</b>	<b>Issue Type</b>	<b>Relevant Officer/s</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
<u>Annual Scrutiny Report</u>	January 2024	Constitutional Requirement and best practice	Oliviya Parfitt, Principal Democratic Services Officer	Draft – January 2023  Final – February 2023, after which the report will be submitted to Full Council.
<u>Selection of an Operator (Archbishops Palace)</u>	November 2023	Pre-decision Scrutiny	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement  Deborah Turner, Interim Strategic Property Consultant	N/A
<u>Forward Plan Monitoring</u> 19	2023/24 Municipal Year	Pre-decision Scrutiny	As applicable.	N/A
<u>Call-Ins</u>	2023/24 Municipal Year	Post-decision Scrutiny	As applicable.	N/A

## Committee Work Programme

Detailed Agenda Items per Committee Meeting, October 2023-March 2024.

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Items &amp; Details</b>
17 October 2023	<p>1. <u>Enforcement Review</u></p> <p>Attendance from 5 MBC Officers and relevant Cabinet Member (Q&amp;A Session).</p> <p>Information Pack prepared.</p>
21 November 2023	<p>1. <u>Enforcement Review (Cont).</u></p> <p>Attendance from 2 External Attendees (KCC) (Q&amp;A Session)</p> <p>2. <u>(draft) Water Management Cycle Working Group Report</u></p> <p>Committee to review report, amend and/or agree its submission to the Cabinet.</p> <p>3. <u>Selection of Operator (Archbishops Palace)</u></p> <p>pre-decision scrutiny.</p>
19 December 2023	<p>1. <u>Enforcement Review (Report Production)</u></p> <p>2. <u>Health Inequality Review commencement</u></p> <p>Likely to have attendance from MBC Officers and relevant Cabinet Member.</p>
23 January 2024	<p>1. <u>Enforcement Review Report agreed (if required).</u></p> <p>2. <u>Health Inequality Review (Cont).</u></p> <p>Likely to have attendance from External stakeholders.</p> <p>3. <u>(draft) Annual Scrutiny Report</u></p> <p>Constitutional requirement for the Committee to produce a report.</p>

20 February 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Health Inequality Review (Cont).</u></li> <li>2. <u>(final) Annual Scrutiny Report</u></li> </ol> <p>To review report and agree its submission to full Council.</p>
19 March 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health Inequality Review (Report Production)</li> </ol> <p>Note: It is possible that the next OSC (June 2024) would be asked to approve the report.</p>

# Agenda Item 14

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 September  
2023

### Receipt of a 'Call-In' – Relevant Procedure (Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review – MBC Response)

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	19 September 2023
Council (if applicable)	To be confirmed.
Cabinet (if applicable)	To be confirmed.

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
<b>Lead Director</b>	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Oliviya Parfitt, Principal Democratic Services Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### Executive Summary

This report outlines how the call-in received will be facilitated at the meeting, in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution and best practice.

#### Purpose of Report

Decision

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

1. The call-in received at appendix 1 to the report be considered against the Cabinet Members' decision as outlined in point 2.1 of the report; and
2. A decision be made from options 1-3 as outlined in points 3.1-3.3 of the report.

## Receipt of a 'Call-In' – Relevant Procedure (Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review – MBC Response)

### 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>The impact on corporate priorities in relation to the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The impact on corporate priorities in relation to the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Risk Management</b>	<p>The risk associated with the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Financial</b>	<p>The financial implications of the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>The call-in will be facilitated with the support of the Democratic Services Team.</p> <p>The staffing implications of the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance

<b>Legal</b>	<p>The Local Government Act Section 9(F) as amended by the Localism Act 2011, requires that where a Local Authority operates under an Executive Governance System there must be at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee that is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Review or scrutinise decisions made' and</li> <li>• Make 'reports or recommendations' to the Executive on the discharge of executive functions (LGA 2000, Section 9F (1-2))</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, the call-in and review of the decision made by the Cabinet Member and any alternative recommendations produced as a result, is within the Committee's statutory powers.</p>	Monitoring Officer
<b>Information Governance</b>	<p>No impact identified from this report.</p> <p>Any information governance implications arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Information Governance Officer
<b>Equalities</b>	<p>No impact identified from this report.</p> <p>Any equalities implications arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	<p>No impact identified from this report.</p> <p>Any effects on public health arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Democratic Services Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<p>No impact identified from this report.</p> <p>Any crime and disorder governance implications arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
<b>Procurement</b>	<p>No impact identified from this report.</p> <p>Any procurement implications arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.</p>	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance

<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	No impact identified from this report.  Any biodiversity and climate change implications arising from the decision being called-in can be found in Appendix 3 to the report.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer
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**2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

2.1 On 7 September 2023, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development (the Cabinet Member) made the following decision:

*That the amended response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Sites, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.*

2.2 The Record of Decision was published on 8 September 2023, with the call-in period set to expire on the 15 September 2023; during this time a call-in request was received. This is attached at Appendix 1 to the report, following its acceptance by the Proper Officer.

For information, the only constitutional requirements that must be met in submitting a call-in request are as follows:

*'Such a request must be made in writing and must state the reason the call-in is believed to be necessary, and the desired outcome of the decision's review' (Part C2, Rule 13.4, 13.4.3 (b)).*

The Constitution also states that:

*'At the meeting, the Members calling in the decision should make themselves available for questioning and will be able to take part in the debate as non-voting Members of the Committee if they are not a Member of the Committee' (Part C2, Rule 13.4, 13.4.4).*

2.3 The options available to the Committee in reviewing the decision made are outlined below, with a table on the next page demonstrating the resulting actions from each option.

- a) Agree that no further action is required; OR
- b) Recommend an alternative decision for consideration by the Executive; OR
- c) Recommend that the decision be reviewed by Full Council.

<b>OSC Options</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>Decision Implementation</b>
Review original decision made and agree that no further action is required.	No further action required.	Cabinet Member Informed.  Decision to be implemented straight after the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting.
Recommend an alternative decision to the Cabinet Member.	Cabinet Member to consider alternative decision.  Either the original decision remains, or an amended decision is issued.	Decision implemented straight after the Cabinet Member's re-consideration.  (Decision is final)
Recommend that the decision be reviewed by Full Council.	Council review the decision and either agree with the original decision or recommend an alternative decision.  Cabinet Member to consider alternative decision; either the original decision remains, or an amended decision is issued.	Decision implemented straight after Council or after the Cabinet Member's re-consideration if an alternative recommendation is put forward by Council.  (Decision is final)

2.4 The information relating to the Cabinet Member's decision has been included within the appendices to this report.

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Option 1 – Agree that no further action is required.**

In this instance, the Cabinet Member will be informed with the original decision to be implemented immediately following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

#### **3.2 Option 2 – Recommend an alternative decision to the Cabinet.**

In this instance, the Cabinet Member will receive formal notification of the Committee's recommendations. The Committee must include the nature of its concerns to supplement the alternative decision.

The Cabinet Member will consider the recommendations made by the Committee and either the original decision or an amended decision will be issued as a result. Once this has taken place, the decision reached is final and will not be subject to call-in.

### **3.3 Option 3 – Recommend that the decision be reviewed by Full Council.**

In this instance, the Committee would refer the decision to the full Council. The Council would then be able to:

- a) Agree that no further action is required; OR
- b) Recommend an alternative decision for consideration by the Executive;

However, similarly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council can only advise the Cabinet Member on which course of action to take. As the original decision made relates to an executive function (Infrastructure Provision), the Cabinet Member is the final decision-maker.

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

- 4.1 There is no preferred option from an Officer perspective, as this report aims to support the Committee in reviewing the Cabinet Member decision submitted for Call-In.
- 

## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

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

- 6.1 This Committee has not previously considered the matter. In accordance with the Council's governance arrangements, the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee (PIED PAC) advised on the item (6 September 2023), before the Cabinet Member made the decision.
- 6.2 The relevant papers for the PIED PAC agenda can be accessed using the link at Section 9 of the report.

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

- 7.1 Given the number of options available, the next steps depend on the option chosen by the Committee. See section 3 for the resulting actions for each option.
- 

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

- Appendix 1: Call-In Request
- Appendix 2: Record of Decision (Cabinet Member)

- Appendix 3: Papers provided to the Cabinet Member in making the decision.
    - 3a: Report; and
    - 3b: Appendix (Amended Response, including the originally submitted response and the additional information submitted)
  - Appendix 4: Excerpt (draft) of the Minutes of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee Meeting held on 6 September 2023 – **TO FOLLOW** once available.
- 

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Agenda Papers for the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee Meeting held on 6 September 2023:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

## APPENDIX 1 – CALL-IN REQUEST

### **CALL IN FORM**

Once completed, please submit this form to either of the Officers shown below, cc'ing in Democratic Services.

Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance or The Chief Executive.

Please fill in the below form:

Decision making body or individual

**Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development**

Decision made (please include the date the decision was taken)

**8/9/23 That the amended response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Sites, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.**

Reason for calling in the decision

The amended response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Sites does not reflect the recommendation from the Planning Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee which overwhelmingly felt that a strong letter of objection be sent rather than what was sent which simply increased the level of concern.

Desired Outcome

A review of the decision be the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a potential referral to full Council and that a letter objecting strongly to the extension of Hermitage Quarry be sent in line with the views of the PIED PAC.

## APPENDIX 1 – CALL-IN REQUEST

Unless this request is made by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, any call-in must be supported by three Members of the Council.

### Members calling in decision

### Signed

1. Cllr Stuart Jeffery	
2. Cllr Vanessa Jones	2. 
3. Cllr Janetta Sams	

Date: 8/9/23

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING,  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Decision Made: 7 September 2023

**Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review - MBC Response**

**Issue for Decision**

To agree a formal response to Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation, and the Kent Minerals Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Site, following the submission of a draft response to meet the consultation deadline of 25 July 2023.

**Decision Made**

That the amended response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Sites, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

**Reasons for Decision**

The Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted in July 2016, with subsequent changes arising from an early partial review being adopted in 2020 for which KCC engaged with MBC through its statutory consultation process.

The matter had previously been considered at the July 2023 PIED PAC, however additional information came to light in advance of that meeting relating to environmental designations.

The Kent Minerals and Waste Plan forms part of the Development Plan for Maidstone and sets out planning policies relating to minerals supply and waste management. All applications on minerals and waste related development are assessed by Kent County Council against the adopted plan, and other types of development affecting minerals and waste sites are assessed by Maidstone Borough, having regard to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan.

At the beginning of 2022, KCC undertook a Regulation 18 consultation on its plan, then a subsequent Regulation 18 consultation on the whole draft plan in December 2022 in respect to further changes. MBC has made representations to these consultations. Comments received at that consultation have now been considered for inclusion in these additional changes, which also respond to updated evidence. This consultation regards a small number of changes only and does not extend to a consultation on the whole plan.

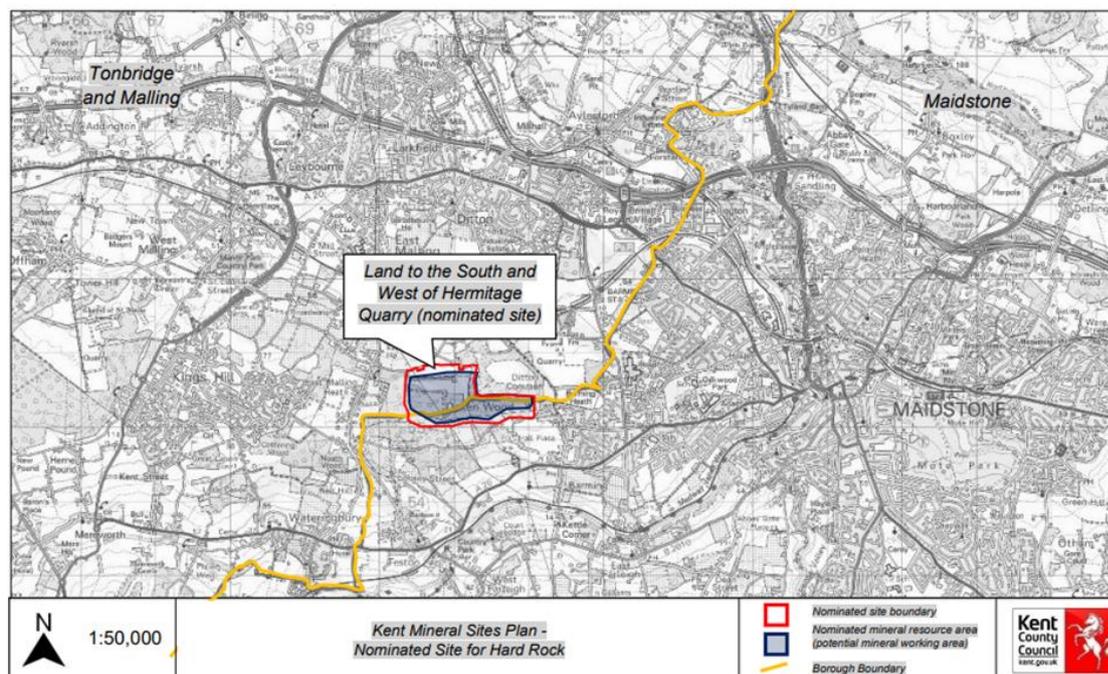
The full proposed amends can be found via this link:  
[Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2023-38 | Let's talk Kent](#)

The main relevant changes proposed to this iteration of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan involve the revision of mineral need over the plan period. For soft sand the overall plan requirement has been increased in line with the

extended plan period. The annual need remains the same. For hard rock, the total requirement over the plan period has increased. Consequently, further reserves will need to be allocated.

As a consequence of the latter change, the Kent Mineral Sites Plan has been updated to include further nominated hard rock allocations. The Sites Plan also updates the position in relation to Chapel Farm soft sand allocation in Lenham.

The additional hard rock allocation is located on land to the south and west of the existing Hermitage Quarry. The new allocation straddles the boundary of Maidstone Borough and Tonbridge and Malling Borough, with circa 2/5 of the allocation being sited within Maidstone.



The proposed allocation would adjoin the existing extraction site. The current extraction site, along with the proposed extension, lie within the Oaken Wood Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

Paragraph 180 (a) of the NPPF states that LPA's should apply the following principles in determining planning applications: if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning should be refused. Paragraph c also states:

"development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists"

Furthermore, Policy DM3 of the adopted Maidstone Local Plan states that developers will ensure new development 'protect positive landscape character, areas of Ancient Woodland... from inappropriate development and avoid significant adverse impact as a result of development.' And in respect to locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity 'avoid damage to and

inappropriate development considered likely to have a significant direct or indirect adverse effects’.

This is an extension of an established minerals site, part of which already occupies an area designated as ancient woodland. The designations are noted, and it would be appropriate for any permission be subject to a condition to restore any wildlife sites and ancient woodland once extraction has been completed.

A number of residential dwellinghouses lie within close proximity to the nominated site boundary, but it is noted that the actual extraction site would be set an appropriate distance from these dwellings. Notwithstanding this setback to the extraction site, Policy DM11 of the draft plan states that:

Minerals and waste developments will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that they are unlikely to generate unacceptable adverse impacts from noise, dust, vibration (including vibration from blasting), odour, emissions (including emissions from vehicles associated with the development), bioaerosols, illumination, visual intrusion, traffic or exposure to health risks and associated damage to the qualities of life and wellbeing to communities and the environment.

The plan offers some surety that the amenity of nearby residential properties can be preserved, providing that broader policies within the plan are adhered to. It is noted that the extended allocation lies within close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and MBC would also be concerned the proposal should not have significant impact on this designation.

In respect to Chapel Farm, new text has been inserted setting out need and supply. The allocation has not changed, nor has the rate of extraction.

The proposed additional allocation at Hermitage Quarry could adversely impact on an area designated as Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland. On this basis, Maidstone Borough Council request that any permission be subject to a condition requiring reinstatement of the Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

The appendix differs from that presented to the PIED PAC, as following the committee’s considerations of the response it has been amended to capture its views.

### **Alternatives considered and Why Rejected**

Option 2: That the proposed response to the consultation is not approved. This would mean that KCC would continue production of its Development Plan Document without relevant and formal input from Maidstone Borough Council at this stage.

Option 3: Following the matter’s consideration by the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee on 6 September 2023, an alternative recommendation was made:

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER:** That the letter be withdrawn, and a new letter sent in its place using the wording provided by the woodland trust of: ‘given unacceptable habitat lost, MBC are unable to support

the proposed quarry extension’.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development has indicated that consideration has been given to refuting the proposal. KCC has an obligation to identify and meet local needs for minerals and at present the proposed site is the only source of hard rock that has been put forward and therefore the Council is not in a position to reject it.

**Background Papers**

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on Friday 15 September 2023**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR  
PLANNING, INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**7 September 2023**

**MBC response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan and  
Kent Minerals Sites Plan reviews**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	06/09/2023
Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development	07/09/2023

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development.
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Karen Britton/Phil Coyne
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Helen Garnett
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

Consultation on the additional changes to the proposed review of the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan 2013-30 commenced on 13 June 2023 and will run through until 25 July 2023. MBC has submitted a draft response in order to meet this deadline, and has asked that a full formal response be provided after this meeting.

**Purpose of Report**

This is the third Regulation 18 consultation undertaken for this plan. Additionally, KCC is consulting on the amendments to the Kent Mineral Sites Plan – Nominated Hard Rock site allocation.

This report outlines the key additional Regulation 18 consultation changes proposed to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan (2013-30). It also outlines proposed changes arising from the updated draft Minerals Sites Plan, including the extension of a site within Maidstone Borough. It recommends that members agree a formal response to the consultations, as drafted by officers and appended to this report.

This report has been presented following further information which came to light after the initial report was presented to the July PIED PAC.

**This report makes the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member:**

- 1.** That the proposed response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan Review consultation and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan Nominated Hard Rock Sites at Appendix 1 of this report be approved.

## MBC response to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan and Kent Minerals Sites Plan reviews

### 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>Accepting the recommendations will enable the Council to ensure that plans at county council level do not materially harm its ability to achieve each of the corporate priorities.</p>	Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The report recommendations support the achievements of the four, cross cutting objectives by ensuring that plans from a neighbouring authority do not materially harm the council's ability to achieve these objectives.</p>	Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	<p>The recommendations seek to reduce the risk associated with the production of a Local Plan Review by ensuring that plans produced by the county council are not in conflict with our own and those set out in government policy.</p>	Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost of responding to the consultation are all within already approved budgetary headings.</li> <li>• Any future recommendations / implication from the outcome of the consultation that have financial</li> </ul>	Mark Green and Adrian Lovegrove Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

APPENDIX 3a – REPORT PROVIDED TO THE CABINET MEMBER

	implications will need to be considered as part of the in-year financial monitoring or if future years as part of the budget process.	
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development
<b>Legal</b>	As part of its duty to co-operate, the Borough Council must engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with the County Council in the preparation of development plan documents in order to maximise the effectiveness of the activity of plan preparation. The Kent County Council are consulting with the Borough Council on an update/refresh to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan 2013-30, which also forms part of Maidstone BC Local Development Plan Documents. The Borough Council has been consulted on and is responding to that consultation. Whilst there are no legal implications arising from the response, accepting the recommendations will help fulfil the Council's duties under s.33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012) as amended.	Cheryl Parks Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Georgia Harvey Information Governance
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Nicola Toulson Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	Head of Spatial

		Planning and Economic Development
<b>Procurement</b>	The recommendation has no immediate impact on budget headings or expenditure in the current year.	Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development Mark Green, Adrian Lovegrove. Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and the listed updates are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implications of this report show significant environmental and social impacts and is directly opposed to Action 6.7 of the Council’s Biodiversity and Climate Action Plan to ‘Increase borough canopy cover expanding ancient forests and reconnecting of existing woodland including urban woods, and greening town centres.’</li> <li>• The proposed extension to Hermitage Quarry is on 64 hectares, and environmental impacts include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Substantial loss of Oaken Wood an ancient replanted woodland – ‘The southern part of the site is designated as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Soils (PAWS) which would be lost to development and potentially fragmenting the remaining woodland. The ancient woodland soil has biodiversity value.’</li> <li>ii) Loss of grade 2 agricultural land,</li> <li>iii) Loss of a designated Local Wildlife Site, which contains ‘biodiversity priority habitats’,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	James Wilderspin Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

	<p>iv) visual impacts to landscape in close proximity to the Kent Downs AONB,</p> <p>v) impact to aquifers and groundwater vulnerability,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of residential dwellings, and social impacts recognised in the 'Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report – Regulation 18 Consultation' (May 2023) include 'If the mineral is transported by road, there is a greater likelihood of negative impacts on air quality and climate change, and negative impacts may be caused on congestion, noise and disturbance, depending on route and distance. The total distance transported is likely to lead to higher emissions overall.'</li> </ul>	
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**2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

2.1 This report sets out the key issues arising from the review of the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan 2023-38. The Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted in July 2016, with subsequent changes arising from an early partial review being adopted in 2020, for which KCC engaged with MBC through its statutory consultation process.

2.2 The matter had previously been considered at the July 2023 PIED PAC, however additional information came to light in advance of that meeting relating to environmental designations.

2.3 The Kent Minerals and Waste Plan forms part of the Development Plan for Maidstone and sets out planning policies relating to minerals supply and waste management. All applications on minerals and waste related development are assessed by Kent County Council against the adopted plan, and other types of development affecting minerals and waste sites are assessed by Maidstone Borough, having regard to the Kent Minerals and Waste Plan.

2.4 At the beginning of 2022, KCC undertook a Regulation 18 consultation on its plan, then a subsequent Regulation 18 consultation on the whole draft plan in December 2022 in respect to further changes. MBC has made representations to these consultations. Comments received at that consultation have now been considered for inclusion in these additional changes, which also respond to updated evidence. This consultation regards a small number of changes only and does not extend to a consultation on the whole plan.

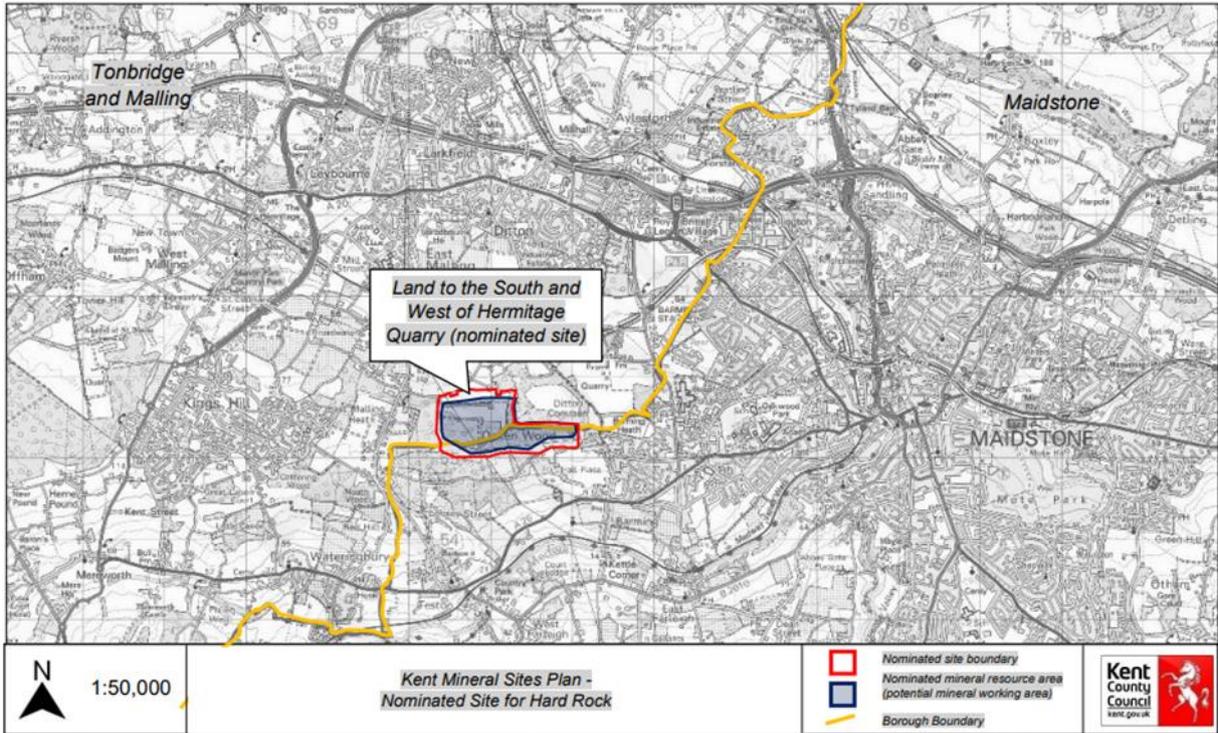
2.5 The full proposed amends can be found via this link: <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/kent-minerals-and-waste-local-plan>.

2.6 The main relevant changes proposed to this iteration of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan involve the revision of mineral need over the plan period.

2.7 For soft sand the overall plan requirement has been increased in line with the extended plan period. The annual need remains the same. For hard rock, the total requirement over the plan period has increased. Consequently, further reserves will need to be allocated.

2.8 As a consequence of the latter change, the Kent Mineral Sites Plan has been updated to include further nominated hard rock allocations. The Sites Plan also updates the position in relation to Chapel Farm soft sand allocation in Lenham.

2.9 The additional hard rock allocation is located on land to the south and west of the existing Hermitage Quarry. The new allocation straddles the boundary of Maidstone Borough and Tonbridge and Malling Borough, with circa 2/5 of the allocation being sited within Maidstone.



2.10 The proposed allocation would abut the existing extraction site. The current extraction site, along with the proposed extension, lie within the Oaken Wood Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

2.12 Paragraph 180 (a) of the NPPF states that LPA’s should apply the following principles in determining planning applications:  
 if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning should be refused.  
 Paragraph c also states:

“development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists”.

2.13 Furthermore, Policy DM3 of the adopted Maidstone Local Plan states that developers will ensure new development ‘protect positive landscape character, areas of Ancient Woodland... from inappropriate development and avoid significant adverse impact as a result of development.’ And in respect to locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity ‘avoid damage to and inappropriate development considered likely to have a significant direct or indirect adverse effects’.

2.14 It is noted that this is an extension of an established minerals site, part of which already occupies an area designated as ancient woodland. The designations are noted, and it would be appropriate for any permission be subject to a condition to restore any wildlife sites and ancient woodland once extraction has been completed.

2.15 A number of residential dwellinghouses lie within close proximity to the nominated site boundary, but it is noted that the actual extraction site would be set an appropriate distance from these dwellings. Notwithstanding this setback to the extraction site, Policy DM11 of the draft plan states that:

2.16 Minerals and waste developments will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that they are unlikely to generate unacceptable adverse impacts from noise, dust, vibration (including vibration from blasting), odour, emissions (including emissions from vehicles associated with the development), bioaerosols, illumination, visual intrusion, traffic or exposure to health risks and associated damage to the qualities of life and wellbeing to communities and the environment.

2.17 Therefore, the plan offers some surety that the amenity of nearby residential properties can be preserved, providing that broader policies within the plan are adhered to.

2.18 It is noted that the extended allocation lies within close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and MBC would also be concerned the proposal should not have significant impact on this designation.

2.19 In respect to Chapel Farm, new text has been inserted setting out need and supply. The allocation has not changed, nor has the rate of extraction.

2.20 In summary, the proposed additional allocation at Hermitage Quarry could adversely impact on an area designated as Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland. On this basis, Maidstone Borough Council request that any permission be subject to a condition requiring reinstatement of the Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

3.1 Option 1: That the proposed response to this consultation at Appendix 1 of this report be approved.

3.2 Option 2: That the proposed response to the consultation is not approved. This would mean that KCC would continue production of its Development Plan Document without relevant and formal input from Maidstone Borough Council at this stage.

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

4.1 For the reasons set out above, it is recommended that Option 1 is followed and that the proposed response as appended to this report is agreed.

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#### **5. RISK**

5.1 The risk associated with these proposals, as well as any risks should the Council 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.

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

6.1 Kent County Council has previously consulted on its Minerals and Waste Plan Review. At each consultation MBC has made representations on the proposed changes.

6.2 The matter was considered by the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee on 6 September 2023. The response at appendix 1 has been amended in response.

6.3 Committee members raised a number of concerns with regards to the extension of the quarry, principally these rested on the impact that the development would have on the Ancient Woodland.

6.4 Members additionally expressed concerns that the Sites Plan and associated evidence base provide insufficient information with respect to the exceptional circumstances that the impact on Ancient Woodland is outweighed by the need to identify local sites for the extraction of hard rock.

6.5 An alternative recommendation was made:

That the letter be withdrawn, and a new letter sent in its place using the wording provided by the woodland trust of: 'given unacceptable habitat lost, MBC are unable to support the proposed quarry extension'.

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#### **7. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

APPENDIX 3a – REPORT PROVIDED TO THE CABINET MEMBER

- Appendix 1: MBC Response to the KCC Minerals and Waste Plan Regulation 18 consultation

Minerals and Waste Planning Policy  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Invicta House  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XX

**Maidstone Borough Council**

Maidstone House,  
King Street,  
Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

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 [maidstoneboroughcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/maidstoneboroughcouncil)

By email to: [mwlp@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mwlp@kent.gov.uk)

Date: 09/08/2023

Dear sir or madam

**Kent Minerals and Waste local Plan, and Kent Minerals Sites Plan; Regulation 18 Consultation Draft**

Thank you for consulting Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 - Further Proposed Changes, and the amendments to the Kent Mineral Sites Plan. Maidstone Borough Council's comments on the proposed changes are detailed below.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) places a legal duty on planning authorities to engage constructively, actively, and on an ongoing basis, to ensure the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in relation to strategic issues. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy.

We note that the proposed Kent Minerals Sites Plan proposes an extension to Hermitage Quarry and that allocation extends the workings into the borough of Maidstone.

Maidstone Borough Council recognises the need to preserve and plan for mineral extraction, however it has concerns that the proposed allocation lies within an area designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland, meaning that the workings could cause harm to biodiversity. MBC therefore requests that any permission be subject to conditions requiring the reinstatement of habitats following completion of extraction.

It is noted that the extended allocation also lies within close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and MBC requests that mitigations be put in place to prevent adverse impact on this designation.

These are the Council's views but are subject to formal ratification and agreement following the Planning and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee. I hope these comments are helpful and Maidstone Borough Council look forward to continuing, constructive dialogue on strategic issues as part of the duty to cooperate as our respective Local Plans progress.

Yours sincerely,

**Cllr Paul Cooper**

Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

Maidstone Borough Council, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

Minerals and Waste Planning Policy  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Invicta House  
Maidstone  
ME14 1XX

**Maidstone Borough Council**

Maidstone House,  
King Street,  
Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

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 [maidstonebc](https://twitter.com/maidstonebc)  
 [maidstoneboroughcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/maidstoneboroughcouncil)

By email to: [mwlp@kent.gov.uk](mailto:mwlp@kent.gov.uk)

Date: 07/09/2023

Dear sir or madam

**Kent Minerals and Waste local Plan, and Kent Minerals Sites Plan; Regulation 18 Consultation Draft**

Thank you for consulting Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 - Further Proposed Changes, and the amendments to the Kent Mineral Sites Plan.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) places a legal duty on planning authorities to engage constructively, actively, and on an ongoing basis, to ensure the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in relation to strategic issues. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy.

Maidstone Borough Council wrote to you on the 09 August 2023 setting out its preliminary views on the proposed changes to the Minerals and Waste and Sites Plans, and confirmed that these would be subject to formal ratification.

A meeting of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee was held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023, and it is therefore appropriate that I convey the strength of feeling relating to the allocation of Hermitage Quarry to the consultation response, in addition to the letter which was sent on 09 August 2023.

The views from the policy advisory meeting are as follows:

MBC notes that the proposed Kent Minerals Sites Plan proposes an extension to Hermitage Quarry and that allocation extends the workings into the borough of Maidstone.

Maidstone Borough Council recognises the need to preserve and plan for mineral extraction, and that extending this site will meet a local need for minerals which limit broader environmental impact of materials being shipped in from elsewhere.

Additionally, the extension of this quarry will allow existing on-site infrastructure and processing areas to be used. However it has concerns that the proposed allocation lies within an area designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland, meaning that the development will cause harm to biodiversity. Whilst the NPPF allows for exceptional circumstances, it is for the County Council to demonstrate that there exists exceptional circumstance that would meet policies set out in the NPPF.

MBC will expect that KCC will provide significant reassurances that there are exceptional circumstances to accord with the NPPF, and should this be demonstrated then maximum mitigation and restoration of the site to prevent the site coming forward for residential development will be expected.

MBC notes that KCC has recently commenced a hard rock call for sites. Should an alternative site be found through this process, then MBC will respond accordingly.

It is noted that the extended allocation also lies within close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and MBC requests that should the site be included in the adopted plan then policy shall require that mitigations be put in place to prevent adverse impact on this designation.

I hope these further comments are helpful, and Maidstone Borough Council look forward to continuing, constructive dialogue on strategic issues as part of the duty to cooperate as our respective Local Plans progress.

Yours sincerely,

**Cllr Paul Cooper**

Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

Maidstone Borough Council, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**19 September 2023**

**Reference from Council – Notice of Motion –  
Rights of the River Medway and its Tributaries**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	19 September 2023
Council	To be confirmed

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

At the meeting of the Council held on 19 April 2023, a motion relating to the rights of the River Medway and its tributaries was moved by Councillor Jeffery, seconded by Councillor Eagle. The motion as amended during the discussion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review.

**This reference makes the following recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

That consideration be given to the motion, as amended, relating to the Rights of the River Medway and its Tributaries with a view to making a recommendation to Council if appropriate.

## Reference from Council – Notice of Motion – Rights of the River Medway and its Tributaries

### 1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Council held on 19 July 2023, the following motion was moved by Councillor Jeffery, seconded by Councillor Eagle:

Our freshwater environments and waterways are facing numerous pressures from pollution, climate change, land management practices, development and amenity use.

It is clear that our environmental laws and regulations are failing to prevent the destruction of nature, often simply regulating the rate of destruction. At the same time there is an emerging global movement of governments recognising the Rights of Nature and in particular the rights of rivers.

Rights of Nature is a way of re-thinking our relationship with nature - from one of dominance to one of interdependency requiring a respectful, holistic and empathic approach. It can also act as a catalyst to shift our thinking from an extractive economy towards a regenerative economy. The idea of nature having rights is not new. Nature has rights. What is new is how we can intervene using a rights of nature lens to protect nature and to give the river a voice as a single entity, from source to sea.

We have extended rights to corporations globally – a company which is a wholly fictional entity has gained legal rights and is recognised as a legal entity distinct from its individual decision makers. If we can define a corporation as having the rights of personhood, then we can imagine a River having these personhood rights.

The Universal Declaration of River Rights establishes that all rivers shall possess, at minimum, the following fundamental rights:

1. The right to flow,
2. The right to perform essential functions within the river's ecosystem,
3. The right to be free from pollution,
4. The right to feed and be fed by sustainable aquifers,
5. The right to native biodiversity, and
6. The right to regeneration and restoration.

We believe there is an opportunity to develop a River Medway Charter over the next 2 years which establishes the rights listed above.

It is therefore resolved that:

1. This Council acknowledges the growing global movement of 'rights of nature' as a framework for rethinking its relationship with the environment.
2. This Council believes that there is a case to be made for considering our interactions with our local waterways in the context of 'Rights of

Rivers' and through which the health and wellbeing of the River Medway and its tributaries can be addressed.

3. This Council will work with the other councils along the Medway catchment to explore with local communities and relevant stakeholders the implementation of Rights of Rivers along the River Medway and its tributaries. This will involve working towards the production of a 'Declaration on the Rights of the River Medway and its tributaries' by relevant stakeholders for possible endorsement by the Council within 2 years.

An amendment was moved by Councillor English, seconded by Councillor Harwood, that the third resolution of the motion be replaced as follows:

Maidstone Borough Council initiate, launch, lead and provide secretariat for a River Len Stakeholder Task Force with participation invited from key landowners along the course of the River Len and its chalk stream and Greensand tributaries alongside the Environment Agency, South East Rivers Trust, Kent County Council, National Highways, South East Water, NFU Kent, Leeds Castle Foundation, River Len Local Nature Reserve and Kent Wildlife Trust.

The Stakeholder Task Force to be chaired by the Leader of the Council with the Leader of the largest non-administration group holding the vice chair, as a clear statement of intent from the Borough Council and to evidence high profile leadership.

The vision for the Stakeholder Task Force will encompass:

- Progressive removal and/or bypassing of manmade barriers to ecological movement i.e. restoring the right to a natural flow;
- Setting measurable targets and achieving continuous improvement across flow rates and water quality (including mitigating current pathways for diffuse pollutants including agricultural and highway run-off);
- Enhancing and recreating riparian habitats along the course of the River Len and its tributaries, including wet woodland, marsh and fen, wet heathland, flood meadow, ponds and ditches; and
- Restoration, expansion and reintroductions of declining or lost riparian flora and fauna associated with the River Len, including migratory fish, DesMoulin's Whorl Snail, White-clawed Crayfish, White-legged Damselfly, Water Shrew, Water Vole, Otter, Common Snipe, Lapwing, Woodcock, Large Bittercress, Southern Marsh Orchid and Black Poplar.

When put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Burton, seconded by Councillor Cooper, that the third resolution of the motion be removed.

When put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

An amendment was moved by Councillor English, seconded by Councillor Burton, that the motion as amended be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review.

When put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and carried.

- 1.2 The motion, as amended, therefore stands referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review.
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## **2. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND WHY NOT RECOMMENDED**

Not applicable.

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## **3. REPORT APPENDICES**

A copy of the Briefing Note which was prepared to assist Members in their consideration of the motion is attached as Appendix A.

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## **4. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 July 2023

**Briefing Note**

**Rights of the River Medway and its tributaries Motion**

Preamble

Our freshwater environments and waterways are facing numerous pressures from pollution, climate change, land management practices, development and amenity use.

It is clear that our environmental laws and regulations are failing to prevent the destruction of nature, often simply regulating the rate of destruction. At the same time there is an emerging global movement of governments recognising the Rights of Nature and in particular the rights of rivers.

Rights of Nature is a way of re-thinking our relationship with nature - from one of dominance to one of interdependency requiring a respectful, holistic and empathic approach. It can also act as a catalyst to shift our thinking from an extractive economy towards a regenerative economy. The idea of nature having rights is not new. Nature has rights. What is new is how we can intervene using a rights of nature lens to protect nature and to give the river a voice as a single entity, from source to sea.

We have extended rights to corporations globally – a company which is a wholly fictional entity has gained legal rights and is recognised as a legal entity distinct from its individual decision makers. If we can define a corporation as having the rights of personhood, then we can imagine a River having these personhood rights.

The Universal Declaration of River Rights establishes that all rivers shall possess, at minimum, the following fundamental rights:

- 1) The right to flow,
- 2) The right perform essential functions within the river's ecosystem,
- 3) The right to be free from pollution,
- 4) The right to feed and be fed by sustainable aquifers,
- 5) The right to native biodiversity, and
- 6) The right to regeneration and restoration.

We believe there is an opportunity to develop a River Medway Charter over the next 2 years which establishes the rights listed above

Motion:

1. This Council acknowledges the growing global movement of 'rights of nature' as a framework for rethinking its relationship with the environment.
2. This Council believes that there is a case to be made for considering our interactions with our local waterways in the context of 'Rights of Rivers' and through which the health and wellbeing of the River Medway and its tributaries can be addressed.

3. This Council will work with the other councils along the Medway catchment to explore with local communities and relevant stakeholders the implementation of Rights of Rivers along the River Medway and its tributaries. This will involve working towards the production of a 'Declaration on the Rights of the River Medway and its tributaries' by relevant stakeholders for possible endorsement by the Council within 2 years.

### Briefing

Rights of Rivers is a growing environmental and legal concept that grants legal rights and 'personhood' to rivers and tributaries. For example, New Zealand and Ecuador have already recognised legal rights for specific rivers. The idea is to challenge the traditional view of rivers as property and put value on the benefits we take for granted. The preamble to the motion sets out the minimum rights to be possessed by rivers according to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers (UDRR). The UDRR also suggests that these rights are possessed not only by a river itself but rather by the whole river basin, calling for guardians to act on behalf of river rights.

The first two parts of the motion are within the gift of Council to act upon, point 3 is a Cabinet Function.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**19 September  
2023**

### Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 September 2023
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	6 September 2023
Housing Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	7 September 2023
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	11 September 2023
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	19 September 2023
Cabinet	20 September 2023

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Council
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Adrian Lovegrove, Head of Finance
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### Executive Summary

This report forms part of the process of agreeing a budget for 2024/25 and setting next year's Council Tax. The report sets out a draft Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2024/25 – 2028/29 and budget proposals. These proposals will then be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 20 September 2023.

The Cabinet will subsequently consider any remaining budget issues at its meeting on 7 February 2024, with a view to determining a final set of proposals for submission to Council on 21 February 2024.

**Purpose of Report**

Recommendation to Cabinet

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

**That the Cabinet be recommended to:**

1. That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 set out in Appendix A be approved.
2. That the budget proposals set out in Appendix B be approved.

# Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Risk Management</b>	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Financial</b>	The budget strategy and the MTFS impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	The process of developing the budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Legal</b>	Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) the Section 151 Officer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the authority, including securing effective arrangements for treasury management. The legal implications are detailed within the body of the report which is compliant with statutory and legal regulations such as the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Local Authorities.  The Council is required to set a council tax by the 11 March in any year and has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget. The budget requirements and basic amount of Council Tax must be calculated in accordance with the requirements of sections 31A and	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

	<p>31B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by sections 73-79 of the Localism Act 2011).</p> <p>The Council is required to determine whether the basic amount of council tax is excessive as prescribed in regulations – section 52ZB of the 1992 Act as inserted under Schedule 5 to the Localism Act 2011. The Council is required to hold a referendum of all registered electors in the borough if the prescribed requirements regarding whether the increase is excessive are met.</p> <p>Approval of the budget is a matter reserved for full Council upon recommendation by Policy and Resources Committee on budget and policy matters.</p>	
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	Privacy and Data Protection is considered as part of the development of new budget proposals. There are no specific implications arising from this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Equalities</b>	The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council’s future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed, an evidence-based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations with be identified.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Procurement</b>	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- 2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council will deliver its Strategic Plan over the next five years. The Council adopted a Strategic Plan for the period 2021 – 2045 in December 2018, and the existing MTFS for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 reflects the Strategic Plan. The new MTFS will continue to reflect the Strategic Plan priorities.
- 2.2 A draft MTFS is attached to this report as Appendix A. As background, it comprises an assessment of the economic environment and the Council's own financial position. It will be seen that the Council faces a budget gap, given the expected impact of inflation on costs, compared with the lower projected rate of growth in Council resources.

### **Budget Savings**

- 2.3 A key outcome of the process of updating the MTFS is to set a balanced budget and agree a level of council tax for 2024/25 at the Council meeting on 21 February 2024. The draft MTFS describes how, in bridging the budget gap, the Council needs to balance the requirement to make savings or generate increased income against the key priorities set out in the Council's Strategic Plan.
- 2.4 The draft MTFS explains that all budgets are reviewed in detail to identify opportunities for savings, or increased income, which can be delivered with the minimum impact on the strategic priorities. To the extent that further growth is planned, above and beyond existing budgets, this would need to be offset by further savings.
- 2.5 The following growth and savings have been identified in the services falling within the remit of the Corporate Services PAC and are shown in Appendix B. Growth and savings relating to the other PACS are set out in Appendix C.

### **2.6 Corporate Services PAC**

*Existing Savings approved February 2023*

#### **Property Investment strategy - £625,000 saving**

New property acquisitions can promote economic development and generate extra income for the Council. The Council has a successful track record in recent years of property acquisitions, including the Lockmeadow Leisure Complex, Maidstone House and a number of industrial units, which have been fully justified in prudential borrowing terms and now generate significant income for the Council. There is £2.5 million per annum set aside in the capital programme for further such acquisitions. This funding will only be utilised for acquisitions which meet the council's investment criteria.

If suitable investments are identified, this would generate cumulative additional income of at least £625,000 per annum over the business

planning period. On the other hand, if the capital budget were not fully spent, there would be a corresponding reduction in borrowing costs and minimum revenue provision (MRP), so there would be no net adverse impact on the budget.

### **New Maidstone Property Holdings developments - £228,000 saving**

Alongside the Affordable Housing programme, the Council develops Private Rented Sector housing for letting through its subsidiary Maidstone Property Holdings. As new developments are acquired or completed, additional income will be generated.

### **Whole Council elections - £60,000 saving**

The Council has now agreed to hold whole council elections every four years. This will reduce the cost of holding elections over the four year electoral cycle. Following the boundary review, initiated in 2021, the first whole council elections will take place in May 2024.

### **Office accommodation - £55,000 saving**

The acquisition of Maidstone House has already led to a saving in the occupancy costs previously incurred and to additional income from letting space in the building. It has been assumed that further income will be generated and/or savings achieved as occupancy levels improve, following investment in the building.

### **Transformation - Automation of transactional services - £50,000 saving**

This specific proposal is to invest in voice recognition technology which would reduce the number of transactions dealt with via customer service advisors in the technical team. £50,000 is the net revenue saving and capital investment will be required in order to deliver this.

### **Corporate Property service improvements - £25,000 saving**

A review of our Corporate Property service has identified that, following the growth of the property portfolio in recent years, there is scope for improvement in management of the portfolio, by strengthening the client side of property management and getting more value from external managing agents.

### **Deleting HR adviser post - £18,000 saving**

Following a period of significant staffing changes in the two authorities that form the HR shared service, a reduction in the number of HR advisers is envisaged in 2025/26.

### **Review of finance structure - £15,000 saving**

Changes in the structure of the finance team scheduled for 2024/25 will create a savings opportunity.

### **Mid-Kent Services - ICT efficiency improvements - £14,000 saving**

A number of efficiency improvements are planned, including new working arrangements and automation of processes, for example in the way new devices are built and in dealing with IT help desk calls. As with all MKS savings, the benefit is shared with partners, and only the MBC share of the saving is shown here.

### **Transformation - Review of print and post - £10,000 saving**

The Council continues to generate a large volume of paper correspondence and records. This project will generate savings, primarily through a reduction in postage costs.

#### *New Savings and Growth*

### **Finance - Additional interest income - £350,000 saving**

This represents additional interest earned on the balance of cash held in the bank, and invested in line with our Treasury Management Strategy. This is a one year benefit as we will start spending the cash as we deliver the capital programme. This will eventually reduce the balance available to the minimum required for day-to-day working capital management. The saving assumes an average balance of £7.75m and an average interest rate of 4%.

### **Mid-Kent Services – Automated data handling for Council Tax - £55,000 saving**

Advances in technology mean that robotics can be used to automate Council Tax processes such as Single Person discount awards and Council Tax moves. This would lead to a reduction in staff which will provide the saving. The savings are split between Benefits (£25,000 per annum) and Revenues (£30,000 per annum). The latter saving would be delivered part-way through 2024/25, so 6 months savings have been assumed in 2024/25.

### **Mid-Kent Services - Shared Revenues and Benefits service with Swale - £60,000 saving**

A business case is being prepared for a three-way Revenues and Benefits Shared Service, ie adding Swale to the existing two-way Maidstone / Tunbridge Wells shared service. This would generate savings, mainly through spreading management capacity across a greater volume of work. The total estimated annual savings for Maidstone are £60,000, of which the first six months worth (£30,000) would fall in 2024/25 if the proposals are agreed by members of the three authorities concerned on currently projected timescales.

### **Mid-Kent Services - Transfer Risk Management to Emergency Planning - £29,000 saving**

MKS has hitherto provide strategic risk management advice and support to the Council. The manager who provided this service has now left Mid Kent

Internal Audit. The Council has the capacity and the skills to deliver this service in-house, through the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Team. This will additionally provide benefits through the service being delivered by staff who have day-to-day experience of planning for emergencies and considering how risks can crystallise in practice. Together with some modest efficiency savings in Mid Kent Audit, this will lead to a reduction of £29,000 in the Council's contribution to MKS. The Head of Service is content that Mid-Kent Audit's operating structure will remain sufficiently robust to continue delivering a core internal audit service to its four member authorities.

### **Corporate Property - Asset Management Plan for commercial property - £29,000 saving**

The Corporate Property team is developing an Asset Management Plan for Commercial Properties which assumes a 5% reduction of current Revenue Repairs and Maintenance costs (reactive) based on greater investment in pre-planned capital expenditure. This will enable the Council's estate to be maintained in a more cost-effective way in the long run.

### **Corporate Property - Saving in Heather House running costs - £27,000**

The Heather House Community Centre is due to be replaced by a new building, as it has been concluded that this is a more cost-effective solution than refurbishment. Accordingly, the existing building will be decommissioned later in 2023/24 and running costs will cease, generating a saving in 2024/25. An operator will be sought for the new community centre, but this will be on the basis that they will cover all running costs.

### **Mid Kent Services - Payroll service external income - £25,000 saving**

The MKS payroll service operates a robust and well-established payroll system. The quality and reliability of the service offered has already led to Dartford Borough Council using MKS's service. It is considered that there is sufficient spare management capacity within the service to take on at least one further external customer, which would reduce costs by allowing overheads to be spread over a wider base.

### **Emergency Planning - Proposed partnership - £20,000 saving**

Discussions are taking place with a neighbouring local authority about a shared Emergency Planning service. Maidstone's Emergency Planning service includes a Manager and a Resilience Officer. The service has considerable experience, having dealt with a range of incidents over the years, and has established robust systems and plans. A neighbouring authority has expressed an interest in joining a 50:50 partnership with Maidstone, whereby our service would add a further Resilience Officer to cover the additional workload and the Manager's time would be split between the two authorities, thus delivering a saving to Maidstone.

### **Mid-Kent Services - Internal audit - Efficiency savings - £19,000**

The existing budget for internal audit continues to be based on the proportion of Mid Kent Audit work attributable to Maidstone Borough Council at the time when it joined the shared service, over ten years ago. In practice, in recent years the Head of Internal Audit has been able to issue an opinion without carrying out all the work for which a budget exists. Deleting the surplus budget would capture this efficiency saving.

### **Mid-Kent Services - ICT software savings - £8,000 saving**

This proposal is to remove the software that controls asset management in favour of Microsoft InTune, which is included in our current Enterprise Agreement. The saving is £25,000 in total for the three-way shared service, of which MBC's share would be £8,000.

### **Biodiversity and Climate Change – Additional post to support property decarbonisation - £49,000 growth**

It is proposed to create a new role of Energy Officer with the aim to both increase the capacity of the housing team to access and manage housing funding opportunities to improve energy efficiency in housing across the borough, as well as to enable the team to implement elements of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action plan that relate to efficiency within Council operations, renewable energy and net zero targets.

### **Biodiversity and Climate Change – Revenue budget to support eco initiatives - £30,000 growth**

The biodiversity and climate change action plan stipulates a number of actions for public engagement to increase climate resilience in the borough and support the public to reduce household energy consumption in line with the council's net zero commitments. The eco hub is an example of such engagement. However, currently there is no permanent revenue budget to support these initiatives (apart from the staffing budget for the team). This growth proposal would allow initiatives such as this to be funded. It would also support waste management and parks and open spaces in delivering public engagement to raise awareness of climate change impacts, reduce energy consumption and the borough's carbon footprint and to increase biodiversity and reduce waste.

## **2.7 Communities Leisure and Arts PAC**

### *New Savings*

#### **Museum - Business rates saving - £35,000**

A revaluation of the Museum's rating assessment has meant that the Museum no longer has to pay business rates, allowing the budget to be saved.

## **Strategy, Insight and Governance - Sell internal printing services externally - £5,000**

The Council has a print room which continues to support Council committees, produce marketing material and provide a range of other services. It is well-resourced and already carries out work for another local authority. There is scope for further income to be generated from external customers.

### **2.8 Housing, Health and Environment PAC**

*Existing Savings approved February 2023*

#### **Garden Waste – Changes to charging arrangements - £80,000 saving**

As part of changes to charging arrangements, the Executive and Council agreed to increase the garden waste subscription from £45 to £47.50 in 2024/25. Customers renewing or joining the service will start paying the new charge with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, so that the change will be phased in over the twelve month period October 2023 – September 2024.

*New Savings*

#### **Environment and Public Realm - Withdrawal from Kent Resource Partnership - £10,000 saving**

The Council currently contributes £15,000 per year to the Kent Resource Partnership - £5,750 funds the core operation and £9,250 funds project work including joint communications. The Council could decide to withdraw from the Partnership and no longer contribute to its operation. There are likely to be ongoing costs relating to Waste Crime, but it is still expected that a saving of £10k could be achieved.

Withdrawing from the Partnership is unlikely to have any significant impact on the Council's Strategic Objectives as there is little evidence to show the County-wide work of the KRP has directly impacted Maidstone's recycling rate which is one of the highest in Kent. Maidstone already has its own Waste Strategy which is due to be updated following confirmation of Government's plans on Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and consistency.

#### **Environment and Public Realm- Disposal of Public Convenience at Mid Kent Shopping Centre - £8,000 saving**

It is proposed that the public conveniences at Mid Kent Shopping Centre be handed over to Mid Kent Shopping Centre, who wish to take over their management and operation. The site currently costs £5,500 per year for cleaning plus £2,570 planned maintenance costs. Disposing of the site to the shopping centre management would enable the service to still be available to the site users but without placing an unnecessary burden on Maidstone taxpayers. These toilets are only of benefit to the visitors to these commercial premises.

### **Housing - Housing grant maximisation - £150,000 saving**

The Council receives grant from central government to support its work on homelessness. This has offset the growth in the Council's own funding of homelessness. A review of this funding and the demands on the service indicates that, even with a potential reduction in future grant levels, there is more scope for applying grant against expenditure.

### **Housing - Reduce landlord incentive budget - £35,000 saving**

The Council currently has a budget of £85,000 which is used to make one-off grants to landlords as an incentive for them to provide accommodation to homeless families. In the current climate it is apparent that the incentives we can offer are insufficient to persuade landlords (in large numbers) to let their properties to households currently residing in TA. Accordingly, it is proposed to give less weight to this strategy as part of our approach to addressing homelessness.

### **Housing - Temporary accommodation new pressures - £600,000 growth less £400,000 saving**

Numbers in temporary accommodation are higher than assumed in the 2023/24 budget and it is currently projected that there will be an overspend of £800,000 for the year. It is expected that expenditure will fall back in 2024/25, assisted by the acquisition of new street properties for temporary accommodation. However, it is projected that there will still be net growth of £200,000 as compared to the 2023/24 budget (ie £600,000 impact from ongoing elevated numbers in TA less £400,000 mitigation from acquisition of new property).

### **Community Protection - Remove surplus budgets - £11,000 saving**

There are budgets within Community Protection that are now no longer required for Safety in Action (now funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner) and for standby budgets for out of hours work.

## **2.9 Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development PAC**

*Existing Savings approved February 2023*

### **Land Charges - Migration of register to HM Land Registry - £33,000 growth offset by £13,000 saving**

The government has legislated to enable HM Land Registry (HMLR) to provide a single, standardised point of contact for provision of the Local Land Charges register. This means that the Council will no longer receive income from searches of the Local Land Charges Register, although we will continue to have responsibility for updating the register. The Council will receive one-off funding to facilitate the transition, but by the end of the transition period the Council will have suffered a cumulative ongoing loss of income. However, this loss of income will mean that the team will no

longer have to carry out the LLC1 search, allowing a saving of £13,000 in 2024/25.

### **Mid Kent Planning Support – Process Improvement and Automation - £15,000 saving**

There are a number of future opportunities for process improvement and automation, e.g. Microsoft 365, the national pilot on reducing invalid planning applications (RIPA), etc that will allow the service to operate more efficiently.

#### *New Savings*

### **Spatial Planning and Economic Development - Additional contribution from Business Rates pool - £150,000 saving**

The Council has a policy of using the proceeds of its membership of the Kent Business Rates Pool to support economic development. Over time, the pool has generated funds in excess of the amounts drawn down, and pool proceeds continue to grow. Accordingly, it is appropriate to increase the amount allocated from the pool to support the base budget.

The Business Rates Pool is a feature of the current local government funding regime. It is not expected that the current regime will change before the next General Election, but it is possible that there may be changes subsequently which would either reduce proceeds from the Pool or eliminate it altogether.

### **Parking - Delete residual Park and Ride site costs - £100,000 saving**

There continue to be residual costs in the budget for running the former Park and Ride site at Willington Street, principally repairs and maintenance and business rates. These budgets can now be deleted.

### **Development Management - Additional CIL recharge for administration - £50,000 saving**

The Council is able to recover the costs of administering the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) up to a limit of 5% of total receipts. Having assessed the Council's costs, and projecting likely annual CIL receipts, it is considered that an additional £50,000 of costs may be recovered.

### **Parking - Short-term additional parking at Sandling Road - £50,000 saving**

The Sandling Road car park will close in due course when work commences on the new Maidstone East housing development. For the time being, running costs are lower than budget. The projected saving for 2024/25 is estimated as approximately £50,000. This savings item is likely to be for one year only, assuming the site is handed over for development at the end of 2024/25.

- 2.10 If all the revenue budget proposals set out above are approved, all other factors remaining equal, and assuming fees and charges are increased in line with the MTFS inflation assumption, this would allow the Council to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.
- 

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Agree the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in Appendix A and the budget proposals set out in Appendices B and C for onward submission to the Cabinet.
- 3.2 Propose changes to the budget proposals.
- 3.3 Make no comment on the budget proposals.
- 

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

- 4.1 The Cabinet must recommend to Council at its meeting on 7 February 2024 a balanced budget and a proposed level of Council Tax for the coming year. The overall strategy and the budget proposals included in this report will assist the Cabinet in doing this. Accordingly, the preferred option is that this Committee recommends that the Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A and the budget proposals at Appendices B and C be agreed.
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### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The Council's finances are subject to a high degree of risk and uncertainty. The draft MTFS includes an evaluation of the Council's financial resilience, from which it can be seen that it has adequate, but not excessive, reserves and is positioned well to manage the financial challenges that it faces.
- 5.2 In order to address risk on an ongoing basis in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, the Council has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each of its meetings.
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### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 The Cabinet received an initial report on the MTFS at its meeting on 26 July 2023 and it agreed the approach set out in that report to development of an MTFS for 2024/25 - 2028/29 and a budget for 2024/25.
- 6.2 Public consultation on the budget has been carried out, with a survey which is due to close on 28 August 2023. Details will be circulated to members once they are available and they are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

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

7.1 The timetable for developing the budget for 2024/25 is set out below.

<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Meeting</i></b>	<b><i>Action</i></b>
September 2023	All Policy Advisory Committees & Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Consider 24/25 budget proposals and draft MTFS
20 September 2023	Cabinet	Agree 24/25 budget proposals and draft MTFS
5 February 2024	Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	Consider final budget proposals and MTFS
7 February 2024	Cabinet	Agree final budget proposals and MTFS for recommendation to Council
21 February 2024	Council	Approve 24/25 budget

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

- Appendix A: Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2028/29
- Appendix B: Budget Proposals 2024/25 – 2028/29 - Corporate Services PAC
- Appendix C: Budget Proposals 2024/25 – 2028/29 – Other PACs.

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers.

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2028/29**



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# 1. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council will deliver its Strategic Plan over the next five years. The Council's Strategic Plan, agreed in December 2018, covers the period 2019 to 2045. The Strategic Plan incorporates four key objectives: embracing growth and enabling infrastructure; homes and communities; a thriving place; and safe, clean and green. Further details are set out in **Section 2**.
- 1.2 Delivering the Strategic Plan depends on the Council's financial capacity and capability. Accordingly, the MTFS considers the economic environment and the Council's own current financial position. The external environment (**Section 3**) is challenging because of high inflation and the state of the UK's public finances. In assessing the Council's current financial position (**Section 4**), attention is paid to its track record of budget management, current financial performance and the level of reserves that it holds.
- 1.3 It is imperative that the MTFS both ensures Maidstone Council's continuing financial resilience and is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of potential scenarios. The Council has prepared financial projections under different scenarios, continuing a practice that has been followed for several years. Details of the different scenarios are set out in **Section 5**.
- 1.4 Planning assumptions for the different scenarios are set out in **Section 6**. A key assumption is the level of Council Tax, as this is the council's principal source of income. Increases in Council Tax are subject to a referendum limit, which at the time of writing (August 2023) is expected to be 3% for 2024/25. This is significantly less than the current rate of inflation, which means that there will be a budget gap, all other factors being equal. The position for future years is even more challenging, given that the expected reset of local government funding is unlikely to be favourable for Maidstone.
- 1.5 Fees and charges in aggregate make an equally important contribution to the Council's resources. Given the rise in the Council's input costs, it is important that these rise in line with inflation. For the purpose of the 2024/25 budget this has been assumed to be 5%.
- 1.6 The MTFS sets out financial projections based on these assumptions in **Section 7**. These are based on scenario 4, which assumes that inflation will remain elevated and central government continues to give the council limited funding flexibility. The table below shows projections for scenario 4, before taking account of the budget changes that are due to be considered by members at meetings of the PACs, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in September 2023.

**Table 1: MTFS Revenue Projections 2024/25 – 2028/29**

	24/25	24/25	25/26	26/27	28/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Resources	53.7	54.7	56.4	58.5	60.2
Predicted Expenditure	55.3	59.2	61.0	61.9	62.7
Budget Gap	1.6	4.5	4.6	3.4	2.5
Existing Planned Savings	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1
Savings Required	0.9	4.5	4.4	3.3	2.4

In accordance with legislative requirements the Council must set a balanced budget. Section 7 concludes by setting out a proposed approach which will specifically address the budget gap in 2024/25. The position in future years is much more challenging and will require a more radical approach.

- 1.7 The Council's strategic priorities are met not only through day-to-day revenue spending but also through capital investment. The Council's programme of building 1,000 Affordable Homes is the centre-piece of the Capital Strategy. Capital investment therefore serves to deliver the Council's strategic priorities, but must remain affordable and sustainable. As set out in **Section 8** below, funds have been set aside for capital investment, using prudential borrowing, and further funding may be available by taking advantage of opportunities to bid for external funding.
- 1.8 The MTFS concludes by describing the process of agreeing a budget for 2024/25, including consultation with all relevant stakeholders, in **Section 9**.

## 2. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES

2.1 The Council has a Strategic Plan which was originally adopted by Council in December 2018. The Strategic Plan has been refreshed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Each year the Strategic Plan is refreshed as appropriate. For 2023/24, the Strategic Plan was updated to reflect the Council's ambition in regard to Biodiversity and Climate Change, the emerging Town Centre Strategy, community resilience, and delivering 1,000 Affordable Homes.

2.2 Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 26 July 2023 that no further review of the Strategic Plan would be required for 2024/25. The four key objectives remain as follows:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place
- Safe, Clean and Green.

'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' recognises that we want Maidstone Borough to work for the people who live, visit and work; now and in the future. We want a Borough where there is a variety of jobs, housing need is met and infrastructure is in place to meet the growing needs of our residents and economy. We also want to ensure we lead and shape our place as it grows, including leading master planning and investing to bring about high quality housing and jobs in the Borough.

'Homes and communities' expresses that we want to have a place that people love and where they can afford to live. This means ensuring that there is a good balance of different types of homes, including affordable housing. We will have safe and desirable homes that enable good health and wellbeing for our communities. We will address homelessness and rough sleeping to move people into settled accommodation. We will work with our partners to improve the quality of community services and facilities including for health care and community activities. Residents will be encouraged and supported to volunteer and play a full part in their communities.

'A thriving place' is a Borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and is an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents. Maidstone is the Business Capital of Kent; we will continue to grow our local economy with high employment, good local jobs and thriving local businesses. We want our town and village centres to thrive and be fit for the future. We will lead investment in the County town and rural service centres through our regeneration projects and working with partners. We are proud of our heritage and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer

A 'safe, clean and green' place is one where we will keep Maidstone an attractive and clean place for all. Maidstone is a safe place to live and we want our residents to feel safe. We want to protect and where possible enhance our environment and make sure our parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are high quality by ensuring they are looked after, well managed and respected.

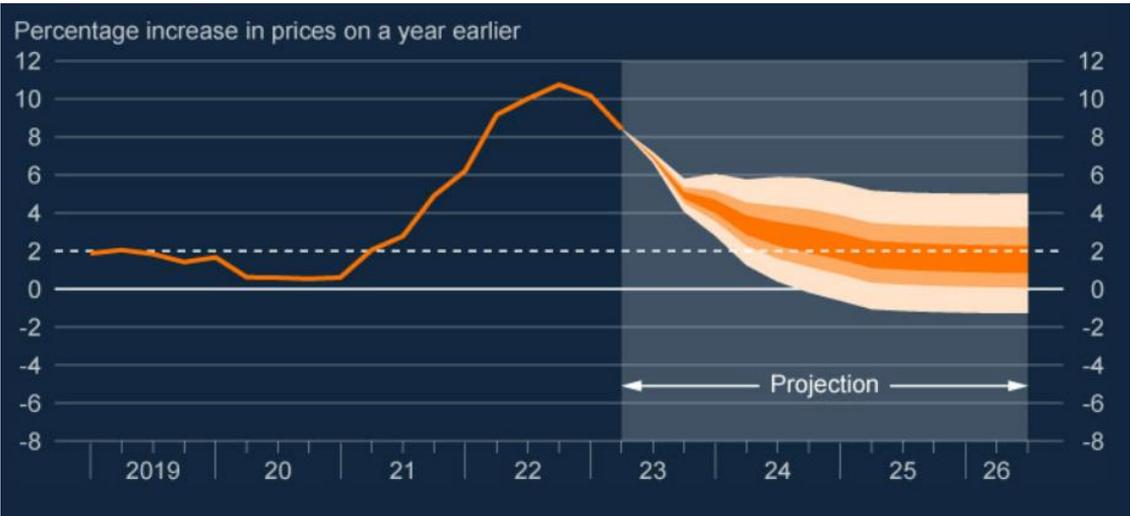
- 2.3 Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in December 2018, the objective of 'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure' has started to be realised, for example the completion of the Innovation Centre and development a new Garden Community.
- 2.4 Amongst initiatives to help make Maidstone a 'Thriving Place' have been MBC investment at Lockmeadow and on the Parkwood Industrial Estate, along with the emerging plans for developing a Town Centre Strategy. We will continue to leverage the Council's borrowing power, if appropriate in conjunction with partners, to realise our ambitions for the borough.
- 2.5 Our 'Homes and Communities' aspirations are being achieved by investment in temporary accommodation and the Trinity Centre and the Leader's commitment to build 1,000 new affordable homes.
- 2.6 The objective of a 'Safe, Clean and Green' place has been emphasised by the Council's commitment to a carbon reduction target and the capital investment to help enable this to be delivered and timely preparation for new waste management arrangements.
- 2.7 Within the framework of the existing Strategic Plan, the Council is therefore prioritising:
- development of the Local Plan and related strategies and policies, in particular the Town Centre Strategy
  - continued investment to make Maidstone a thriving place
  - investment in 1,000 new affordable homes
  - measures to enable the Council's carbon reduction target to be met.
- 2.8 The funding envelope within which these priorities must be delivered depends heavily on the Council's own revenue-generating capacity. The Council is largely self-sufficient financially, drawing most of its income from Council Tax and a range of other locally generated sources of income, including Parking, Planning Fees and the Council's property portfolio. However, it operates within the local authority funding framework set by central government, which is likely to impose tight constraints, and is affected by macro-economic conditions, in particular the rate of inflation. The two key variables in financial planning are therefore the restriction set by central government on the amount by which Council Tax can be increased and the rate of inflation. The financial implications are set out in section 6 below.

### 3. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

#### Macro outlook

3.1 The UK economy has been battered by a series of shocks over the past three years. The Covid pandemic was followed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which led to big increases in energy and food prices. The number of people available to work has not recovered from the Covid pandemic and productivity growth is low. This has led to high inflation, which is only just beginning to fall.

**Figure 1: CPI inflation projection based on market interest rate expectations**



*Source: Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee report, August 2023*

3.2 Whilst inflation is projected to fall to 2% by early 2025, Bank of England forecasts have proved consistently over-optimistic and there is a high risk that inflation levels will remain elevated.

#### Public Finances

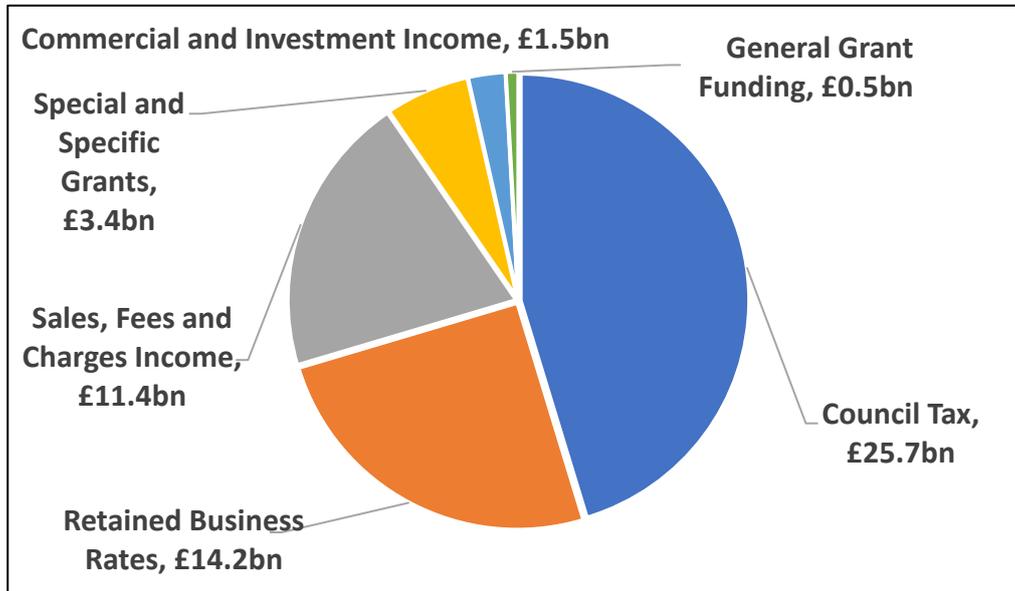
3.3 Slow growth and higher interest rates have negatively impacted the public finances. To address this, HM Treasury envisages a programme of fiscal consolidation over the next few years, with taxes set to rise to nearly 38% of GDP and increases in public service spending limited to 1% a year in real terms. This means that whoever is in government after the forthcoming general election will face very tough choices on tax and spending.

3.4 The overall public expenditure context is relevant for the council, because the local authority funding framework set by government is a crucial determinant of the Council’s financial position. This is primarily because central government restricts the amount by which Council Tax can be increased through the referendum limit and it determines the share of business rates that can be retained locally.

## Local Government Funding

3.5 The main sources of local government funding nationally are set out below.

**Figure 2: How Council Services are funded**



Source: IFS, 'Does Funding Follow Need?', October 2022

- 3.6 In recent years, the reduction in direct central government funding for local government has been mitigated by increases in locally generated sources of income, with Council Tax rising by more than the overall rate of inflation. Upper tier authorities in particular have been able to raise additional tax through a social care precept. This has led the government's preferred measure of council spending, 'Council spending power', to increase, even though it may not reflect the actual resources available. However, funding has failed to keep up with the increased demands on council services, particularly for social care and housing.
- 3.7 The other main element of local government funding, beside Council Tax, is Business Rates. The 2010-15 Coalition Government transferred a notional 50% of locally-collected Business Rates income back to local government, but the requirement to adjust the amount of business rates retained between authorities, based on respective service needs, means that authorities with an active commercial sector and low perceived levels of need, like Maidstone, retain a low proportion of business rates (just 10% in Maidstone's case). It was originally intended to increase the 50% share of business rates retained locally to 75%, but this is no longer government policy.

- 3.8 The gradual squeeze on council funding means that an increasing number of councils are unable to set balanced budgets. This is formally signalled by the issue of a section 114 report. The councils that are most vulnerable tend to be those facing social care cost pressures, ie upper tier or single tier authorities, so it is likely that any additional support for local government in 2024/25 will be focused on them.

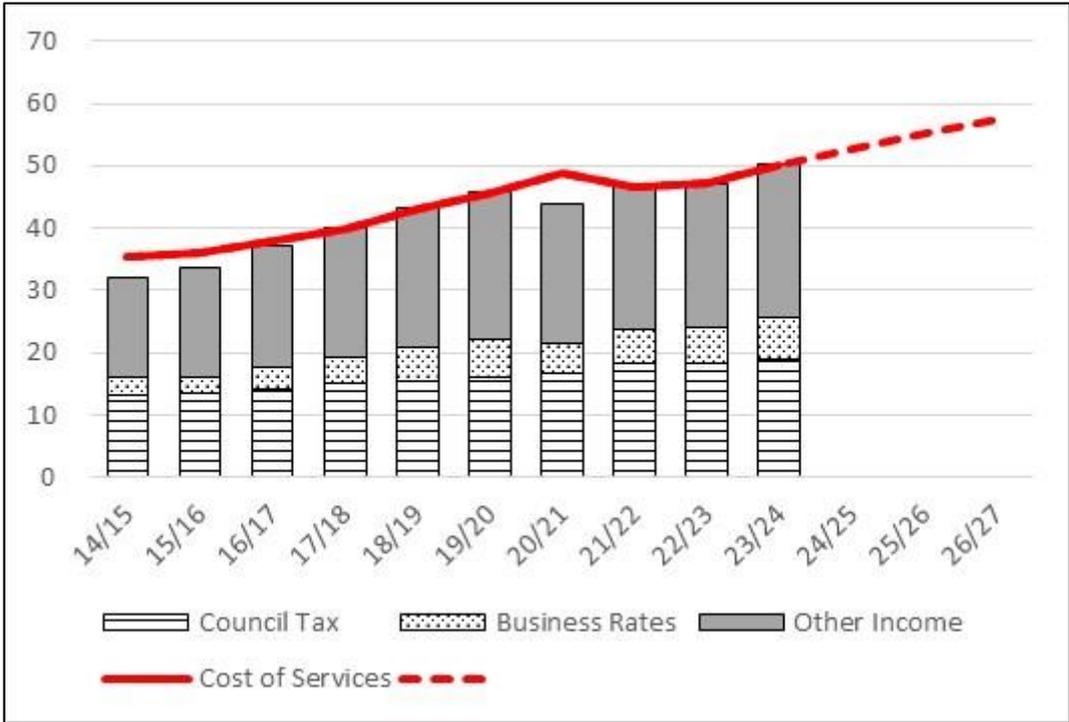
### **Conclusion**

- 3.9 The UK economy faces low growth prospects and continued high inflation. This limits the scope for any increase in public expenditure. To the extent that the funding framework for local government will be flexed to alleviate financial pressures caused by expenditure growth, this is likely to benefit upper tier or single tier authorities, not lower tier authorities like Maidstone.

## 4. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

- 4.1 As a lower tier authority, Maidstone Borough Council is not subject to the extreme pressures currently faced by upper tier authorities arising in particular with respect to adults’ and children’s social care.
- 4.2 The Council is broadly self-sufficient financially. It ceased receiving direct government support in the form of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in 2016/17 and relies mainly on Council Tax and a range of other locally generated sources of income, including parking, planning fees and the property portfolio, to fund ongoing revenue expenditure. During the pandemic, income fell and expenditure increased, but the consequent budget gap, being the difference between cost of services and aggregate income, was covered with direct government funding. This is illustrated in the graph below.

**Figure 3: Sources of Council funding**



- 4.3 The Council’s financial resilience can be assessed using CIPFA’s Resilience Index. The screen shot below shows Maidstone’s scores for 2021/22 (the most up to date data).

**Figure 4 – CIPFA Resilience Index for the Council in 2021/22**



Source: <https://www.cipfa.org/services/financial-resilience-index/resilience-index>

4.4 There are a number of measures captured by the Resilience Index that contribute to financial resilience, according to CIPFA, based on the Revenue Outturn data submitted to central government for 2021/22.

Reserves:

- sustainability of reserves
- level of reserves
- change in reserves
- level of unallocated reserves
- level of earmarked reserves
- change in unallocated reserves
- change in earmarked reserves.

Indebtedness:

- interest payable / net revenue expenditure
- gross external debt.

Financial profile:

- fees and charges as a % of service expenditure
- council tax requirement as % of net revenue expenditure
- growth above the government's business rates baseline.

4.5 CIPFA also considers that financial resilience depends on the quality of management, as evidenced by:

- quality of financial management, including use of performance information
- effective planning and implementation of capital investment
- ability to deliver budget savings if necessary
- risk management.

An assessment is set out below of how the Council performs on these measures.

## Reserves

- 4.6 Indicators of financial stress relating to reserves for Maidstone are generally towards the 'lower risk' end of the spectrum, as compared with our peers. As at 31 March 2023 the Council had unallocated General Fund reserves of £13 million. This corresponds to three months of service expenditure, thus providing an adequate but not excessive level of 'cushion' against unforeseen events.
- 4.7 It should be noted that 'earmarked reserves' are shown as being towards the higher end of the risk spectrum, meaning that the Council holds lower earmarked reserves than many of its peers. Given that such reserves are, by definition, 'earmarked', it is not necessarily the case that high levels of earmarked reserves should be regarded as reducing risk. Drawing on such reserves could mean diverting them from the projects for which they were intended. A high level of earmarked reserves could also indicate a failure in project delivery.
- 4.8 It is nevertheless the case that the council needs to build up its Housing Investment Fund, which comes within the category of earmarked reserves. This is because the affordable housing programme requires a revenue subsidy, which needs to be in place before properties are transferred to a Housing Revenue Account (see paragraph 8.7 below).
- 4.9 Reserves are shown below within the context of the council's overall financial position, as represented by its most recent balance sheet (previous year shown for comparative purposes).

**Table 2: Maidstone Borough Council balance sheet (unaudited)**

<b>31st March 2022 £000</b>		<b>31st March 2023 £000</b>
185,324	Long Term Assets	194,687
53,195	Current Assets	25,338
77,649	Current Liabilities	52,577
97,854	Long Term Liabilities	23,643
<b>63,016</b>	<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>143,805</b>
12,516	Unallocated General Fund Balance	12,983
21,375	Earmarked General Fund Balance	21,376
288	Capital Reserves	369
28,837	Unusable Reserves	109,077
<b>63,016</b>	<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>143,805</b>

4.10 The main changes between the two balance sheet dates and the principal reasons are as follows:

- *Increase in long term assets:* A number of additional properties were purchased during 2022/23.
- *Decrease in current assets:* These have reduced as the short-term liquid investments held at the start of the year have been used to fund the capital programme and make Support for Energy payments to eligible households along with some other Covid-19 related payments.
- *Decrease in current liabilities:* The decrease in liabilities is mainly owing to the deployment of government grants, previously held as liquid investments pending use for the purposes described above.
- *Decrease in long term liabilities:* There has been a significant reduction in the pensions liability. This has come about due to a change in the discount rate used, which is linked to short-term interest rates, which rose between March 2022 and March 2023.
- *Increase in unusable reserves:* This arises because the pension asset / liability in the balance sheet is treated as unusable. As the liability has fallen (see above) so the level of reserves increases.

4.11 The unallocated general fund balance within usable reserves represents the Council's core reserves. It is an essential part of the Council's strategic financial planning, as this amount represents the funds available to address unforeseen financial pressures.

4.12 For local authorities there is no statutory minimum level of unallocated reserves. It is for each Council to take a view on the required level having regard to matters relevant to its local circumstances. CIPFA guidance issued in 2014 states that to assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves the Chief Financial Officer should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing their authority. The assessment of risks should include external risks, such as natural disasters, as well as internal risks such as the achievement of savings.

4.13 Maidstone Council historically set £2 million as a minimum level for unallocated reserves. In the light of the heightened risk environment facing the Council, it was agreed from 2021/22 that this minimum should be increased to £4 million. In practice, the level of unallocated reserves held is higher, at £13 million, thus providing a reasonable, but not excessive, level of additional assurance.

### **Indebtedness**

4.14 The Council has a relatively low level of external debt. As at 31 March 2023 this amounted to £10 million (included within liabilities in Table 2). Although the Council has expanded its property portfolio in recent years, this has largely been funded from internal sources.

4.15 The CIPFA Resilience Index shows interest payable compared with net revenue expenditure as being towards the higher risk end of the spectrum. However, this is somewhat misleading, because the figure used for interest payable comprises just £100,000 payable on external debt and £1.8 million representing a notional interest charge on pension liabilities.

**Financial profile**

4.16 Three of the metrics used by CIPFA indicate the authority’s underlying financial profile. These largely reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and are usually of very long historical standing.

*Fees and charges as a % of service expenditure* measures the extent to which an authority can cover service expenditure through fees and charges. It is beneficial, for example, if an authority can generate substantial parking income. Maidstone tends towards ‘higher risk’ on this measure, possibly indicating that it is not exploiting such sources of income as effectively as it could do.

*Council tax requirement as % of net revenue expenditure* measures the extent to which Council Tax income covers revenue expenditure. Maidstone is very low risk on this basis, as it can cover revenue expenditure fully through council tax income, without being dependent on external income or government funding.

*Growth above baseline* measures the rate of business rates growth as compared to the government’s baseline. An area with a strong local economy would perform well on this metric. Maidstone is in the middle of the risk spectrum.

**Financial management**

4.17 The Council has a strong track record of managing finances within the agreed budgets. The revenue out-turn for 2022/23 is set out below, showing that the Council ended the year spending just £212,000 (1%) less than the agreed budget for the year.

**Table 3: 2022/23 Revenue Out-turn**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Budget £000</b>	<b>Actual £000</b>	<b>Variance £000</b>
Economic Development	620	720	-100
Planning	2,112	2,444	-332
Parking	-1,410	-1,865	455
Corporate Services	10,894	10,270	624
Housing & Health	2,726	3,711	-985
Environmental Services	6,874	6,364	510
Communities, Leisure & Arts	1,414	1,375	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,231</b>	<b>23,019</b>	<b>212</b>

- 4.18 Financial management at Maidstone Borough Council contains a number of elements. Officers and members are fully engaged in the annual budget setting process, which means that there is a clear understanding of financial plans and the resulting detailed budgets
- 4.19 Detailed financial reports are prepared and used on a monthly basis by managers, and on a quarterly basis by elected members, to monitor performance against the budget. Reports to members are clear, reliable and timely, enabling a clear focus on any areas of variance from the plan.
- 4.20 Financial reports are complemented by performance indicators, which are reported both at the service level to the wider leadership team, and at a corporate level to members. Member reports on performance indicators are aligned with the financial reports, so that members see a comprehensive picture of how services are performing.
- 4.21 Financial management and reporting is constantly reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose and meets the organisation's requirements. Quarterly financial reports to members have been redesigned over the last two years to make them more user-friendly.
- 4.22 Where variances arise, prompt action is taken to address them. Action plans are put in place at an early stage if it appears that there is likely to be a budget overspend.
- 4.23 The authority consistently receives clean external and internal audit opinions.

### **Capital investment**

- 4.24 The Council has a capital programme amounting to around £200 million over the next five years. The main element within the programme is the housing programme. Site acquisitions to date provide the capacity to deliver around 500 units. These will comprise a mix of tenures but a significant element will contribute to the overall target of delivering 1,000 affordable homes over the next ten years.
- 4.25 All schemes within the capital programme are subject to appropriate option appraisal. Any appraisal must comply with the requirements of the Prudential Code, which requires that capital investment should be funded in a way that is prudent, affordable and sustainable. Accordingly, an investment appraisal is undertaken prior to any site acquisitions for the housing programme.
- 4.26 The capital programme is largely funded through external sources, so it depends on the availability of funding, whether through Public Works Loan Board borrowing or other sources of finance. The Council has locked in £80 million of future borrowing, to be drawn down between 2024 to 2026, in order to mitigate the funding risk.
- 4.27 Member oversight is ensured, first by inclusion of schemes in the capital programme that is approved as part of the annual budget setting process. Subsequently, prior to any capital commitment being entered into, a report

setting out details of the capital scheme is considered by the relevant service committee.

- 4.28 The Council has a corporate project management framework that applies to projects included within the capital programme. This provides for designation of a project manager and sponsor and includes a mechanism for progress on major projects to be reported to a Strategic Capital Investment Board.
- 4.29 So far as the housing programme is concerned, effective delivery of the programme is assured through an experienced in-house client team, which sources appropriate external skills (architects, employers' agents, contractors) to implement individual schemes. Each scheme is monitored from a financial and operational viewpoint and financial monitoring of capital projects is incorporated within the quarterly reports to Service Committees.

### **Ability to deliver budget savings**

- 4.30 The Council has a good track record of delivering budget savings, whilst sustaining and investing in services. Savings initiatives are planned so far as possible across the five-year period of the MTFs, rather than the focus being simply on achieving whatever savings are necessary in order to balance the budget for the coming year.
- 4.31 A common criticism of local authority financial planning is that proposed savings are often over-optimistic and are not based on realistic evidence of what is achievable. The Council aims to mitigate this risk with a robust process for developing budget savings proposals:
- New and updated savings proposals are sought on a regular annual cycle, with Service Managers typically briefed on the savings remit in August/September
  - Savings proposals are then developed over a period of around two months
  - Savings proposals have to be formally documented and signed off by the Service Head who will be responsible for delivering them.
- 4.32 Once savings have been built into the budget, their achievement is monitored as part of the regular financial management process described above.

### **Risk management**

- 4.33 The Council's MTFs is subject to a high degree of risk and uncertainty. In order to address this in a structured way and to ensure that appropriate mitigations are developed, the Council has developed a budget risk register. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way. The budget risk register is updated regularly and is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting.

4.34 The major risk areas that have been identified as potentially threatening the Medium Term Financial Strategy are as follows, in ranking order.

- Inflation rate is higher than 2% government target
- Capital programme cannot be funded
- Constraints on council tax increases
- Failure to contain expenditure within agreed budgets
- Financial impact from major emergencies such as Covid-19
- Planned savings are not delivered
- Business Rates pool fails to generate sufficient growth
- Collection targets for Council Tax and Business Rates missed
- Adverse impact from changes in local government funding
- Financial impact from IT security failure
- Pension liability cannot be funded
- Other income fails to achieve budget
- Fees and Charges fail to deliver sufficient income
- Litigation costs exceed budgeted provisions
- Increased complexity of government regulation
- Shared services fail to meet budget
- Council holds insufficient balances

4.35 The Council has implemented JCAD risk management software, which allows individual service areas to log and monitor risks. By reviewing risks on a regular basis in this way, it is expected that any major new risks will be identified and appropriate mitigations developed.

### **Conclusion**

4.36 When assessed against the CIPFA criteria for financial resilience, the Council can be seen to have adequate reserves in the short term and to be positioned well to manage the financial challenges it will face. The following section considers whether this position is sustainable.

**5. SCENARIO PLANNING**

5.1 As Maidstone’s financial position is dependent on government policy and on broader economic factors such as inflation, neither of which can be predicted with any certainty, it is appropriate to model the impact of different scenarios on the Council. Following a similar approach to that adopted when developing the current 2023/24 – 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Strategy, the following four scenarios can be sketched out.

<p><b>Scenario 1: Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility</b></p> <p>The rate of price inflation falls in line with BoE forecasts, but government maintains existing constraints on local government finances in order to reduce debt and create capacity for tax cuts.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 2: Inflation falls, some funding flexibility</b></p> <p>Inflation falls in line with BoE forecasts, and government adopts more accommodative local government finance settlements to help councils address demand pressures.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 3: Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility</b></p> <p>Inflation only reaches the target level of 2% at the end of the MTFS planning period. Owing to the continued high level of inflation, government relaxes constraints on local government finances to allow council services to be protected.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 4: Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility</b></p> <p>Inflation only reaches the target level of 2% at the end of the MTFS planning period, but government maintains the existing level of constraints on local government finances.</p>

Scenario 4 is the most challenging of those sketched out above, as it represents a combination of continued high inflation and tight constraints on the Council’s revenue raising capacity. For planning purposes, we consider it prudent at this stage to adopt Scenario 4. However, the other scenarios will be modelled and the implications considered when developing the detailed Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2 The next section sets out planning assumptions under each of the above scenarios.

## 6. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 In drawing up financial projections, assumptions need to be made about what future scenarios might mean. The key dimensions are:

- (a) the Council Tax base;
- (b) the level of Council Tax;
- (c) retained Business Rates, which in turn depends on overall business rates and government policy on distributing Business Rates income;
- (d) other local income, eg fees and charges;
- (e) the cost of service delivery, which is subject to the effect of inflation on input prices.

Each of these is considered in more detail below.

### *Council Tax base*

6.2 Council Tax is a product of the tax base and the level of tax set by Council. The tax base is a value derived from the number of chargeable residential properties within the borough and their band, which is based on valuation ranges, adjusted by all discounts and exemptions.

6.3 The tax base has increased steadily in recent years, reflecting the number of new housing developments in the borough. See table below:

**Table 4: Number of Dwellings in Maidstone**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of dwellings	70,843	71,917	73,125	75,034	76,351
% increase compared with previous year	1.74%	1.52%	1.68%	2.61%	1.76%

**Note:** Number of dwellings is reported each year based on the position shown on the valuation list in September.

6.4 The Council tax base is also affected by collection rates and the number of households benefitting from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Typically these factors do not vary significantly between years but in the event of a major downturn in the economy, collection rates could be expected to fall and more households would be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

6.5 Future growth assumptions for each scenario are set out below.

<b>Council Tax base growth assumptions</b>					
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Scenario 1 – Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 2 – Inflation falls, some funding flexibility	1.5%	1.5%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 3 – Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility	1.5%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Scenario 4 – Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility	1.5%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%

### *Level of Council Tax*

6.6 The level of council tax increase for 2024/25 is a decision that will be made by Council based on a recommendation made by the Cabinet. In practice, the Council’s ability to increase the level of council tax is limited by the need to hold a referendum for increases over a government set limit. In 2023/24, the limit was 3%. The Council approved the maximum possible increase. The rationale for this approach was that:

- pressures on the Council’s budget mean that even a marginal difference in Council Tax income is of value;
- the referendum limit might revert to a lower level in later years;
- because the starting point for calculating the referendum limit in any given year is the previous year’s Council Tax, agreeing a lower increase reduces the Council’s room for manoeuvre in later years.

6.7 Given that CPI inflation was 8.7% for the year to May 2023, it is hard to see the referendum limit being reduced from the current level of 3%. A prudent assumption (Scenario 4) would therefore be that the referendum limit will be 3% in 2024/25, but after the General Election that is due to take place by January 2025, the government will seek to bear down on inflation by restricting the limit to 2%, being the target level of inflation<sup>1</sup>.

6.8 Future growth assumptions for each scenario are set out below.

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<sup>1</sup> The Leader of the Labour Party announced in March 2023 that a Labour government would freeze Council Tax in 2024/25, using the proceeds of a windfall tax on oil and gas companies. Presumably this means that central government would reimburse local authorities with an amount equivalent to that by which they would have increased tax locally.

<b>Council Tax increase assumptions</b>					
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Scenario 1 – Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 2 – Inflation falls, some funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 3 – Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 4 – Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

- 6.9 A key MTFS assumption is that Council Tax increases are maximised within the constraints of the referendum limit.

*Retained business rates*

- 6.10 Under the current business rates regime, local government in aggregate retains 50% of business rates income. However, most of the 50% share collected locally is lost to Maidstone, because it is redistributed to other authorities through a system of tariffs and top-ups.

**Table 5: Baseline Business Rates Income 2023/24**

	£000	%
Baseline Business Rates income	62,333	100
Government share	-31,166	-50
Kent County Council / Kent Fire & Rescue Authority	-6,233	-10
Government tariff	-21,551	-35
Baseline Business Rates income retained by MBC	3,382	-5

To the extent that business rates income exceeds the baseline, this growth element is retained locally, subject to a levy payable to central government by tariff authorities like Maidstone.

- 6.11 The Council has been able to minimise the levy payable on business rates growth through its membership of the Kent Business Rates Pool. This is because the levy payable by some pool members (district councils) is offset against the top-up received by the major preceptors (Kent County Council and Kent Fire and Rescue).
- 6.12 Business rates pool income is allocated, in accordance with the Pool Memorandum of Understanding between Kent authorities, as follows.

Maidstone Borough Council – used for specific projects that form part of the Economic Development strategy. £250,000 of this amount is top-sliced in the budget for ED salaries and spatial planning.	30%
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Growth Fund – In Maidstone this is split 50:50 between MBC and Kent County Council for the regeneration of the Town Centre and is deployed at Maidstone East and Sessions House / Invicta House respectively.	30%
Kent County Council	30%
Contingency - To compensate Kent local authorities who do not benefit directly from pool membership (eg because their business rates growth is lower than the baseline)	10%

6.13 There are a number of factors affecting the future pattern of business rates income:

- Government uses the share of business rates that local authorities are allowed to retain as a mechanism for directing resources towards the areas of perceived need (hence Maidstone, as a relatively prosperous area, only retaining 5% of baseline business rates). This resource allocation has remained broadly unchanged since 2014, when the current local government funding system was introduced, but a 'fair funding review', which will update the resource allocation, has been mooted for several years. In practice it is now unlikely to be implemented before 2026/27.
- The government share of business rates and the tariff (see Table 4 above) are fixed £ amounts, based on a predetermined business rates baseline. This has benefited the Council over the past ten years, as the rate of business rates growth has been greater locally than general price inflation, and the Council has benefited from this excess growth. However, the reverse could be the case if there is a downturn in total business rates income.
- As part of any change to the funding system, the business rates baseline is expected to be adjusted. This will give a higher baseline for the Council, with the result that the accumulated business rates growth of the past ten years, which (subject to the levy) is currently retained locally, would be lost.

6.14 These factors are generally likely to have an adverse impact on business rates income. However, the government has indicated that changes such as implementation of the fair funding review and a revision of the baseline would be implemented over a period of time, dampening any immediate adverse impact.

6.15 Future growth assumptions for each scenario are set out below.

<b>Business rates growth assumptions</b>					
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Scenario 1 – Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	-2.0%	-2.0%	-2.0%
Scenario 2 – Inflation falls, some funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Scenario 3 – Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility	5.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Scenario 4 – Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility	5.0%	2.0%	-2.0%	-2.0%	-2.0%

*Other income*

- 6.16 Other income, in aggregate, is now a major contributor to the Council’s total revenue budget. The main components of other income are set out below:

**Table 6: Projected Other Income 2023/24**

	£ million
Fees and charges	10.5
Property rental income	7.1
Shared services trading income	3.7
Other income	2.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24.1</b>

The Council has a policy that guides officers and councillors to set the appropriate level of fees and charges based on demand, affordability and external factors. Given the current inflationary environment, it is important to target an appropriate overall increase in the amount of fees and charges to mitigate the expected increase in the Council’s input costs. The alternative would be for the Council to have to make further savings, potentially reducing the level of services that it provides to residents.

- 6.17 Note that some fees and charges are set by central government and are not necessarily increased annually. Rents may only change at the point of periodic rent reviews.
- 6.18 Future growth assumptions for each scenario are set out below. These correspond to the inflation level projected for the respective scenarios, on the basis that it is reasonable to expect income to increase in line with expenditure. A key MTFS assumption is that overall income from fees and charges increases in line with expected increases in the Council’s input costs.

<b>Other income growth assumptions</b>					
	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Scenario 1 – Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 2 – Inflation falls, some funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 3 – Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.0%	2.0%
Scenario 4 – Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.0%	2.0%

### *Cost of services*

- 6.19 The cost of services is subject to inflation. Service cost increases tend to lag behind published inflation indices, but they are likely to follow the same pattern. Salaries account for around 50% of total input costs, and market pressures are likely to mean that inflation will impact salaries in the medium term. Many other costs, in particular contract costs, are directly linked to inflation indices.
- 6.20 As described above, there is considerable doubt about whether inflation will fall as quickly as official forecasts suggest. Accordingly, the preferred scenario 4 adopts a more prudent approach than simply following the Bank of England forecast.

<b>Cost of services growth assumptions</b>					
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Scenario 1 – Inflation falls, limited funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 2 – Inflation falls, some funding flexibility	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Scenario 3 – Inflation remains elevated, some funding flexibility	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.0%	2.0%
Scenario 4 – Inflation remains elevated, limited funding flexibility	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.0%	2.0%

For the purposes of detailed budget planning, a more granular approach is taken to forecasting budget growth, and specific percentages are applied to the different categories within cost of services.

## 7. REVENUE PROJECTIONS

- 7.1 Strategic revenue projections for scenario 4 are summarised in table 7 below. In light of the many uncertainties around future funding, it is important to note that projections like these can only represent a 'best estimate' of what will happen. These projections will be updated as more information becomes available, prior to a final version of the projections being included in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**Table 7: MTFS Revenue Projections 2024/25-2028/29**

	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Scenario 4</b>					
Total Resources	53.7	54.7	56.4	58.5	60.2
Predicted Expenditure	55.3	59.2	61.0	61.9	62.7
Budget Gap	1.6	4.5	4.6	3.4	2.5
Existing Planned Savings	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1
Savings Required	0.9	4.5	4.4	3.3	2.4

- 7.2 Issues contributing to the budget gap of £900,000 in 2024/25 are inflation and £700,000 of additional growth in 2023/24 which was funded from one-off resources and is now built into base budgets. In 2025/26 and future years, the potential loss of funding from a local government funding reset and the cost of borrowing for the capital programme lead to much larger budget gap figures.
- 7.3 Note that all these assumptions assume that Council Tax income is increased by the maximum possible given the referendum limit, and fees and charges are increased in line with inflation. In all cases, the budget gap would be greater if these measures were not taken. See below for illustrative figures for 2024/25.

	£000
'Do nothing' budget gap	2,023
Increase Council Tax by 3%	-573
Increase Other Income by 5%	-525

Budget gap per Strategic Revenue Projection 925 (see Table 7 above)

- 7.4 In summary, it is assumed here that Council Tax is increased by the maximum possible, which in Scenario 4 is 3%; and that in order to deliver a 5% increase in other income, fees and charges are increased appropriately. To the extent that individual categories of fees and charges are not increased by this amount, compensating additional increases would need to be found elsewhere.

### Approach to balancing the budget

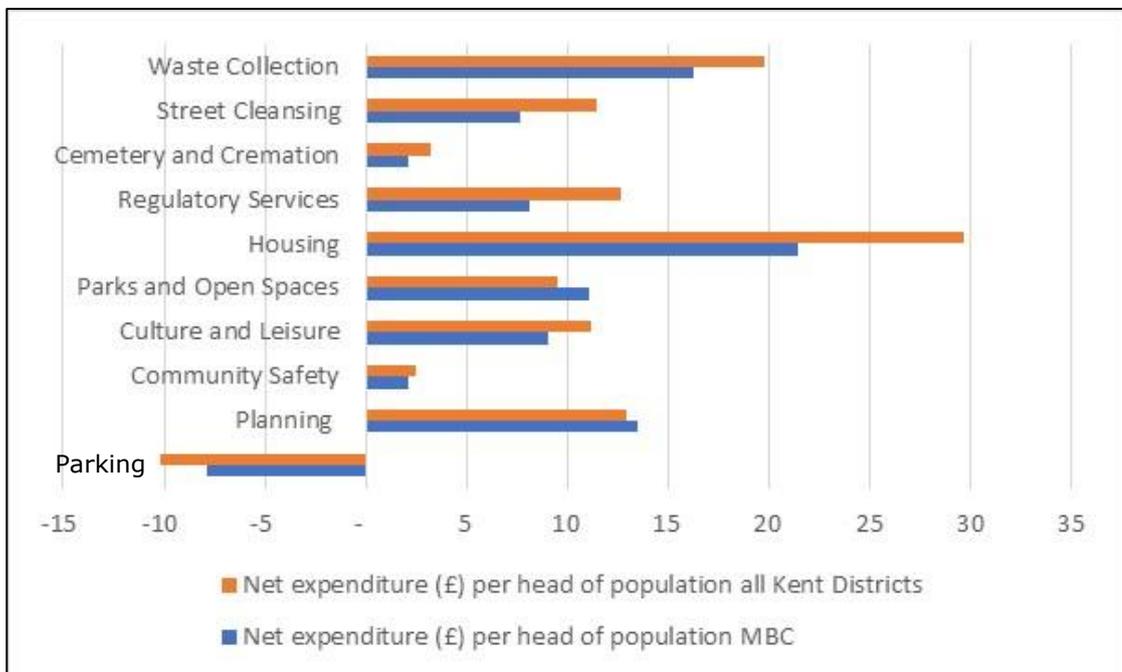
- 7.5 The immediate priority in setting a balanced budget for 2024/25 is to close the budget gap of £925,000 for next year. In line with the Council's usual

practice, savings proposals have been sought from service managers. Whilst individual proposals may not amount to significant sums, in aggregate they may contribute substantially to meeting the deficit.

7.6 It can be seen from the table above that savings on a much greater scale will be required in subsequent years. Assuming that the projections remain broadly unchanged, this will demand a much more thoroughgoing review of Council budgets, and potentially service reductions. In seeking areas where there may be potential for making savings, it is worth comparing the Council's most recent spending data with those of its peers – the other district Councils of Kent. This is not to imply that this Council is over-spending or under-spending in particular areas. Rather, it is intended to put our allocation of expenditure against the different priorities in context.

**Figure 5: Expenditure per head of population**

*Source: Local Authority 2021/22 Revenue Outturn returns*



7.7 From this it can be seen that MBC spends more than its peers on:

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Planning and Development
- Parking (ie income is lower than average).

6.7 Work will need to take place over the coming year so that savings proposals are ready for the start of the 2025/26 budget process.

## 8. CAPITAL STRATEGY

8.1 The capital programme plays a vital part in delivering the Council’s strategic plan, since it is only through long term investment that our ambitions for the borough, in particular the 1,000 Affordable Homes programme, can be realised. The capital programme has an impact on revenue, because of the cost of borrowing and the annual charge (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP) that the Council is required to make to set aside sufficient money to fund the repayment of borrowing.

8.2 The profile of the current five year capital programme is as follows.

**Table 8: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2027/28**

	<b>23/24</b>	<b>24/25</b>	<b>25/26</b>	<b>26/27</b>	<b>27/28</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Affordable Housing	6,123	20,080	22,825	25,487	22,442	96,958
Social Housing Grant	-5,790	-3,120	-1,290	-8,250	-6,060	-24,510
Private Rented Sector	3,090	6,765	6,832	9,578	6,861	33,125
Temporary Accommodation	12,000	12,000	8,000	0	0	32,000
Disabled Facilities	800	800	800	800	800	4,000
Housing – Other	675	1,325	974	543	100	3,616
Environment	6,970	880	730	580	590	9,750
Communities, Leisure & Arts	4,329	3,700	3,350	1,000	1,000	13,379
Planning & Infrastructure	206	0	0	0	0	206
Corporate Services	10,514	7,280	5,423	5,249	4,903	33,369
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,917</b>	<b>49,710</b>	<b>47,644</b>	<b>34,986</b>	<b>30,636</b>	<b>201,893</b>

8.3 As the level of investment increases, the revenue cost of borrowing increases. Ultimately this is offset by income, to the extent that capital schemes generate income, eg in the form of housing rents. However, there is a period during which capital schemes need to be funded before they start to generate income.

8.4 There are a number of risks associated with the capital programme which potentially will impact the revenue account, to the extent that capital expenditure is abortive or leads to the write-down of capital investments:

- Construction price
- Contractor failure / liquidation
- Availability / cost of finance (currently the Council has arranged £80 million of funding, but the availability and cost of finance when this is exhausted is not known).

- 8.5 Finally, there is a specific requirement in relation to the Affordable Housing programme to provide the necessary subsidy for tenants. The requirement for a subsidy arises because affordable housing (ie housing to be let at a rent of no more than 80% of the Local Housing Allowance) does not achieve the normal rate of return that is required on Council investments in order to satisfy the prudential borrowing rules.
- 8.6 In order to avoid the Council facing an ongoing revenue burden from subsidising affordable housing tenants, and to avoid setting deficit budgets in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) when it is established, it is assumed that a capital sum of around £50,000 per unit must be set aside for each unit of affordable housing. Note that there are strict rules about the HRA ringfence, above all the fact that the HRA cannot set a deficit budget. The capital sum must be set aside **before** housing units are transferred into the HRA. Otherwise, the HRA would run a deficit for every unit of housing transferred in, because of the excessive cost of funding housing stock that is transferred into it.
- 8.7 If the target of 1,000 affordable homes is to be achieved over a ten year period, the Council needs to set aside funds now to provide the necessary subsidy. An opportunity to provide this subsidy, without impacting core revenue spending, is available thanks to the government's continued deployment of one-off resources each year to local authorities in the form of New Homes Bonus and Services Grant. In 2022/23, an initial tranche of £3.2 million was earmarked from New Homes Bonus and transferred to a Housing Investment Fund. Although there is no assurance that such grants will continue to be available into the future, if the Council is to provide affordable homes as part of its capital programme, it needs to maximise the amount of one off resources, eg New Homes Bonus and Services Grant, that are transferred into the Housing Investment Fund. Note that there is a risk that New Homes Bonus will reduce in future, as housing growth falls, so any other one off resources will likely be required as well.
- 8.8 It is proposed that a key MTFS assumption is that one-off resources such as New Homes Bonus and Services Grant are earmarked for the Housing Investment Fund.

## **9. CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1 Each year the Council carries out consultation as part of the development of the MTFS. A budget survey is being carried out and is due to close on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The results will be reported to members to aid their consideration of the budget proposals.
- 9.2 Consultation with members will take place in September 2023 on detailed revenue budget proposals. Individual Policy Advisory Committees will consider the budget proposals relating to the services within their areas of responsibility, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet will consider the budget proposals for the Council as a whole.
- 9.3 Proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 will be considered by the Policy Advisory Committees and Cabinet later in the Autumn; capital budget proposals will be considered by the Corporate Services PAC and Cabinet in January 2024. The final budget will be presented to Council on the 21st February 2024.

**Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 - 2028/29**

Service	Proposal	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Existing Savings</b>							
Corporate Property	Property Investment Strategy	-125	-125	-125	-125	-125	-625
Housing	New Maidstone Property Holdings developments	-228					-228
Elections	Whole council elections	-60					-60
Corporate Property	Office accommodation savings	-55					-55
Transformation	Automation of transactional services	-50					-50
Corporate Property	Service improvements	-25					-25
HR	Deleting HR adviser post		-18				-18
Finance	Review of structure	-15					-15
MKS ICT	Efficiency improvements			-14			-14
Transformation	Review of print and post including handling and processing cheques	-10					-10
Finance	Investment income - reversal of earlier saving		50				50
	Sub-total	-568	-93	-139	-125	-125	- 1,050
<b>New Savings</b>							
Finance	Additional interest income	-350	350				0
Mid Kent Services	Automated data handling for Council Tax	-40	-15				-55
Mid Kent Services	Shared Revenues and Benefits service with Swale	-30	-30				-60
Mid Kent Services	Transfer Risk Management to Emergency Planning	-29					-29
Corporate Property	Asset Management Plan for commercial property	-29					-29
Corporate Property	Saving in Heather House running costs	-27					-27
Mid Kent Services	Payroll service external income	-25					-25
Emergency Planning	Emergency Planning partnership	-20					-20
Mid Kent Services	Internal audit - Efficiency savings	-19					-19
Mid Kent Services	ICT software savings	-8					-8
Biodiversity & Climate Change	Additional post to support property decarbonisation	49					49
Biodiversity & Climate Change	Revenue budget to support eco initiatives	30					30
	Sub-total	-498	305	0	0	0	-193
<b>OVERALL CHANGE IN BUDGET (£000)</b>		<b>-1,066</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>-139</b>	<b>-125</b>	<b>-125</b>	<b>-1,243</b>

Negative figures shown above represent a reduction in expenditure budgets, or increased income targets. Positive figures indicate increased expenditure, or a reduction in the income budget.

## Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 - 2028/29

Service	Proposal	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Museum	Museum business rates saving	-35					-35
Strategy, Insight and Governance	Sell internal printing services externally	-5	-5				-10
<b>OVERALL CHANGE IN BUDGET (£000)</b>		<b>-40</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-45</b>

Negative figures shown above represent a reduction in expenditure budgets, or increased income targets. Positive figures indicate increased expenditure, or a reduction in the income budget.

Policy Advisory Committee

Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 - 2028/29

Service	Proposal	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Existing Savings</b>							
Garden Waste	Changes to charging arrangements	-80		-80			-160
	Sub-total	-80	0	-80	0	0	-160
<b>New Savings</b>							
Environment and Public Realm	Withdrawal from Kent Resource Partnership	-10					-10
Environment and Public Realm	Disposal of PC at Mid Kent Shopping Centre	-8					-8
Housing	Housing grant maximisation	-150					-150
Housing	Reduce landlord incentive budget	-35					-35
Housing	Temporary accommodation growth	600					600
Housing	Temporary accommodation savings	-400					-400
Community Safety	Remove surplus budgets	-11					-11
	Sub-total	-14	0	0	0	0	-14
<b>OVERALL CHANGE IN BUDGET (£000)</b>		<b>-94</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-174</b>

Negative figures shown above represent a reduction in expenditure budgets, or increased income targets. Positive figures indicate increased expenditure, or a reduction in the income budget.

Policy Advisory Committee

Revenue Budget Proposals 2024/25 - 2028/29

Service	Proposal	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Existing Savings</b>							
Land Charges	Migration of land charges register to HM Land Registry	-30	63				33
Land Charges	Staff reduction	-13					-13
MK Planning Support	Process improvement and automation		-15				-15
	Sub-total	-43	48	0	0	0	5
<b>New Savings</b>							
Spatial Planning and Economic Development	Additional contribution from Business Rates Pool	-150					-150
Parking	Delete residual Park and Ride site costs	-100					-100
Development Management	Additional CIL recharge for administration	-50					-50
Parking	Sandling Road Car Park running costs (one year only)	-50	50				0
	Sub-total	-350	50	0	0	0	-300
<b>OVERALL CHANGE IN BUDGET (£000)</b>		<b>-393</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-295</b>

Negative figures shown above represent a reduction in expenditure budgets, or increased income targets. Positive figures indicate increased expenditure, or a reduction in the income budget.

# Agenda Item 17

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 September 2023

### Public consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme KCWS

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	7th September 2023
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	Before 29 <sup>th</sup> September 2023

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Health
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Martyn Jeynes, Community and Strategic Partnership Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### **Executive Summary**

KCC are currently undertaking a public consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme (KCWS). Through the consultation, KCC have announced plans that would see the service reduced significantly and have a potentially disproportionate impact on Maidstone and its residents as a result. To ensure the concerns of Maidstone Borough Council are recorded the following report provides information in relation to the proposed changes and the potential impact and offers suggested responses to the questions asked in the consultation should the Cabinet Member choose to respond.

#### **Purpose of Report**

Cabinet Member Decision

**This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation to the Cabinet Member:**

That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health approves the consultations responses attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

# Public consultation in relation to the Kent Community Warden Scheme KCWS

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>The proposed changes are likely to impact on our ability to provide a Safe, Clean and Green borough. It will also impact on Homes and Communities. The public consultation offers and opportunity to ask KCC to consider the implication changes will have on our strategic objectives.</p>	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The report recommendation supports both the Health Inequalities are Addressed and the Reduced Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved Cross Cutting Objectives.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Risk Management</b>	There are no proposed risks associated to the recommendation.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Financial</b>	Whilst there are no direct financial implications associated to the recommendations in this report, it is highly likely that the proposed changes will impact on a number of services in the Housing and Health Portfolio as demand shifts to Maidstone Borough Council services	Head of Finance
<b>Staffing</b>	Whilst there are no direct staffing implications associated to the recommendations in this report, it is highly likely that the proposed changes will impact on a number of services in the Housing and Health Portfolio as demand shifts to Maidstone Borough Council services.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services

<b>Legal</b>	Responding to the public consultation has no legal implications.	
<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>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	Whilst there are no direct Public Health implications associated to the recommendations in this report, it is highly likely that the proposed changes will impact on the health of the population and individuals in the borough.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	Whilst there are no direct Crime and Disorder associated to the recommendations in this report, it is highly likely that the proposed changes will impact on the crime and disorder due to the partnership role the KCC Wardens have played in the borough, including the multi-agency taskforce.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Procurement</b>	Not applicable	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Regulatory Services
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kent County Council are proposing changes to the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) as detailed in their Consultation document and questionnaire found in appendix 1.
- 2.2 The KCWS is a discretionary service that provides a proactive and visible service to improve residents' quality of life and allow their communities to thrive. The proposed changes are driven by KCC's financial challenge, which requires savings of £1 million by 2024-25. This would entail a reduction of 32 warden posts and two management posts, and a change in the allocation of wardens across the county.
- 2.3 The proposed changes aim to retain the service's wide remit, objectives, and community-based approach, but with fewer wardens and less coverage. The service will continue with six teams covering two districts each, with a minimum of three wardens per team plus a team leader. Additional wardens (14 under the proposed reductions) will be placed within teams based on need using the proposed Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP), which uses a variety of data and information to rank wards according to need.
- 2.4 The consultation is running for 12 weeks from 12 July until 3 October 2023. The feedback from the consultation will be presented to Members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee in January 2024 for their consideration and recommendation. In order to meet the deadline for the consultation, a report will be presented to the relevant PAC outlining our proposed responses to the consultation on behalf of residents of Maidstone and/or as a member of the Safer Maidstone Partnership.

### What impact might the proposed changes have in Maidstone specifically

- 2.5 Maidstone is currently covered by one team, which comprises one team leader and 13 wardens distributed across Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling as detailed in the table at 2.6 below.
- 2.6 Team - Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling (1 team leader, 13 wardens)

Areas covered	Area type	Allocated?
Aylesford, Burham, Eccles	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Bearsted	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Borough Green and Wrotham	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Boughton Monchelsea, Chart Sutton and Loose	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Coxheath	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Ditton	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
East Malling	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
East Peckham and Hadlow	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Harrietsham and Lenham	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated

Headcorn	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Marden and Staplehurst	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Snodland and Holborough	Towns	Warden allocated

- 2.7 Under KCC's proposed changes to KCWS, this team would be reduced to one team leader and three wardens with additional wardens allocated according to need using GAP.
- 2.8 This means that many areas in Maidstone that currently have a warden allocated to them would lose their warden while some areas without a warden may gain one. The document does not specify which wards in Maidstone would be affected by these changes as it depends on the use of GAP. Given high levels of deprivation and other issues in East Kent there is a concern that most warden resources will be deployed there.
- 2.9 The reduction of wardens in Maidstone could affect support for residents, especially those who are elderly, vulnerable, isolated or have complex needs. It will also affect partnership working with other organisations such as Community Protection Team, Kent Police, Parish councils, community groups, schools, health services, and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.10 The document invites residents and stakeholders in Maidstone to share their views on how these changes could impact them or their organisation; what they would like KCC to consider or put in place if wardens need to be withdrawn from an area; what alternative sources they would turn to if they lose their warden support; and any suggestions on how else the service could make savings.
- 2.11 The KCWS in Maidstone offers a range of support to the community, playing an integral role in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the community, providing vital information, directly or through vulnerability meetings to statutory services on mental health, self-neglect, and general welfare concerns. The combination of their uniform and absence of enforcement powers creates a unique offer that builds trusted relationships and get through the barriers that other services find challenging. They also help free up hospital beds by helping vulnerable people return home and access support services, reducing the burden on acute NHS services. including providing knowledge and advice on local services, assisting with engaging hard-to-reach residents, providing one-to-one support to clients, and supporting community safety and engagement initiatives.
- 2.12 Amongst our concerns as an authority is that while this may result in short-term savings, it is likely to have significant impacts on public funding in the long term due to increased demand for acute services rather than the care and support the service is currently able to provide. It will also displace current support onto agencies who may not be resourced or may get resistance from being able to support individuals or communities. This will include our Community Protection Team, Housing Teams, the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System and acute services like Mental Health and Social Services.

- 2.13 The information provided in the consultation identifies that nearly 50% of those supported by wardens were helped to access services via social prescribing by the wardens. The report identifies that there are other services available to support individuals who need it. This statement conflicts with their acknowledgment of the need for support for vulnerable people to access services; a role the wardens actively provide.
- 2.14 There is also concern that recent changes to the role of Police Community Support Officers may exacerbate the loss of KCWS as it is unlikely that Beat Officers, particularly at current resourcing levels, will be able to support communities and vulnerable individuals in the same way. This is further aggravated by the impact of the financial crisis on the charity sector where the reduction in funding streams is seeing services reduce or even stop.
- 2.15 Data gathered in relation to serious violence shows that periods of poverty have significant impacts on communities with violence more prevalent in those individuals who are deprived key services during times of crisis. The reduction of services at this time is very likely to impact on levels of violence in the next 10-15 years.
- 2.16 A further concern is that if the proposed measures are introduced the level of demand on the reduced team could be very overwhelming. The existing KCWS service is embedded within local service delivery and a smaller team may be ineffective due to an unreasonable demand. This might impact on the service further due to high turnover or sickness within the officers that remain.
- 

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 **Do Nothing**- the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health could choose not to respond. The decision on whether to amend the KCWS lies with Kent County Council and a public consultation will allow the communities themselves to provide feedback.
- 3.2 **That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Health responds to the public consultation** on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. This is the preferred option as detailed in section 4.
- 

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

- 4.1 The preferred and recommended option is 3.2, that Cabinet Member for Housing and Health respond to the public consultation to ensure the concerns identified in 2.4 to 2.12 are represented in their evidence gathering prior to the decision being finalised.
- 4.2 Whilst the response alone is unlikely to persuade the decision makers, the response provided will lend weight to similar responses and ensure that the

views of Maidstone Borough Council are represented alongside other concerns or support offered by the general public and other stakeholders.

- 4.3 Suggested responses for the questions in the consultation are provided in Appendix 2 for Cabinet Member for Housing and Health to consider/use when responding to ensure the concerns identified above are incorporated.
- 

## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered are low, other than potential reputational damage. Conversations held with Strategic partners and community representatives, such as Elected Members and Parish Councils, through Cluster meetings and Conversations have been taken into consideration when putting forward the proposal.

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

- 6.1 The timescale provided has not allowed for Maidstone Borough Council to undertake a consultation of its residents. The KCC Consultation has been shared with all elected Ward Members and Parish Councils for them to engage with or encourage their communities to respond.
- 

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

- 7.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing and Health will respond to the consultation using the information provided within this report and the appendices as an appointed representative of Maidstone Borough Council.
- 

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

- Appendix 1: KCWS Consultation document and questionnaire
  - Appendix 2: Suggested responses to the questionnaire.
-

# Kent Community Warden Service Review

Consultation document  
and questionnaire



## Have your say!

We are proposing to make savings by redesigning the Kent Community Warden Service.

Find out more and tell us your views at

[kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](https://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview)

Consultation open from 12 July to 13 October 2023.



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## 1. Introduction

We are running a consultation on proposed changes to our Community Warden service. We want to share our proposals with you and invite your views.

To help meet the financial challenge Kent County Council (KCC) is facing, the Community Warden service has been asked to reduce its annual budget by £1 million by 2024-25. To achieve this level of saving, we will need to redesign the service.

This consultation document provides information on:

- the current Community Warden service, including what it does and how it operates
- why we are proposing to make changes and how we have developed our proposals
- the proposed changes to the service and details of other options that have been considered
- how service users and other interested parties can participate in the consultation and tell us how these changes could impact them.

There is a glossary on page 14 which will give you more information on some the words in this document. These words are highlighted in **bold**.

## 2. The Community Warden service

### Background

The Community Warden service was established in 2002. Today, the service is structured with:

- 70 wardens (including six team leaders)
- two area managers
- one volunteer and apprenticeship scheme manager
- one business coordinator.

The service's £2.4 million budget mostly covers these staffing costs. The remaining £135,000 of this budget is used for uniforms, equipment, training, materials, vehicles, and travel expenses.

### What does the service do?

When the Community Warden service was first established, its main aim was to form a key part of the Council's response to its **statutory** responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006). Under Section 6 of the 1998 Act, we must work with the other responsible authorities, such as Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service, to tackle local

crime and disorder. Under Section 17 of this Act, we must consider crime and disorder implications for all of our functions and decisions.

The service's remit has evolved and expanded from the initial crime and disorder focus and the service now also contributes to our duties under the **Care Act 2014**. Under Section 1 of this Act, we must promote individual wellbeing, and under Section 2, we must prevent needs for care and support. This means we have to consider:

- what services, facilities and resources are already available in the area (for example local voluntary and community groups), and how these might help local people
- identifying people in the local area who might have care and support needs that are not being met
- identifying carers in the area who might have support needs that are not being met.

Wardens contribute to these duties by having knowledge of the communities they serve and being able to connect residents to what will promote their wellbeing or prevent care and support needs. This could be financial support, housing, information and advice, carers support, social connections, and activities.

Today, the wardens provide a proactive and visible service that helps in a variety of ways to improve residents' quality of life and allow their communities to thrive. The current service remit can be described by its four key objectives:

**Objective 1** - Strengthening community resilience to ensure 'Stronger, Safer Communities'. Helping residents feel safer and be resilient at times of challenge.

**Objective 2** - Supporting the elderly and vulnerable. Facilitating access to the right support, care and services.

**Objective 3** - Fostering community cohesion and wellbeing. Working across communities to help build a sense of community.

**Objective 4** - Assisting residents to navigate public services.

The service works closely with district **Community Safety Units (CSUs)** and receives requests from multiple different partners such as Adult Social Care, Kent Police, Trading Standards, district and borough councils, parish and town councils, community groups, schools, health services (e.g. GPs) and Kent Fire and Rescue Service. These requests can be to:

- provide local knowledge or advice
- support community safety and engagement initiatives

- assist partner organisations to engage with hard-to-reach residents
- provide one to one support to the partner organisation’s clients where they are limited due to capacity or eligibility
- provide support to clients which only the wardens can provide due to their trusted community position
- provide support during emergency incidents.

**Where does the service operate?**

Most wardens are based within a particular community. Historically, they have been deployed in rural communities or areas at the very edge of towns serving a population of between 2,500 and 5,000 residents. The areas served were identified by their community safety issues using:

- crime and disorder statistics
- referrals to social services
- unemployment levels
- deprivation statistics.

Decisions were made by KCC with Kent Police in consultation with district, borough, parish and town councils.

In recent years, allocations of warden posts have been reviewed and updated at times of recruitment based on the service’s understanding of changes in communities and their needs.

Today, there are six teams covering two districts each. The service operates with most wardens assigned to a particular area but also flexibly responding to needs beyond this, allowing for coverage of most of the county.

The table below shows the current team staffing levels:

<b>District teams</b>	<b>Number of staff</b>
Ashford and Swale	1 team leader, 8 wardens*
Canterbury and Thanet	1 team leader, 11 wardens*
Dartford and Gravesham	1 team leader, 5 wardens*
Dover and Folkestone & Hythe	1 team leader, 11 wardens
Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling	1 team leader, 13 wardens
Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells	1 team leader, 6 wardens*

\*There are currently vacancies within these teams which means that the current staffing number is 60.

A full breakdown of current warden allocations can be found in Appendix A from page 39 and on our service webpage: [www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens).

### **3. Why are we proposing changes?**

In February 2023, our **Members** approved the Council's planned budget for 2023-24. The budget takes into account a £182 million rise in the cost of services, fuelled by inflation, market conditions and additional demands on council services from an ageing population with increasing complexity of need. Increased funding from the government and council tax provide £124 million. This leaves a shortfall of £58 million over the next financial year, which will need to be found from spending reductions, increased income and some use of reserves (our savings) to balance the budget. This means that we are having to make savings across a whole range of services, including the Community Warden service. To achieve the level of savings required, we will need to redesign the service.

### **4. How have we developed our proposals?**

We have engaged with key stakeholder organisations, Community Warden service staff, and other services within KCC to help develop the proposals presented in this consultation. We have also used feedback previously received from service users and partners to help inform our thinking.

The majority of staff and partners felt that the service's objectives are right; that the wardens' broad remit, autonomy, and ability to respond flexibly is a strength of the service.

Over 3,000 service users have been surveyed since November 2020. 76% of responses said useful information was provided by the warden and 41% said the warden helped them access services that they had struggled to access on their own. Many respondents said that the visit made them feel happier (94%), safer (80%), less worried (89%) and that the visit will improve their quality of life (76%). These outcomes, along with the reasons given for wardens providing support, span all four of the service's objectives, showing residents both use and value the broad remit of the service.

A large majority of the partners felt that wardens should continue to be based within communities and that there should be a warden presence in all districts. Most staff felt that the service should not move to being solely reactive. There was also agreement that key criteria to use when identifying where a warden should be based are:

- high levels of deprivation
- high elderly populations
- barriers to accessing services
- low life satisfaction
- rural areas.

## 5. How do we propose to make savings?

Most of the service's £2.4 million budget provides the salaries of community wardens. To reduce the service budget by the required £1 million, staffing reductions are needed.

We know from the feedback we've received that what the wardens do and how they do it is largely viewed as being valuable and effective. **We are therefore proposing to retain:**

- **the service's wide remit**
- **the community-based proactive nature of the service.**

**We are also proposing to retain a presence in all 12 districts.** However, with fewer wardens, coverage across the county would be reduced.

**We are proposing the following changes:**

**A minimum service level across the county with more warden presence in areas of highest need.** The service would continue with six teams, covering two districts each. There would be a minimum of three wardens per team plus a team leader who also provides a uniformed presence and works operationally. Additional wardens (14 under the below proposed reductions) would be placed within teams based on need using the proposed Geographical Allocation Policy (see below).

All wardens will have an area in which they are based but wardens would need to work more flexibly, responding outside of these areas when the need arises. This would allow the wardens to maintain their local knowledge, links with Community Safety Units (CSUs) and community groups, take referrals or respond at times of crisis across all districts. It will also allow districts with greater levels of need to receive a greater level of support.

**Reducing the service by 32 warden posts and two management posts.**

Proposed structure:

- 38 wardens (including six team leaders)
- one operational manager
- one business coordinator.

This level of staffing would support the proposed operating model, streamline management roles to retain as much frontline staff as possible, and retain sufficient support, supervision, day-to-day organisation and prioritisation of the teams' workload through the team leader posts.

**Allocate wardens to wards.** It is proposed to allocate wardens to **electoral wards**. There is a lot of data available at ward level that can help identify areas of need. There are 271 wards in Kent with population sizes varying from 2,000 to

12,000. A ratio of 6,000 to 12,000 residents per warden would be manageable. This would mean some smaller wards may need to be grouped.

**Introduce a Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP).** To identify which wards will have a warden allocated to them (for both the minimum service level, and the additional wardens), we will use a variety of data and information to see where there is the greatest need for the service.

The Community Warden service’s broad remit means there is a wide range of data which could be used. The data we have selected are from KCC, the Police, the Office for National Statistics and the 2021 Census.

We have selected the indicators (types of data) we feel are the most relevant to the service’s objectives. We would use these to rank wards according to need to help identify where wardens should be based.

<b>Proposed indicators</b>
<p>Objective 1 – Community safety and resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of lone parent households with dependent children</li> <li>• % of people over 65 living alone</li> <li>• % of people providing 50+ hours of unpaid care per week</li> <li>• Level of domestic abuse</li> <li>• Level of children’s social care referrals progressing to assessment</li> <li>• Level of anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Level of scams reported to Trading Standards</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 2 – Supporting the elderly and vulnerable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators of loneliness (widowhood, housing tenure, poor self-reported health and household size)</li> <li>• Level of Homecare clients</li> <li>• % of people over 55</li> <li>• % of people with a disability or long-term impairment</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 3 – Foster community cohesion and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators of low wellbeing</li> <li>• Low levels of community engagement (sport, hobby, youth club and social club and community organisation membership)</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 4 – Assist with navigating public services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Index of Multiple Deprivation: Barriers to housing and services domain, 2019</li> <li>• Distances from nearest GP, urgent care and A&amp;E (accident and emergency)</li> </ul>

To arrive at a total score for each ward, so that they can be ranked by need, we would take the following steps:

1. Convert the indicators from their different formats (rates, numbers, percentages) into an index score, which would allow the indicators to be compared and combined.
2. Combine the indicator scores for each objective, giving them equal importance, to arrive at a score for each objective.
3. Combine the scores for each objective, giving each equal importance, to arrive at a score for each ward.

The wards can then be ranked by need within each district (for the minimum service level allocations) as well as across the county as a whole (for the additional allocations).

The Community Warden service has always had a strong emphasis on partnership working. Therefore, alongside this modelling of data, final allocation decisions will take into account:

- changes to public transport and community buildings (which may highlight communities at greater risk of isolation)
- conversations with Adult Social Care (including impact of new **locality model**)
- Kent Police's new neighbourhood policing model
- areas of high crime for which warden placements are not appropriate
- areas already well supported by services whose remit overlaps with the Community Warden service
- engagement with district and borough councils and local CSUs
- engagement with Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).

Under these proposals 32 warden posts would be removed. The minimum number of wardens per team (three) and the additional wardens (14) would be allocated to wards across the county using the GAP. The GAP is part of this consultation and therefore subject to change.

If these proposed changes were to go ahead, it is likely there would be a change in the level of service you or your community receive from the Community Warden service.

The following table shows the current and proposed staffing arrangements:

District teams	Current staffing	Proposed future minimum staffing	Proposed future additional staffing
Ashford and Swale	1 team leader, 8 wardens*	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
Canterbury and Thanet	1 team leader, 11 wardens*	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
Dartford and Gravesham	1 team leader, 5 wardens*	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
Dover and Folkestone & Hythe	1 team leader, 11 wardens*	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling	1 team leader, 13 wardens	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells	1 team leader, 6 wardens*	1 team leader, 3 wardens	To be determined**
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>14</b>

\*Teams with vacant posts

\*\*14 wardens to be placed in teams according to need identified by the GAP (some teams will then have more than three wardens).

### Legal requirements

The Community Warden service is a **discretionary service**, which means KCC is not legally required to provide it. It is acknowledged that the service contributes to our statutory duties under the Crime and Disorder Act and the Care Act. However, we do not solely rely on the service to prevent and reduce crime and disorder, promote wellbeing, or prevent needs for care and support.

The proposals are designed to enable the reduced Community Warden service to achieve all it can under these duties. For example, retaining the service's remit and community-based approach makes the service particularly effective in contributing to these duties.

### Summary of proposed changes

<p><b>Positives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The valued community-based approach would be retained.</li> <li>• The valued wide remit (objectives) of the service would be retained.</li> <li>• There would be a presence in all districts across Kent, placed in the areas of greatest need for each district.</li> <li>• The additional 14 wardens would be placed where need is greatest.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Negatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be fewer uniformed wardens (reduced from 70 to 38).</li> <li>• Fewer communities would be allocated a warden.</li> <li>• Many areas currently allocated a warden would lose their warden.</li> </ul>

## 6. What other options have we considered?

Before deciding on our proposals in section 5 we considered and discounted a number of other options to make savings. These were:

**1. Making savings by other means than reducing the number of wardens/staff.** The £135,000 of the service budget that does not cover staffing is not large enough for the size of savings required. These costs relate to uniform, equipment, training, and materials. There would be some savings in this area due to reduced warden numbers.

**2. Narrowing service remit.** We considered narrowing the service's broad remit (objectives) so that the existing level of county coverage could be maintained. For example, if wardens were to only support the elderly and vulnerable, and not cover safety, resilience or community wellbeing anymore, they may in theory be able to do this over more areas. However, staff and stakeholder feedback in the pre-consultation engagement valued the range and flexibility of warden support, allowing adaptation to different community needs. They also felt that all of the service's objectives are connected and dependent on each other. Previous surveys of service users and case studies show demand across all the service's objectives.

The recent Positive Wellbeing **social prescribing** project that wardens participated in also highlighted that wardens were particularly effective as social prescribers due to their:

- trusted community presence and relationships, which allow them to identify and engage with potential service users who would benefit
- good local knowledge of what is available to 'prescribe' to.

**3. Moving away from being a proactive, community-based service.** We considered the possibility of wardens being centrally managed and only responding to referrals and requests. This would in theory allow the service to maintain coverage across the majority of the county as wardens would not be based in particular areas. However, staff and stakeholders in pre-consultation feedback valued the community-based proactive approach as it means wardens have local knowledge, relationships and trust built within those communities, which partners can rely upon.

The Positive Wellbeing social prescribing project also highlighted that wardens were particularly effective as social prescribers due to their integral presence in communities.

**4. Simple and equal distribution across teams.** Having the same number (or as near to as possible) of wardens in each district has been considered. However, this wouldn't take into account the different levels of need between districts, including criteria such as deprivation and elderly populations.

**5. High need ward coverage only.** Using only high need criteria such as deprivation, and not ensuring a minimum service level across the county, would result in the majority of the service being focused in east Kent. However, most stakeholders said that there should be wardens in all districts to allow the service to maintain their local knowledge, links with Community Safety Units (CSUs) and community groups, take referrals or respond at times of crisis.

**6. Reducing management and support roles.** We are proposing a reduction of managers from three to one. There is only one business coordinator post, which we are proposing to retain. Without this post, administrative tasks would fall to operational team leaders and wardens reducing the amount of time they can be out in the community.

Reducing team leader posts is also considered to be undesirable as they are the key point of contact across two districts for CSUs and they provide close supervision and support to wardens who increasingly work with individuals with complex needs. Team leaders will also be expected to be operational, providing additional, visible uniformed presence.

## 7. Equality analysis

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out to assess the potential impacts of the proposals being put forward in this consultation on the protected characteristics. These are: age, disability, sex, gender identity, race, religion/belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. We also examine carers' responsibilities.

The scale of the savings needed are not possible without significantly reducing the number of community wardens. Unfortunately, this means that there would be an adverse impact on some protected groups.

The proposed Geographical Allocation Policy would ensure wardens, though reduced in number, are targeted to where they are most needed. This would result in some communities losing their warden. However, it may also result in some areas which currently don't receive support, doing so in the future. Therefore, there is potential for a positive impact, although not on the same scale as the overall negative impact.

Four groups, older people, females, people with a disability or long-term impairment, and those with carer's responsibilities have been identified as being more impacted by these proposals as they represent the majority of the wardens' current service users. Approximately 80% of the service users are 55 or over and 46% are 75 or over. 63% are female. 30% would describe themselves as disabled. 17% have caring responsibilities.

The feedback from this consultation will be used to review and update the EqIA, which will be considered before any decisions are taken.

The full EqIA is available to view online at [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](https://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview) or in hard copy on request.

## 8. How to have your say

Before any decisions are made, we want to hear your views on:

- how the proposed reductions and approach to allocating the wardens could impact you
- any additional information that you think we need to consider
- any alternative suggestions for how the service could make the saving
- the assumptions we have made in the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

Please let us know your views by visiting [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](https://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview) and completing the online questionnaire. Alternatively, complete the questionnaire starting on page 15 of this document.

**This consultation will run for 12 weeks from 12 July until 3 October 2023.**

### Contact details

If you would like to request paper copies of the consultation material, or if you have any questions about this consultation, please contact us by:

**Speaking to your local warden:** If you have a warden you already know.

**Email:** [CommunityWardenReview@kent.gov.uk](mailto:CommunityWardenReview@kent.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 03000 42 26 88 (this number goes to an answer machine which is monitored during office hours).

Easy Read and Large Print versions of this document are available from our website or on request.

If you need any of the consultation material in any other format or language, please email [alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk) or telephone on 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service 18001 03000 42 15 53). This number goes to an answer machine, which is monitored during office hours.

### What happens next?

The responses to this consultation will be analysed and presented in a consultation report. This report will be published on the consultation webpage and presented, along with an updated EqIA, to **Members** of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee in January 2024 for their consideration and recommendation. Following this meeting a decision is expected to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services. We will publish details of the decision on the consultation webpage.

Any changes to warden allocations would most likely take effect in Spring 2024.

## 9. Glossary

**Care Act 2014:** The law that sets out how Adult Social Care in England should be provided. It requires local authorities to make sure that people who live in their areas receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious or delay the impact of their needs.

**Community Safety Partnership (CSP):** A multi-agency partnership including the local authority, police, fire and rescue services, health, and probation, which formulate strategies for the reduction of crime.

**Community Safety Unit (CSU):** An operational group that sits below the Strategic **Community Safety Partnership** for a district or borough. The CSU includes various partners such as: police, district/borough council services, housing associations, community wardens, fire and rescue services, substance misuse services and charities (e.g. Age UK). They undertake multi-agency initiatives and operations throughout the year to tackle community safety related issues.

**Discretionary service:** A service that the Council chooses to provide but does not legally have to.

**Electoral wards:** Kent is made up of 271 wards which are small sub-divisions of the county's 12 districts.

**Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA):** We use EqIAs to capture and evidence our equalities analysis of the impact of our actions on service users, residents and staff with protected characteristics. In this way, completion of an EqIA contributes toward compliance with the **Public Sector Equality Duty**.

**Locality model:** KCC's Adult Social Care and Health service changed its operating model in the last year to a 'locality operating model' which means having place-based teams aligned to local communities.

**Members:** KCC's elected politicians/councillors.

**Public Sector Equality Duty:** Ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

**Social prescribing:** A process of referring and helping individuals to access a variety of activities and local sources of support to address issues such as loneliness and wellbeing.

**Statutory:** Something that the Council has to do or provide because government regulations say that all Councils must do. For example, KCC as a whole must promote wellbeing when carrying out any of their care and support functions in respect of a person, but we do not have to provide a community warden service.

## 10. Questionnaire

This questionnaire can be completed online at [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](http://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview)

Alternatively, fill in this paper form and return to: **Freepost COMMUNITY WARDENS**. Please make sure that the address is written in capitals and that your response reaches us by the **3 October 2023**.

**Privacy:** Kent County Council (KCC) collects and processes personal information in order to provide a range of public services. KCC respects the privacy of individuals and endeavours to ensure personal information is collected fairly, lawfully, and in compliance with the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. Read the full Privacy Notice at the end of this document.

### Section 1 – About You

#### Q1. Are you responding as...?

Please select the option from the list below that most closely represents how you will be responding to this consultation. Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yourself (as an individual)
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of someone who uses the Community Warden service. <i>Please answer all the questions using their details and not your own.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A partner agency (e.g. Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Health services/provider)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A representative of a local community group or residents' association
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a charity or voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Kent Community Warden service member of staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	A KCC employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	An educational establishment, such as a school or college
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a business
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input type="text"/>

**Q1a. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (partner agency, community group, council, VCSE, educational establishment or business), please tell us the name of the organisation here:**

**Q2. Please tell us the first five characters of your postcode:**

Please do not reveal your whole postcode. If you are responding on behalf of someone else, provide their postcode. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, use your organisation's postcode. We use this to help us to analyse our data. It will not be used to identify who you are.

**Q3. How did you find out about this consultation? Please select all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/>	Twitter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nextdoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	From a friend or relative
<input type="checkbox"/>	From a community warden
<input type="checkbox"/>	An email from KCC's Community Warden service
<input type="checkbox"/>	An email from Let's talk Kent or KCC's Engagement and Consultation team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kent.gov.uk website
<input type="checkbox"/>	KCC County Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Town, Parish, District or Borough Council / Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Newspaper
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poster / postcard
<input type="checkbox"/>	KCC's staff intranet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input type="text"/>

**Q4. Have you, or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of, received support or a service from the Community Wardens?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**If you have answered 'No' or 'Don't know', please go to Section 2, Q8 on page 21.**

**If you have answered 'Yes', please continue to Q5 on the next page.**

**If you are responding on behalf of someone else, please remember to answer all of these questions using their details.**

**Q5. What support / service did the Community Wardens provide to you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of?**

Please select **all** that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with community safety issues or providing advice, for example, support relating to anti-social behaviour, scams, rogue traders, flooding, the pandemic or low-level crime.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal, one to one support for wellbeing and quality of life, such as linking to financial support, housing, information and advice, carers support or social connections and activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with community engagement either by; setting up and / or supporting events, groups, clubs, projects, or volunteering activities in the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilitating my organisation in accessing other partners, such as liaising with councils and the police.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partnering with my organisation (this could be to provide local knowledge, advice, support for community safety initiatives, support for emergencies or support for the welfare of clients).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input data-bbox="652 1059 1406 1202" type="text"/>

**Q6. Please tell us how often you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of has been supported by the Community Warden service?**

Please select **one** option.

- A single occurrence
- More often

**Q6a. If you have answered 'More often' to Q6, please tell us how often:**

Please select **one** option.

- At least once a week
  - Once a fortnight
  - Once a month
  - Twice a year
  - Less regularly
  - Have been supported in the past. Please tell us how long this was for.
  - Other, please tell us:
- |  |
|--|
|  |
|  |

**Q7. How do you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of benefit from engaging with / receiving support from the Community Warden service?**

Please select **all** that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Gain useful information / community updates / advice or guidance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gain access to services / care / support that I was not aware of or had difficulty in accessing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling safer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling less lonely / socially isolated
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling of improved wellbeing
<input type="checkbox"/>	No benefit (please go to Q8)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input data-bbox="657 940 1404 1046" type="text"/>

**Q7a. If you would like to tell us more about how you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of has benefitted from engaging with / receiving support from the Community Warden service, please use the box below.** Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

## Section 2 – Our Proposals

This document provides details of the proposed changes to where and how the Community Warden service operates (see pages 6 to 9).

**We have proposed not to change the service’s current remit and objectives. This means the range and variety of ways wardens can support an individual or community would be the same.**

**Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the service maintaining its current remit and objectives?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q8a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q8 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**We have proposed for wardens to continue to be community-based, so they can continue to be proactive in the support they provide to communities.**

**Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with wardens being community-based?**

Please select **one** option.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**Q9a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q9 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**We have proposed to retain six teams covering two districts each, with a minimum of one team leader and three wardens per team, and to distribute the further 14 wardens across the teams according to need.**

**Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?**

Please select **one** option.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**Q10a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q10 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**We have proposed to reduce the Community Warden service by 32 warden posts and two management posts to achieve the savings required.**

**Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach to achieve the £1 million saving?**

Please select **one** option.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**Q11a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q11 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**To retain a community-based approach, we have proposed to allocate wardens to electoral wards. Wards may be grouped to reach a population ratio of approximately 6,000 to 12,000 residents per warden.**

**Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals to ...?**

Select **one** option per proposal/row.

<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Allocate wardens to electoral wards						
Group wards to reach a population ratio of approximately 6,000 to 12,000 residents per warden.						

**Q12a. Please tell us the reasons for your answers to Q12 in the box below.**

If your comment relates to a specific proposal in Q12, please make that clear in your answer.

**We have proposed to identify the wards in which to base all wardens using data and information as described in the Geographical Allocation Policy on pages 7 to 9.**

**Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?**

Please select **one** option.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**Q13a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q13 in the box below.**

**If you think we have missed out any data, information, or considerations from the proposed Geographical Allocation Policy, please include these in your answer.**

**Q14. Please tell us how the proposed service changes could affect you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**Due to the size of the changes being proposed to the Community Warden service (reduction in numbers and changes to allocations) it is quite possible for there to be changes to the level of service you currently receive.**

**Q15. What would you like us to ensure is considered or put in place if wardens need to be withdrawn from an area?**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**Q16. If the Community Warden service is withdrawn from your area, what alternative sources do you think you would turn to?**

Please select **all** that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Adult Social Care services	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charities or voluntary sector organisations	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community groups	
<input type="checkbox"/>	District / Borough council	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor / GP	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kent Police	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parish / Town council	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us:	<input type="text"/>

**We have completed a consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the proposed changes to the Community Warden service.**

An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any service change, policy or strategy would have on age, sex, gender identity, disability, race, religion / belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carer's responsibilities.

The equality impacts are summarised on page 12. The full EqIA is available online at [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](http://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview) or in hard copy on request.

**Q17. We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything else we should consider relating to equality and diversity. Please add any comments below:**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

**Q18. Do you have any additional feedback on our proposals and/or suggestions on how else we could make savings to our Community Warden service budget?**

### Section 3 – More About You

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and that no one gets left out. That's why we are asking you these questions. We will only use this information to help us make decisions and improve our services.

**If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don't have to.**

**It is not necessary to answer these questions if you are responding on behalf of an organisation.**

**Q19. Which of the following best describes your working status? Please select one option.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Working full time
<input type="checkbox"/>	Working part time
<input type="checkbox"/>	On a zero-hours or similar casual contract
<input type="checkbox"/>	Temporarily laid off
<input type="checkbox"/>	Freelance / self employed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not working due to a disability or health condition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Carer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Homemaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input type="text"/>

**Q20. Are you...?** Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say

**Q21. Is your gender the same as your birth?** Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say

**Q22. Are you ...?** Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Heterosexual / Straight
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bi / Bisexual
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay man
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay woman / Lesbian
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input type="text"/>

**Q23. Which of these age groups applies to you?** Please select **one** option.

0-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	16-24	<input type="checkbox"/>	25-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	35-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75-84	<input type="checkbox"/>	85+ over	<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a long standing physical or mental condition that has lasted, or is likely to last, at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

**Q24. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?** Please select **one** option.

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

**Q24a. If you answered 'Yes' to Q24, please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you.**

You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all that apply. If none of these applies to you, please select 'Other' and give brief details of the impairment you have.

- Physical impairment
- Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)
- Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy
- Mental health condition
- Learning disability
- I prefer not to say
- Other, please tell us:

**Q25. To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?** Please select **one** option. (Source 2011 Census)

White English	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White & Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Welsh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Northern Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed Other*	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Gypsy/Roma	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British African	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British Other*	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Other*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arab	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian or Asian British Other*	<input type="checkbox"/>		

\*Other - If your ethnic group is not specified on the list, please describe it here:

**Q26. Do you regard yourself as belonging to a particular religion or holding a belief?** Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say

**Q26a. If you answered 'Yes' to Q26, which of the following applies to you?**

*Please select **one** option.*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Christian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buddhist
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hindu
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jewish
<input type="checkbox"/>	Muslim
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input type="text"/>

A Carer is anyone who provides unpaid care for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. Both children and adults can be carers.

**Q27. Are you a Carer?** Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, your feedback is important to us.

All feedback received will be reviewed and considered in the development of our proposals.

We will report on the feedback we receive, but details of individual responses will remain anonymous, and we will keep your personal details confidential.

# Consultation Privacy Notice

Last updated: 30 April 2023

## Who are we?

We, Kent County Council (KCC), take our privacy obligations seriously and we've created this privacy policy to explain how we treat your personal information collected in this questionnaire. Personal information is information we hold which is identifiable as being about you.

Our collection, use and disclosure of your personal information is regulated under the United Kingdom Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are responsible as 'controller' of that personal information for the purposes of those laws. Our Data Protection Officer is Benjamin Watts.

## The personal information we collect and use

### Information collected by us

In the course of responding to consultations published by Kent County Council we collect the following personal information when you provide it to us:

- responses to questionnaire / consultation
- equalities data collected through questionnaire response - age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, disability, pregnancy or maternity or if you are a Carer
- employment and education details
- postcode.

We ask you not to provide information that will identify you in your response in this questionnaire.

You do not need to submit any equalities or postcode information if you do not want to. KCC is committed to the principle that all our customers have the right to equality and fairness in the way they are treated and in the services that they receive. Any information you do give will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people, and to check if services are being delivered in a fair and reasonable way.

We will not ask you to provide your name, email or full home address. If you provide this information, it will not be entered into spreadsheets or databases used to process response data and will not be used in producing reports. We will follow our Data Protection policies to keep your information secure and confidential. Your equality data will be anonymised before it is shared with external organisations who have been commissioned on individual projects to undertake analysis and reporting on our engagement and consultation activities.

### How we use your personal information

We collect and use this information in order to:

- understand your views about a particular topic or KCC activity
- analyse consultation and engagement activity
- inform KCC's future strategy, policy, service design and budget planning
- undertake equality monitoring.

We may use your postcode to analyse the geographical spread of responses and in some cases to understand in more detail how responses are impacted by location. We will only ask you for the first five characters of your postcode to avoid being able to identify specific households in less populated areas.

We may use your postcode to carry out a type of profiling to estimate which one of a number of lifestyle groups you are most likely to fall into. We do this using geodemographic segmentation tools. We do not make any decisions about individual service users based solely on automated processing, including profiling.

### How long your personal data will be kept

We will hold any personal information provided by you in this questionnaire for up to six years following the closure of a consultation. Our Retention Policy is available from our website or on request.

We rely on UK GDPR Article 6(1)(e): 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' and Article 6(1)(c) 'for compliance with a legal obligation to which the controller is subject' as our lawful basis.

We rely on Article 9(2)(g) 'processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest' (statutory etc. and government purposes, equality of opportunity or treatment) as the lawful basis on which we collect and use your special category data.

The processing is necessary for our statutory purposes including equalities monitoring or to understand the potential impact of proposals on conditions related to special category data within your response (e.g. when identifying or keeping under review the existence or absence of equality of opportunity or treatment between groups of people with the view to enabling such equality to be promoted or maintained.) It is necessary for identifying or keeping under review the existence or absence of equality of opportunity or treatment between groups of people with the view to enabling such equality to be promoted or maintained. You can read [KCC's Equality Policy on our website](#) or on request.

### Who we share your personal information with

We may share your personal data with those listed below:

- services within the Council who are responsible for the management of the engagement or consultation activity
- a third-party supplier who has been contracted to independently analyse the consultation responses
- organisations such as schools and academies with whom we may be consulting in partnership or on behalf of

- district or borough councils or government departments with whom we may be consulting in partnership or on behalf of.

We will share personal information with law enforcement or other authorities if required by applicable law.

Any personal information provided that could identify you will be removed before consultation results are published.

We use a system to log your feedback, which is provided by Granicus.

## Your rights

Under UK GDPR you have a number of rights which you can access free of charge which allow you to:

- know what we are doing with your information and why we are doing it
- ask to see what information we hold about you
- ask us to correct any mistakes in the information we hold about you
- object to direct marketing
- make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Depending on our reason for using your information you may also be entitled to:

- ask us to delete information we hold about you
- have your information transferred electronically to yourself or to another organisation
- object to decisions being made that significantly affect you
- object to how we are using your information
- stop us using your information in certain ways.

We will always seek to comply with your request, however, we may be required to hold or use your information to comply with legal duties.

For further information about your rights, including the circumstances in which they apply, see the [guidance from the UK Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#) on individuals' rights under UK GDPR.

If you would like to exercise a right, please contact the Information Resilience and Transparency Team at [data.protection@kent.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@kent.gov.uk).

## Keeping your personal information secure

We have appropriate security measures in place to prevent personal information from being accidentally lost or used or accessed in an unauthorised way. We limit access to your personal information to those who have a genuine business need to know it. Those processing your information will do so only in an authorised manner and are subject to a duty of confidentiality.

We also have procedures in place to deal with any suspected data security breach. We will notify you and any applicable regulator of a suspected data security breach where we are legally required to do so.

## Who to contact

Please contact the Information Resilience and Transparency Team at [data.protection@kent.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@kent.gov.uk) to exercise any of your rights, or if you have a complaint about why your information has been collected, how it has been used or how long we have kept it for.

You can contact our Data Protection Officer, Benjamin Watts, at [dpo@kent.gov.uk](mailto:dpo@kent.gov.uk). Or write to Data Protection Officer, Kent County Council, Sessions House, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ.

The United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation also gives you the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner who may be contacted at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns> or telephone 03031 231113.

For further information visit <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/about-the-website/privacy-statement>.

## Appendix A - Current area allocations

**Team - Ashford and Swale** (1 team leader, 8 wardens)

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
Aldington, Brabourne, Smeeth, Mersham and Sevington	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Bethersden, High Halden, Hamstreet and Woodchurch	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Charing, Hothfield and Challock	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Faversham and Sittingbourne	Towns	Warden allocated
Iwade and Kemsley	Village / Civil Parishes and Suburbs	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Kingsnorth and Stanhope	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Leysdown and Warden	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Minster (Swale)	Towns	Warden allocated
Newington (swale)	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Sheerness	Towns	Warden allocated
Tenterden, Appledore, Wittersham and Stone	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Wye, Chilham and Godmersham	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated

**Team - Canterbury and Thanet** (1 team leader, 11 wardens)

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
Acol, Cliffsend, Pegwell, Manston and St Nicholas at Wade	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Bekesbourne, Littlebourne, Patrixbourne, Barham and Bridge	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Birchington	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Chartham, Waltham and Petham	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Greenhill	Suburb	Warden allocated
Herne and Broomfield	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Margate Taskforce Support Warden	Towns	Warden allocated
Minster (Thanet)	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Newington (Thanet)	Suburb	Warden allocated
Seasalter	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Sturry and Hersden	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Westgate	Towns	Warden allocated

**Team - Dartford and Gravesham** (1 team leader, 5 wardens)

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
Higham, Chalk, Cobham and Sole Street	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Istead Rise	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Longfield, New Barn, Darenth and Bean	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Meopham, Culverstone and Vigo	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Stone	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Swanscombe and Greenhithe	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Temple Hill and Joyce Green	Suburb	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
Westcourt	Suburb	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens

**Team - Dover and Folkestone & Hythe** (1 team leader, 11 wardens)

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
Ash, Eastry and Sandwich	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Capel Le Ferne and Hawkinge	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Cheriton	Suburb	Warden allocated
Dymchurch, Lympe and West Hythe	Villages / Civil Parishes / Hamlet	Warden allocated
Elham, Etchinghill and Lyminge	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Eythorne, Elvington and Shepherdswell	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Folkestone East	Town	Warden allocated
Kingsdown, Ringwould Millhill and Walmer	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Lydd	Town	Warden allocated
New Romney	Town	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
St Margarets at Cliffe	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
St Radigunds and Tower Hamlets	Suburbs	Warden allocated

**Team - Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling** (1 team leader, 13 wardens)

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
Aylesford, Burham, Eccles	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Bearsted	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Borough Green and Wrotham	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Boughton Monchelsea, Chart Sutton and Loose	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Coxheath	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Ditton	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
East Malling	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
East Peckham and Hadlow	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Harrietsham and Lenham	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Headcorn	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Marden and Staplehurst	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
Snodland and Holborough	Towns	Warden allocated

**Team - Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells (1 team leader,6 wardens)**

<b>Areas covered</b>	<b>Area type</b>	<b>Allocated?</b>
<b>Cranbrook, Benenden, Frittenden and Sissinghurst</b>	Towns / Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
<b>Eynsford, Farningham and Crockenhill</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
<b>Goudhurst, Lamberhurst and Hawkhurst</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
<b>Paddock Wood</b>	Town	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
<b>Pembury</b>	Town	Warden allocated
<b>Rusthall and Sherwood</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
<b>Shoreham and Otford</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
<b>Swanley St Mary's and Hextable</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated
<b>Westerham</b>	Town	Vacancy or routinely covered by neighbouring wardens
<b>West Kingsdown and Hartley</b>	Villages / Civil Parishes	Warden allocated

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For queries or to request hard copies of the consultation material, please email **CommunityWardenReview@kent.gov.uk** or phone **03000 422688**. For any alternative formats, email **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.



## Appendix 2- KCWS Consultation document and questionnaire-proposed responses

### 1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire can be completed online at [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](https://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview)

Alternatively, fill in this paper form and return to: **Freepost COMMUNITY WARDENS**. Please make sure that the address is written in capitals and that your response reaches us by the **3 October 2023**.

### Section 1 – About You

#### Q1. Are you responding as...?

Please select the option from the list below that most closely represents how you will be responding to this consultation. Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yourself (as an individual)
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of someone who uses the Community Warden service. <i>Please answer all the questions using their details and not your own.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	A partner agency (e.g. Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Health services/provider)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A representative of a local community group or residents' association
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a charity or voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Kent Community Warden service member of staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	A KCC employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	An educational establishment, such as a school or college
<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of a business
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us: <input style="width: 300px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

**Q1a. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (partner agency, community group, council, VCSE, educational establishment or business), please tell us the name of the organisation here:**

**Q2. Please tell us the first five characters of your postcode:**

**ME15 6JQ**

Please do not reveal your whole postcode. If you are responding on behalf of someone else, provide their postcode. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, use your organisation’s postcode. We use this to help us to analyse our data. It will not be used to identify who you are.

**Q3. How did you find out about this consultation?** Please select **all** that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Next-door
- From a friend or relative
- From a community warden
- An email from KCC’s Community Warden service
- An email from Let’s talk Kent or KCC’s Engagement and Consultation team
- Kent.gov.uk website
- KCC County Councillor
- Town, Parish, District or Borough Council / Councillor
- Newspaper
- Poster / postcard
- KCC’s staff intranet
- Other, please tell us:

**Q4. Have you, or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of, received support or a service from the Community Wardens?**

Please select **one** option.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**If you have answered 'No' or 'Don't know', please go to Section 2, Q8 on page 21.**

**If you have answered 'Yes', please continue to Q5 on the next page.**

**If you are responding on behalf of someone else, please remember to answer all of these questions using their details.**

**Q5 What support / service did the Community Wardens provide to you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of?**

Please select **all** that apply.

<b>X</b>	Help with community safety issues or providing advice, for example, support relating to anti-social behaviour, scams, rogue traders, flooding, the pandemic or low-level crime.
<b>X</b>	Personal, one to one support for wellbeing and quality of life, such as linking to financial support, housing, information and advice, carers support or social connections and activities.
<b>X</b>	Help with community engagement either by; setting up and / or supporting events, groups, clubs, projects, or volunteering activities in the community.
	Facilitating my organisation in accessing other partners, such as liaising with councils and the police.
<b>X</b>	Partnering with my organisation (this could be to provide local knowledge, advice, support for community safety initiatives, support for emergencies or support for the welfare of clients).
	Other, please tell us: <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 400px; height: 50px; display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"></div>

**Q6 Please tell us how often you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of has been supported by the Community Warden service?**

Please select **one** option.

	A single occurrence
<b>X</b>	More often

**Q6a. If you have answered 'More often' to Q6, please tell us how often:**

Please select **one** option.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	At least once a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Once a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	Once a month
<input type="checkbox"/>	Twice a year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less regularly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been supported in the past. Please tell us how long this was for.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please tell us:


**Q7 How do you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of benefit from engaging with / receiving support from the Community Warden service?**

Please select **all** that apply.

X	Gain useful information / community updates / advice or guidance
	Gain access to services / care / support that I was not aware of or had difficulty in accessing Feeling safer
	Feeling less lonely / socially isolated
	Feeling of improved wellbeing
	No benefit (please go to Q8)
	Don't know
X	Other, please tell us:

KCC Community Wardens provide a holistic approach to services, offering a one stop shop for residents. Their work supports the wider determinants of health to improve health and wellbeing with the long term aim of reducing inequalities. KCC Wardens alleviate pressure on statutory services by working in a way that those organisations are unable to. The service supports the communities we represent in feeling less lonely/socially isolated and improving wellbeing.

**Q7a. If you would like to tell us more about how you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of has benefitted from engaging with / receiving support from the Community Warden service, please use the box below.** Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

The Community Warden service work closely with the police and other agencies to help make Maidstone a safer place to live, work and visit. They provide a visible presence on the streets and in public spaces, helping to deter crime and anti-social behaviour. They also provide support and advice to residents on a range of issues, including home security, personal safety and community cohesion.

In addition to this, the Community Warden service supports some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. They feed into our Community Safety Vulnerability Group on a weekly basis and provide vital information to statutory services on mental health, self-neglect and general welfare of customers who are often disengaged from services or hard to reach. They also help to free up hospital beds by helping vulnerable people home. This is a constant work stream and important to relieve the pressure on the NHS.

The Community Wardens also build trusting relationships with the vulnerable, community leads such as Parish Councils and the community in general. For Maidstone this includes attending our Ward Cluster meetings where we regularly bring together Elected Members and Parish Council representatives of up to 4 district wards, to discuss community safety concerns and shared action plans to reduce ASB, crime and community tensions. They have also participated in the delivery of the Community Safety Partnership and specifically the Maidstone Task Force, whose success has been at the heart of Kent Police's Neighbourhood Policing Review. Within this role, the KCC wardens worked to support the creation of legacy support services that reduce social isolation and improve social prescribing.

It is unclear from the proposal how the wardens will prioritise competing workloads to meet current objectives and deliver the same standard of work.

## Section 2 – Our Proposals

This document provides details of the proposed changes to where and how the Community Warden service operates (see pages 6 to 9).

**We have proposed not to change the service's current remit and objectives. This means the range and variety of ways wardens can support an individual or community would be the same.**

**Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the service maintaining its current remit and objectives?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q8a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q8 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

Through the delivery of their current objectives, the KCWS has become an integral to the support provided to communities in Maidstone. Each of the current objectives are closely aligned to our own Strategic objectives as a local authority. This is particularly in regard to our objectives of providing a Safe, Clean and Green borough and our Homes and Communities objective. Our answer of "Tend to Agree" as opposed to "Strongly Agree" is due to our concerns that the proposed reduction in the number of wardens, and the uncertainty as to how many wardens Maidstone would received, will impact on the capacity of those wardens to effectively deliver all the objectives effectively.

**We have proposed for wardens to continue to be community-based, so they can continue to be proactive in the support they provide to communities.**

**Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with wardens being community based?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q9a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q9 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

The KCWS has become a reliable support to many of our communities and there are concerns that the capacity of the limited number of wardens proposed will lead to those that have become reliant on the KCWS, losing that support altogether. In other areas the allocated resource for Maidstone could also struggle to meet the demand of the service. The uniformed presence the KCWS in communities provides reassurance and makes them approachable and allows residents to trust them with information that they may be less willing to share ordinarily. The reduction in KCC wardens, in combination with recent changes to Police Community Support Officers is likely to significantly and disproportionately impact on the most vulnerable and most deprived people in our communities. This is being compounded further by funding issues for the charity sector, despite increases in demand for services. As an example, the KCWS in Maidstone have played an integral role in supporting those individuals who choose to self-neglect or have mental health conditions. Some of these individuals choose to disengage from services such as mental health and social services, which can impact on their own health and sometimes their community. The trust that wardens are able to foster with these individuals requires time and determination that our statutory services, such as GPs or mental health practitioners are unable to provide due to service pressures.

**We have proposed to retain six teams covering two districts each, with a minimum of one team leader and three wardens per team, and to distribute the further 14 wardens across the teams according to need.**

**Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q10a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q10 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

Whilst we feel that it is important to retain a service, there is a concern that the proposed levels will simply not be able to meet the demands and expectations of the service itself, which may ultimately compromise the service itself due to increase risk of sickness and issues retaining wardens in the service. The reduced capacity will consequently impact on some of the services and systems in place for Maidstone. Reduced community engagement or support of vulnerable people could lead to increases in community tension and could mean that vital information about vulnerable people or important relationships with them could be lost, impacting on other services, such as mental health and social services.

**We have proposed to reduce the Community Warden service by 32 warden posts and two management posts to achieve the savings required.**

**Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach to achieve the £1 million saving? Please select one option.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q11a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q11 in the box below.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

See Q10a
----------

**To retain a community-based approach, we have proposed to allocate wardens to electoral wards. Wards may be grouped to reach a population ratio of approximately 6,000 to 12,000 residents per warden.**

**Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals to ...?**

*Select **one** option per proposal/row.*

<b>Proposals</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Allocate wardens to electoral wards		X				
Group wards to reach a population ratio of approximately 6,000 to 12,000 residents per warden.		X				

**Q12a. Please tell us the reasons for your answers to Q12 in the box below.**

If your comment relates to a specific proposal in Q12, please make that clear in your answer.

In 2020/21 Maidstone Borough Council introduced Ward Cluster meetings where we regularly bring together Elected Members and Parish Council representatives of up to 4 district wards based on a number of factors including the nature of the concerns impacting on each ward. The effectiveness of this approach has seen Maidstone Police adopt the use of Clusters for assigning areas to their new Beat Officers. This is unique to Maidstone and ensures good coverage across all communities. However, the current resourcing levels for Kent Police is seeing the limited numbers of officers stretched thinly and making them less effective than was perhaps hoped from their new model. Therefore, whilst we would support the grouping of wards, it is with the caveat that they:

- Mirror the clusters created in Maidstone.
- Are resourced appropriately.

We have proposed to identify the wards in which to base all wardens using data and information as described in the Geographical Allocation Policy on pages 7 to 9.

**Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?**

Please select **one** option.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tend to agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tend to disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

**Q13a. Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q13 in the box below.**

**If you think we have missed out any data, information, or considerations from the proposed Geographical Allocation Policy, please include these in your answer.**

Maidstone Borough Council, through its community safety work, advocates the use of data and evidence to create evidence led approach. This may however see wardens removed from communities in which the KCWS have been integral for many years as the data may not support their retention. Consideration will need to be given into how those communities and the vulnerable people within them are supported. Particularly those who vulnerable people who have already built relationships with the service and could be isolated or even exploited without the services' support. There is no evidence that health inequalities have not been considered as a proposed indicator.

**Q14. Please tell us how the proposed service changes could affect you or the person / organisation you are responding on behalf of.**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

Please see the responses to Q8 to Q13

**Due to the size of the changes being proposed to the Community Warden service (reduction in numbers and changes to allocations) it is quite possible for there to be changes to the level of service you currently receive.**

**Q15. What would you like us to ensure is considered or put in place if wardens need to be withdrawn from an area?**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

For Maidstone we would ask that consideration is given to how the proposed changes will impact on the following:

- Supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities, regardless of which Ward they are in, and feeding into our Community Safety Vulnerability Group on a weekly basis.
- Providing vital information to statutory services on mental health, self-neglect and general welfare of customers who are often disengaged from services or hard to reach.
- Helping to free up hospital beds by helping vulnerable people home. This is a constant work stream and important to relieve the pressure on the NHS.
- Building trusting relationships with the vulnerable, community leads, such as Parish Councils and the community in general, including attending our Ward Cluster meetings
- Participation in the delivery of the Community Safety Partnership and specifically the Neighbourhood Task Force

**Q16. If the Community Warden service is withdrawn from your area, what alternative sources do you think you would turn to?**

Please select **all** that apply.

<b>X</b>	Adult Social Care services
<b>X</b>	Charities or voluntary sector organisations
<b>X</b>	Community groups
<b>X</b>	District / Borough council
<b>X</b>	Doctor / GP
<b>X</b>	Kent Police
<b>X</b>	Parish / Town council
	Don't know
<b>X</b>	Other, please tell us:

Mental Health Services are missing from the this list.

As a local authority we anticipate increase demand on all the services listed above, regardless of whether they have the resources or capacity necessary to meet the demand.

**We have completed a consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the proposed changes to the Community Warden service.**

An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any service change, policy or strategy would have on age, sex, gender identity, disability, race, religion / belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carer's responsibilities.

The equality impacts are summarised on page 12. The full EqIA is available online at [kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview](http://kent.gov.uk/communitywardenreview) or in hard copy on request.

**Q17. We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything else we should consider relating to equality and diversity. Please add any comments below:**

Please do not include any personal information that could identify you or anyone else within your response.

The very nature of the wardens' roles aligns them to people with protected characteristics and helping them to access services. This includes poverty, which for Maidstone Borough Council has been identified as a further area of concern for our residents. They often provide the support /links where families or society are not. The proposed reductions will impact on the level support the KCWS are able to provide.

**Q18. Do you have any additional feedback on our proposals and/or suggestions on how else we could make savings to our Community Warden service budget?**

One of our biggest operational concerns is the impact this might have on the helping people home scheme. The wardens play a key role in facilitating the move of vulnerable people away from hospital beds and back into their homes. As mentioned before, the wardens regularly raise concerns to our Vulnerabilities forum. They bring to the conversation vital information that is only possible through the relationships they form.

There is no evidence that those people the wardens are supporting have been consulted with. Residents are often socially isolated and digitally excluded, so would not have the capacity to respond via the normal channels. By removing the support and signposting they receive from the Warden, has KCC considered the effect this approach will have on their wellbeing?

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted