

COMMUNITIES, LEISURE AND ARTS POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 5 March 2024
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Bryant, Eagle, Forecast (Chairman), Fort, Mrs Gooch (Vice-Chairman), Harper, Hinder, Naghi and T Wilkinson

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

AGENDA

Page No.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Apologies for Absence | |
| 2. Notification of Substitute Members | |
| 3. Urgent Items | |
| 4. Notification of Visiting Members | |
| 5. Disclosures by Members and Officers | |
| 6. Disclosures of Lobbying | |
| 7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information | |
| 8. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 (to follow) | |
| 9. Forward Plan relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference | 1 - 4 |
| 10. 2024/25 Events Programme | 5 - 12 |
| 11. 3rd Quarter Finance Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24 | 13 - 27 |
| 12. Draft Key Performance Indicators | 28 - 35 |
| 13. Preventing Financial Exclusion | 36 - 81 |
| 14. Arts Hub & Maker Space | 82 - 139 |

Issued on 26 February 2024

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

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 12 A and Brief Description

15. Exempt Appendix to Item 14: Arts Hub & Maker Space	Paragraph 3 – Financial/Business Affairs	140
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INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on 1 March 2024). 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**.

To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit the [Council's Website](#).







MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 FEBRUARY 2024 TO 31 MAY 2024

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

A Key Decision is defined as one which:

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

The current Cabinet Members are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Burton
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Cabinet Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report ω	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Mar 2024</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Mar 2024</p>	3rd Quarter Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report	<p>Paul Holland, Adrian Lovegrove</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk, adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
Arts Hub & Maker Space A report on the options for establishing an Arts Hub & Maker Space	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024	Arts Hub Feasibility Study Arts Hub & Maker Space	<p>AnnMarie Langley</p> <p>AnnMarieLangley@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
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>Key performance indicators are reviewed annually. This report proposes the KPIs for the period 2024/25.</p> <p>4</p>	Cabinet	Leader of the Council	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	<p>Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee 6 Mar 2024</p> <p>Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee 12 Mar 2024</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024</p> <p>Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee 13 Mar 2024</p>	Key Performance Indicators	<p>Carly Benville, Anna Collier</p> <p>carlybenville@maidstone.gov.uk, annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
Preventing Financial Exclusion	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts	20 Mar 2024	No	No Open	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee 5 Mar 2024	Preventing Financial Exclusion	<p>Orla Sweeney, Anna Collier</p> <p>orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk, annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

**Communities, Leisure & Arts
Policy Advisory Committee**

5 March 2024

Events Programme for 2024-25

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
PAC/Communities, Leisure & Arts	5 th March 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Not applicable, report for noting by the Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ann-Marie Langley, Arts & Culture Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	ALL

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2024/25 Events Programme.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendation to the Committee (CLA)

1. That this report be noted.

2024/25 Events Programme

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Events Programme will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve 'A Thriving Place' through delivering a variety of high quality arts and cultural events. The event plan is also linked to the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Local Investment Plan.	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	The event programme supports the achievement of the 'Heritage is Respected' cross-cutting objective by raising awareness of the town's history and heritage through specific events. The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced' cross-cutting objective by helping to reduce social isolation and delivering improvements in physical and mental health for target groups through participation in arts events and activities.	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Risk Management	Risks associated with individual events will be addressed as part of Council procedures.	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Financial	The Plan can be delivered within existing budgets and UKSPF funding as already approved	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	No specific implications	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Legal	No specific implications – report just for noting.	Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The report is for noting and contains no recommendations that would propose a change in service, therefore no equalities	Equalities & Communities Officer

	impact assessment will be required.	
Public Health	Participating in events is generally likely to have a generally positive implication for population health.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No specific implications	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Procurement	No specific implications	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	It has been noted that action should be taken to ensure events are plastic free and minimise single use products, utilise sustainable vendors, consider public transportation options to access events, and encourage recycling and reuse.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of the Council's strategic priority to make Maidstone a thriving place and the commitments made in our local investment plan to deliver the levelling up agenda, an annual events programme has been developed, comprising both events run by the Council itself and those where the Council partners with other organisations.

2.2 A programme of events has been planned for the 2024-25 financial year, as outlined in the appendices to this report. There are three categories of event, those being fully funded by MBC (through base budget or grant); those being funded through other sources but where MBC officers are providing support; and commercial events being delivered by third parties

Enc.1 lists only events being planned or supported by MBC

Enc.2 lists all known events being planned in the borough, including those being delivered by third parties/commercial

2.3 Sculpture Trail launch event, Wednesday 3rd April
This will be a two-centred event starting in Brenchley Gardens with a walkabout by a giant T-Rex and some baby dinosaurs. They will start in the Gardens then head into Week Street and Fremlin Walk to engage with visitors. The team will then move to Lockmeadow to deliver 2 x 'How to train your dinosaur' interactive sessions in the afternoon. The new digital app will be promoted via QR codes throughout the day.

- 2.4 Medieval Fayre, Saturday 6th April
This will include a variety of re-enactors demonstrating traditional crafts and skills, alongside knight and princess training, crime and punishment trials, storytelling and medieval music and dance. Costumed characters will walkabout in Week Street and Fremlin Walk to promote the event on the day.
- 2.5 Maidstone Summer Series, 20th July – 24th August
This will be a weekly event, every Saturday from 10am – 2pm in the town centre. It will include a number of acts, normally seen at Covent Garden, as well as local bands and musicians. Acts will include jugglers, magicians and acrobats but the full line-up is still to be confirmed.
- 2.6 Brenchley Bandstand Concerts, 21st July – 1st September
There will be a series of 7 bandstand concerts in Brenchley Gardens this year including Invicta Jazz Orchestra, BAE Systems Brass Band and other big band/brass bands from the local area.
- 2.7 Outdoor Theatre, 17th – 25th August
Hazlitt Theatre will be delivering an outdoor touring production of 'The Three Musketeers' this summer, starting at the Amphitheatre and including Lenham, Bearsted, Staplehurst, Marden, Cobtree Manor Park, South Park, Bredhurst, Stockbury, East Farleigh and Dandelion Time. Tickets will be subsidised to ensure they are affordable for families.
- 2.8 Maidstone Literary Festival, 5th – 12th October
Building on the success of last year's inaugural event, we will be delivering another Literary Festival this year. This is in the early planning stages so no further details are available at this time.
- 2.9 At this relatively early stage, events continue to be developed, so further events are likely to be added to the programme shown in the appendices.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are no matters for decision in this report.

Date	Event	Location(s)	Partners / Organisers
20-Jan	Big Big Indoor Bootfair	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	MBC (Market)
07 Feb - 1 Jun	Maidstone Young Artist Award Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
13 - 15 Feb	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
16-Feb	SEND family craft	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
02-Mar	Big Big Indoor Bootfair	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	MBC (Market)
02-Mar	Children's Calligraphy workshop	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
09-Mar	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
15 - 24 Mar	Heart of Kent Walking Festival	Various	MBC & Partners
23-Mar	Teen/Adult Calligraphy workshop	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
28-Mar	Film Screening - Wallace & Gromit	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
02 - 04 Apr	Easter craft activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
03-Apr	Sculpture Trail launch event	Brenchley Gardens / Lockmeadow	MBC
06-Apr	Medieval Fayre	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
6 - 20 Apr	Maidstone Zoo Exhibition	Mote Park	MBC (Cobtree Charitable Trust funding)
09 - 11 Apr	Easter craft activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
04-May	Spring Craft Market	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
9 - 11 May	Community Yarn Bombing & Tea Party	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Paula George
18-May	Mayor making & Civic Parade	Town Centre	MBC (Civic team)
18-May	Community Variety Show	Whatman Park	MBC (delivery partner TBC)
28 - 30 May	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
30 May (TBC)	Film Screening - Paddington	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
Jun (TBC)	'Rainbow Monarchs' talk by Rob Forknall	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Rob Forknall
09-Jun	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
14 - 17 Jun	Hidden Histories Community Dig	Mote Park	MBC
15-Jun	Family Arts Award Day	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
15 Jun - 7 Sept	I Grew Up 80s Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
27 Jun (TBC)	Film Screening - Moonlight & LGBTQ film	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
13 or 20 Jul	Festival of Archaeology	Maidstone Museum	MBC & KAS
20-Jul	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
21-Jul	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
25 Jul (TBC)	Film Screening - Jaws	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
26-Jul	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
27-Jul	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
27-Jul	Steampunk Festival	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
Jul (TBC)	Steampunk Bring & Buy sale	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
Jul (TBC)	Steampunk Murder Mystery Evening	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
28-Jul	Vintage & Retro Fair	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
28-Jul	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC

Date	Event	Location(s)	Partners / Organisers
Aug (TBC)	80s Disco with DJ Debbie	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
02-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
03-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
04-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
09-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
10-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
11-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
16-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
17-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
17-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Amphitheatre	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
18-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
18-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Lenham Tithe Barn	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
20-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Cobtree Manor Park	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
21-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Staplehurst	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
22-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Marden	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
23-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
23-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	South Park & Bearsted	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
24-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
24-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Dandelion & Little Fant Farm	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
25-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
25-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Bredhurst (TBC) & Stockbury	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
29 Aug (TBC)	Films-Desperately Seeking Susan & Princess Bride	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
30-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
01-Sep	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
06-Sep	80s quiz night (optional fancy dress)	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
14-Sep	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
19-Sep	Pirates! A talk by Craig Campbell, KAS	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & KAS
Oct (TBC)	Needle felting workshops with Mona Whitton	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Mona Whitton
1 - 31 Oct	Black History Month Art Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
5 - 12 Oct	Maidstone Literary Festival	Town centre - various venues	MBC
26 Oct - 2 Nov	Scarecrow Festival (TBC)	Town centre	MBC
29 - 31 Oct	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
31 Oct (TBC)	Film screening - Psycho	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
31 Oct (TBC)	Shakespeare & Witches' talk	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Rob Forknall
02-Nov	Mexican Fiesta & Day of the Dead	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
10-Nov	Remembrance Day Parade	Town centre	MBC (Civic team)
30 Nov - 1 Dec	Santa & sleigh; Giant Post Box	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
Dec (TBC)	Xmas craft workshop with Mona Whitton	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
07-Dec	Christmas Market	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
7, 14 & 21 Dec	Father Christmas' Fireplace	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
14-Dec	Xmas Producers and Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
14-Dec	Film screening - Die Hard & Elf	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)

Every Tuesday General Market
Every Saturday General Market

Lockmeadow MBC
Lockmeadow MBC

Date	Event	Location(s)	Partners / Organisers
06-Jan	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
20-Jan	Big Big Indoor Bootfair	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	MBC (Market)
03-Feb	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
03-Feb	Lunar New Year	Town Centre & Lockmeadow	Maidstone Cultural Group/Cohesion Plus, MBC
07 Feb - 1 Jun	Maidstone Young Artist Award Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
07-Feb - 1 Jun	Graham Clarke: A Retrospective Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	Graham Clarke
10 - 18 Feb	Butler Games	Leeds Castle	Leeds Castle
10 - 18 Feb	February Fun & Frolics	Kent Life	Kent Life
13 - 15 Feb	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
15-Feb	Kettle Bridge Concertina Day	Maidstone Museum	Kettlebridge Concertinas
16-Feb	SEND family craft	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
02-Mar	Big Big Indoor Bootfair	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	MBC (Market)
02-Mar	Children's Calligraphy workshop	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
09-Mar	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
15 - 24 Mar	Heart of Kent Walking Festival	Various	MBC & Partners
23-Mar	Teen/Adult Calligraphy workshop	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
24-Mar	Holi Festival	Collis Green Millennium Park	Maidstone Nepalese Community / Collis Green
28-Mar	Film Screening - Wallace & Gromit	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
29 Mar - 14 Apr	Family Easter Treasure Trail	Leeds Castle	Leeds Castle
29 Mar - 14 Apr	Easter Trail	Town centre	One Maidstone
30-Mar	United Kingdom Pro Wrestling Show	Coronation Square, Lockmeadow	UK Pro Wrestling
02 - 04 Apr	Easter craft activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
03-Apr	Sculpture Trail launch event	Brenchley Gardens / Lockmeadow	MBC
06-Apr	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
06-Apr	Medieval Fayre	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
06-Apr	Heritage Transport Show	Detling Showground	Heritage Transport Show
6 - 20 Apr	Maidstone Zoo Exhibition	Mote Park	MBC (Cobtree Charitable Trust funding)
09 - 11 Apr	Easter craft activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
26 Apr - 5 May	Funfair	Mote Park	Forrest Amusements
1 - 31 May	MaidFest (including Cocktail Week)	Town Centre	One Maidstone
04-May	Spring Craft Market	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
2 - 6 May	Maidstone Fringe Festival	Town Centre - inc. Lockmeadow	Make Some Noise
04-May	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
9 - 11 May	Community Yarn Bombing & Tea Party	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Paula George
18-May	Mayor making & Civic Parade	Town Centre	MBC (Civic team)
18-May	Community Variety Show	Whatman Park	MBC (delivery partner TBC)
25 - 27 May	Kent Garden Show	Detling Showground	Kent Garden Show
25 - 27 May	The Queen's Joust	Leeds Castle	Leeds Castle
28 - 30 May	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
30 May (TBC)	Film Screening - Paddington	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
31 May - 2 June	Rock the Mote	Mote Park	Lucus Live
Jun (TBC)	'Rainbow Monarchs' talk by Rob Forknall	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Rob Forknall
01-Jun	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
09-Jun	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
14 - 17 Jun	Hidden Histories Community Dig	Mote Park	MBC
15-Jun	Taste of the Caribbean Food & Drink	Mote Park	S & A Entertainment Ltd
15-Jun	Family Arts Award Day	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
15 Jun - 7 Sept	I Grew Up 80s Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
21 - 30 Jun	Celebration Life Festival	Lockmeadow	All Saints Church
22-Jun	Maidstone PRIDE	Lockmeadow (& poss Town Centre)	Maidstone Pride Group
22 - 23 Jun	Bubble Rush	Mote Park	Demelza Hospice
27 Jun (TBC)	Film Screening - Moonlight & LGBTQ film	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
28 Jun - 30 Aug	Shaun the Sheep Trail	Town Centre	Heart of Kent Hospice
29-Jun	Kids Rock	Mote Park	The Rock Music School
5 - 7 Jul	Battle of Britain Air Show	Headcorn Aerodrome	Aero Legends
5 - 7 Jul	Kent County Show	Detling Showground	Kent Agricultural Society
06-Jul	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
6 - 7 Jul	Race for Life	Mote Park	Cancer Research UK
12 - 14 Jul	Revival/ Raver Tots	Mote Park	Lucus Live
13-Jul	Classical Concert	Leeds Castle	Leeds Castle
13 or 20 Jul	Festival of Archaeology	Maidstone Museum	MBC & KAS
19 - 21 Jul	Maid of Stone	Mote Park	Lucus Live
20-Jul	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
21-Jul	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
25 Jul (TBC)	Film Screening - Jaws	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
26-Jul	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
27-Jul	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC

Date	Event	Location(s)	Partners / Organisers
27-Jul	Steampunk Festival	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
Jul (TBC)	Steampunk Bring & Buy sale	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
Jul (TBC)	Steampunk Murder Mystery Evening	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Steampunk Festival
27-Jul	Maidstone River Festival	Riverside, Lockmeadow	River Festival Committee
27-Jul	Pete Tong's Ibiza Classical	Mote Park	Lucus Live
28-Jul	Vintage & Retro Fair	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
28-Jul	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
Aug (TBC)	80s Disco with DJ Debbie	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
02-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
03-Aug	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
03-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
04-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
09-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
10-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
11-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
16-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
17-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
17-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Amphitheatre	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
18-Aug	Concrete Canvas	Lockmeadow	City Core Creative
18-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
18-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Lenham Tithe Barn	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
20-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Cobtree Manor Park	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
21-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Staplehurst	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
22-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Marden	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
23-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
23-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	South Park & Bearsted	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
24-Aug	Maidstone Summer Series	Town Centre	MBC
24-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Dandelion & Little Fant Farm	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
24 - 25 Aug	Thai Festival	Lockmeadow	Thai Orchid
24 - 26 Aug	Military Odyssey	Detling Showground	Military Odyssey
25-Aug	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
25-Aug	Outdoor Theatre - Three Musketeers	Bredhurst (TBC) & Stockbury	MBC / Hazlitt Theatre
29 Aug (TBC)	Films-Desperately Seeking Susan & Princess Bride	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
30-Aug	Art in the Park	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
01-Sep	Bandstand Concert	Brenchley Gardens	MBC
06-Sep	80s quiz night (optional fancy dress)	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
6 - 15 Sept	Heritage Open Days	Various	Various
07-Sep	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
07-Sep	Memory Walk	Mote Park	Alzheimers UK
08-Sep	Maidstone Community Mela	Mote Park	Maidstone Cultural Group/Cohesion Plus
14-Sep	Local Producers & Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
14-Sep	Cafe Mambo	Mote Park	Lucus Live
14 - 15 Sept	WWI Weekend (HOD)	Detling Showground	CEMA
19-Sep	Pirates! A talk by Craig Campbell, KAS	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & KAS
21-Sep	Music event tbc	Mote Park	Lucus Live
28-Sep	Oktoberfest	Mote Park	Lucus Live
Oct (TBC)	Needle felting workshops with Mona Whitton	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Mona Whitton
1 - 31 Oct	Black History Month Art Exhibition	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
5 - 12 Oct	Maidstone Literary Festival	Town centre - various venues	MBC
26 Oct - 30 Nov	Sewing the Seeds: A legacy in Thread exhibition	Maidstone Museum	Mid Kent Embroidery & Textiles Group
26 Oct - 2 Nov	Scarecrow Festival (TBC)	Town centre	MBC
29 - 31 Oct	Half Term Craft Activities	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
31 Oct (TBC)	Film screening - Psycho	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
31 Oct (TBC)	Shakespeare & Witches' talk	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum) & Rob Forknall
02-Nov	Repair Cafe	Lockmeadow (Market Hall)	Maidstone CAN
02-Nov	Mexican Fiesta & Day of the Dead	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
9 & 10 Nov	Fireworks Spectacular	Leeds Castle	Leeds Castle
9 & 10 Nov	Fireworks Spectacular	Kent Life	Kent Life
10-Nov	Remembrance Day Parade	Town centre	MBC (Civic team)
14-Nov	Xmas Lights Switch On	Town Centre	One Maidstone
14 Nov - 31 Dec	Festive Trail	Town Centre	One Maidstone
30 Nov - 1 Dec	Santa & sleigh; Giant Post Box	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
Dec (TBC)	Xmas craft workshop with Mona Whitton	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
07-Dec	Christmas Market	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
7, 14 & 21 Dec	Father Christmas' Fireplace	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)
14-Dec	Xmas Producers and Craft Market	Lockmeadow	MBC (Lockmeadow)
14-Dec	Film screening - Die Hard & Elf	Maidstone Museum	MBC (Museum)

Every Tuesday General Market
Every Saturday General Market

Lockmeadow MBC
Lockmeadow MBC

**COMMUNITIES, LEISURE & ARTS
POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

5 March 2024

**3rd Quarter Finance Update & Performance Monitoring
Report 2023/24**

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 March 2024
Cabinet Meeting	20 March 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager Carly Benville, Senior Information Analyst
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2023/24 financial and performance position for the services reporting into the Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee (CLA PAC) as at 31st December 2024 (Quarter 3). The primary focus is on:

- The 2023/24 Revenue and Capital budgets; and
- The 2023/24 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that relate to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045.

The combined reporting of the financial and performance position enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues in their proper context, reflecting the fact that the financial and performance-related fortunes of the Council are inextricably linked.

Budget Monitoring

Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 3 for the services reporting to CLA PAC is £1.397m, compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.637m, representing an overspend of £0.761m.

Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 3 for CLA PAC was £0.284m against a total budget of £1.433m.

The budgets used in this report are the revised estimates for 2023/24.

Performance Monitoring

50% (2 of 4) of the KPIs falling under this PAC achieved their quarter 3 targets.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update

An update on progress made against schemes using this funding is shown at Appendix 3.

Purpose of Report

The report enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures and performance issues as at 31st December 2023.

This report makes the following recommendations to the Communities, Leisure & Arts Policy Advisory Committee:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted;
2. That the Capital position at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24 be noted;
3. That the Performance position as at Quarter 3 for 2023/24, including the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position, where significant issues have been identified, be noted;
4. That the UK Shared Prosperity Fund update, attached at Appendix 3 be noted.

3rd Quarter Finance Update & Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>This report monitors actual activity against the revenue budget and other financial matters set by Council for the financial year. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is linked to the Strategic Plan and corporate priorities.</p> <p>The Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Cross Cutting Objectives	This report enables any links between performance and financial matters to be identified and addressed at an early stage, thereby reducing the risk of compromising the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-2045, including its cross-cutting objectives.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Risk Management	This is addressed in Section 5 of this report.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Financial	<p>Financial implications are the focus of this report through high level budget monitoring. Budget monitoring ensures that services can react quickly enough to potential resource problems. The process ensures that the Council is not faced by corporate financial problems that may prejudice the delivery of strategic priorities.</p> <p>Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money.</p>	Senior Finance Manager (Client)

	The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	
Staffing	<p>The budget for staffing represents a significant proportion of the direct spend of the Council and is carefully monitored. Any issues in relation to employee costs will be raised in this and future monitoring reports.</p> <p>Having a clear set of performance targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.</p>	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Legal	<p>The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Committee to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget.</p> <p>There is no statutory duty to report regularly on the Council's performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. One of the purposes of the Key Performance Indicators is to facilitate the improvement of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Council services. Regular reports on Council performance help to demonstrate best value and compliance with the statutory duty.</p>	Senior Legal Advisor
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA would be carried out as part of a	Equalities and Communities Officer

	policy or service change, should one be identified.	
Public Health	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Procurement	Performance Indicators and Strategic Milestones monitor any procurement needed to achieve the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28 - including the budget for 2023/24 - was approved by full Council on 22nd February 2023. This report updates the Committee on how its services have performed over the last quarter with regard to revenue and capital expenditure against approved budgets.
- 2.2 The financial position for CLA needs to be considered within context of the overall financial position for Maidstone. Currently there is a forecast overspend that will need to be managed over the rest of the year to come back within budget. We know this may fluctuate as demand as costs settle during the year. The CLA PAC will need to consider any actions it may need to take to ensure it manages within its controllable budgets.
- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 1 is a report setting out the revenue and capital spending position at the Quarter 3 stage. Overall net expenditure at the end of Quarter 1 for the services reporting to CLA PAC is £1.397m compared to the approved profiled budget of £0.636m, representing an overspend of

£0.761m. Capital expenditure at the end of Quarter 3 for CLA PAC was £0.284m against a total budget of £1.433m. There are two significant revenue budget variances that are currently forecast by the end of the year, and these are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 2.4 Attached at Appendix 2 is a report setting out the position for the KPIs for the corresponding period. Attached at Appendix 3 is an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to comment.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget, the Capital Programme, and the KPIs at the end of December 2023, the Committee can choose to note this information or could choose to comment.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.
- 5.2 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2023/24. The budget is set against a continuing backdrop of limited resources and the continuation of a difficult economic climate. Regular and comprehensive monitoring of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Cabinet the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The KPIs update ("Performance Monitoring") are reported to the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) quarterly: Communities, Leisure & Arts PAC, Housing, Health & Environment PAC and Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development PAC. Each committee also receives a report on the relevant priority action areas. The report is also presented to the Corporate Services PAC reporting on the priority areas of "A Thriving Place", "Safe, Clean and Green", "Homes and Communities" and "Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure".

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 The Quarter 3 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Policy Advisory Committees during March 2024.

8. **REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Third Quarter Budget Monitoring 2023/24
 - Appendix 2: Third Quarter Performance Monitoring 2023/24
 - Appendix 3: UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update 2023/24
-

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

APPENDIX 1 – THIRD QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING

Contents

Part A: Third Quarter Revenue Budget 2023/24

- A1) Revenue Budget
- A2) Significant Variances

Part B: Third Quarter Capital Budget 2023/24

- B1) Capital Budget
- B2) Significant Variances

Part A - Third Quarter Revenue Budget 2023/24

A1) Revenue Budget: Communities, Leisure & Arts (CLA) PAC

- A2.1 The table below provides a detailed summary of the budgeted net expenditure position for the services reporting directly into CLA PAC at the end of Quarter 3. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (i.e. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included). The budgets used are the revised estimates for 2023/24.
- A2.2 This table now shows the variance split between expenditure and income to give more of an insight into the nature of the variance.

CLA Revenue Budget: NET EXPENDITURE (@ 3rd Quarter 2023/24)

Cost Centre	Net £000	Net £000	Net £000	Expenditure £000	Income £000	Net £000	Forecast Net £000	Forecast Variance £000
Cultural Development Arts	70	60	33	24	3	27	70	0
Museum	25	14	-15	39	-10	29	25	0
Carriage Museum	7	5	6	0	-2	-1	7	0
Museum-Grant Funded Activities	0	-2	-11	10	-2	8	0	0
Hazlitt Arts Centre	335	241	248	-6	0	-6	335	0
Festivals and Events	14	9	40	-37	6	-31	40	-26
Leisure Centre	-141	-131	-76	-57	3	-55	-61	-80
Mote Park Adventure Zone	-77	-57	-71	0	13	13	-77	0
Cobtree Golf Course	-35	0	0	0	0	0	-35	0
Mote Park Cafe	-65	-49	-48	-3	2	-1	-65	0
Parks & Open Spaces Leisure Activities	-2	-1	-2	0	0	0	-2	0
Mote Park Leisure Activities	-43	-42	-44	0	2	2	-43	0
Tourism	11	11	-3	8	6	14	11	0
Museum Shop	-22	-17	-7	0	-10	-10	-22	0
Lockmeadow	243	198	442	-244	0	-244	443	0
Lockmeadow Complex	-1,521	-1,684	-1,133	-68	-483	-552	-1,041	-480
Market	27	31	18	9	5	14	27	0
Performance & Development	82	79	81	-2	0	-2	82	0
Press & Public Relations	7	1	-6	3	5	7	7	0
Grants	166	160	137	23	0	23	166	0
Delegated Grants	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	0
Parish Services	139	139	138	1	0	1	139	0
Leisure Services Section	71	83	82	1	0	1	71	0
Cultural Services Section	337	253	287	-34	0	-34	370	-33
Visitor Economy Section	134	101	119	-18	0	-18	134	0
Market Section	97	73	62	11	0	11	97	0
Communications Section	259	195	182	13	0	13	259	0
Policy & Information Section	590	443	396	44	3	47	560	29
Customer Services Section	734	552	539	13	0	13	734	0
Salary Slippage	-43	-32	0	-32	0	-32	-43	0
Totals	1,401	636	1,397	-302	-459	-761	2,191	-590

21

These budget areas are all covered by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure & Arts.

A2) CLA Revenue Budget: Significant Variances

A2.1 Within the headline figures, there are a number of both adverse and favourable net expenditure variances for individual cost centres. It is important that the implications of variances are considered at an early stage, so that contingency plans can be put in place and, if necessary, be used to inform future financial planning. Variances will be reported to each of the Policy Advisory Committees on a quarterly basis throughout 2023/24.

A2.2 The table below highlights and provides further detail on the most significant variances at the end of Quarter 3.

CLA PAC Variances (@ 3rd Quarter 2023/24)

	Positive Variance Q3	Adverse Variance Q3	Year End Forecast Variance
Communities, Leisure & Arts	£000		
Leisure Centre - Under the terms of the current contract with the operator the Council is responsible for excess utility costs, and with utility prices continuing to be at a high level this is reflected in this overspend.		-54	-80
Lockmeadow Complex - A number of units at the complex have fallen vacant during the period, leading to a shortfall against budget. However, progress has been made in identifying new tenants. A tenant offering virtual reality experiences has moved one of the vacant units. The former David Lloyd unit now operates as the Lockmeadow Health Club, under the same management as the council's leisure centre. The Club has built up membership numbers quickly although running costs are proving higher than expected. Head of Terms have been agreed with a prospective tenant at the former Frankie & Benny's and although there has been delays in finalising the lease it is expected that the unit will be occupied shortly. Work is under way to clear the former Feathers unit to make it more marketable. Note that the business case for the Lockmeadow acquisition anticipated that at the end of existing leases there would be a period during which these units would be non-income producing, so the adverse variance does not alter the overall financial basis of the acquisition.		-551	-480

Part B - Third Quarter Capital Budget 2023/24

B1) Capital Budget 2023/24 (@ 3rd Quarter 2023/24)





Capital Programme Heading	Revised Estimate 2023/24 £000	Actual to December 2023 £000	Budget Remaining £000	Q4 Profile £000	Projected Total Expenditure £000	Projected Slippage to 2024/25 £000
Communities, Leisure & Arts						
Mote Park Lake - Dam Works	40	39	1	1	40	
Museum Development Plan	389	146	243	275	421	-32
Leisure Provision	699	73	626	250	323	376
Tennis Courts Upgrade	40	17	23	23	40	
Riverside Walk Works	250		250			250
Mote Park Kiosk Refurbishment & Extension	15	8	7	7	15	
Total	1,433	284	1,149	555	839	593




B2) Capital Budget Variances (@ 3rd Quarter 2023/24)

Communities, Leisure & Arts
Museum Development Plan – Further works are planned for the new Archaeology Gallery in the final quarter, which will take the cost of the project over the approved budget for the year in the capital programme. However, this was anticipated as external funding had been secured to cover these costs.
Leisure Provision – The extension to the contract for the management of the centre has now been agreed, and subject to signing it is anticipated that capital works can proceed as soon as possible, so there could be spend in the final quarter of the year, although this could slip into 2024/25.
Riverside Walk Works – This project has now been subsumed into plans for Town Centre improvement works, including upgrades to lighting in the Town Centre. The budget will therefore be carried forward to 2024/25.

APPENDIX 2 – THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Key to performance ratings

RAG Rating	
	Target not achieved
	Target slightly missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has been sustained
	Performance has declined
N/A	No previous data to compare

Note




Where KPIs are 'data only' PIs, the short/long term trend arrows represent whether the numbers are higher or lower than the previous comparison period.

Performance Summary















RAG Rating	Green	Amber	Red	N/A ¹	Total
KPIs	2	1	1	4	8
Direction	Up	No Change	Down	N/A	Total
Last Quarter	2	0	4	2	8
Last Year	3	0	0	5	8

- 50% (2 of 4) key performance indicators (KPIs) falling under this PAC achieved their quarter 3 (23/24) targets.
- Compared to last quarter (Q2 23/24), performance has improved for 33.3% (2 of 6) the indicators and declined for 66.7% (4) of (6) of the indicators.
- Compared to last year (Q3 2022/23), performance has improved for 100% (3 of 3) the indicators.

Communities, Leisure & Arts Q3 Performance

Performance Indicator	Q3 2023/24				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Number of households at risk of (or in) financial crisis (LIFT data) <i>September 2023</i>	615				N/A
Percentage change in Utility costs for public use leisure assets	Half – Yearly Indicator				

¹ PIs rated N/A are not included in the summary calculations.

Performance Indicator	Q3 2023/24				
	Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (Last Quarter)	Long Trend (Last Year)
Number of outreach projects/work undertaken by the Hazlitt	17				N/A
Percentage of tickets sold at the Hazlitt	82.45%	50%			
Footfall at the Museum and Visitors Information Centre	8,235	12,500			
Footfall at the Maidstone Leisure Centre	116,051	110,600			
Market Hall Occupancy Percentage	72.53%	75%			N/A
Extra visits to the Borough for Events (HUQ)	Annual Indicator				

Comments where targets have slipped

The Museum

The KPI tracking the “**Footfall at the Museum and Visitors Information Centre**” achieved a total of 8,235 visitors against a target of 12,500. This represents a shortfall of 4,265 visitors, or approximately 34% below the target. Since the planning and delivery of the new "Lives in our Landscape Gallery" began to take shape, the decision was taken by previous management to stop extra events, tours and other activities. This released staff-member resource to focus on the Gallery delivery. The Gallery project is on a very tight timescale with mainly existing staff being utilised to deliver the project. There was no capacity to continue to deliver the usual activities. This is having an effect on footfall numbers at present. However, we would expect to see much better figures in 2024/25, with some events coming back into the calendar and a brand-new gallery for visitors to explore.

The Market

The KPI tracking the “**Market Hall Occupancy Percentage**” missed target by less than 10%, achieving 72.53% against a target of 75%. In October and November, the Hall maintained occupancy rates at 80%. However, this decreased in December as the regular auctioneer hirers took their Christmas Break from the middle of December until early January. Additionally, the team have less weekend events as organisers and customers tend to be away with family. This year the team added a Christmas Eve Farmer's Market and a Model Railway Exhibition (and sale), but despite these additions, the December occupancy numbers were just over half.

UKSPF 2023/4 Quarter 3 Update:

In December 2023 the Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) confirmed that the Year 2 six-month progress report was approved and are happy with our approach to spending this year. Officers are continuing to work and complete projects for year 2, with new project leads identified for year 3 expenditure, which included a largest proportion of our UKSPF allocation.

Rural Fund: Following the allocation of £184,370 towards four successful bids for rural funding in 2023/24 a further 21 submissions have been received for funding in 2024/25. The panel conducted a review of submissions in February and awarded the remaining £359,920 to 12 bids from across the borough. These projects will commence in April 2024 with progress closely monitored by officers to ensure all are completed by March 2025.

Year 2 projects and an update:

Intervention	Project	Detail	2023/24 budget	Amount spent:	£ Committed	Q3 Update:
E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities	Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.	Creative communities fund for local organisations and groups to support events	£35,830	£23,000	£6,500	Applications for Round 4 closed in November 2023. We received 17 applications and made 8 awards.
		Literature Festival	£15,000	£16,077	£0	The event was successfully held in October and saw large audiences of all ages coming along to enjoy the wide variety of authors and workshops using town centre venues including Maidstone Museum, Archbishops' Palace and All Saints Church. The overspend has been funded from the advertising budget
		Iggy Sculpture Trail	£60,000	£35,910	£25,100	The trail will be supported by a digital trail app which is being populated with information, this is expected to launch from April 2024
		Equipment purchases to support events	£2,751	£3083	£0	Purchases of a set of temporary exhibition walls, and 2 microphones have been completed. An underspend in Year 1 has been carried over for purchases this year

		Arts Carnival	£20,000	£20,000	£0	The Arts Carnival, which was rearranged due to adverse weather, took place on Saturday 9 th September 2023. The next Carnival will take place in 2025.
		Partner for Elmer 2	£40,000	£40,000	£0	Contract has been signed with the launch expected Summer 2024.
	Project C- A Community Arts Hub & Maker Space	Feasibility Study	£5,000	£5,000	£0	The final amended feasibility report was received in August with an MBC working group set up to action the results of the report. A separate report dealing with the outcome is on this agenda.
E8: Campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of local area	Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.	Advertising budget to promote events across all channels	£15,000	£8,440	£1,012	Advertising budget has been used to promote events throughout the autumn and will be used further with the Lunar events in the new year.
		Borough Insight Events and Town centre focussed	£30,000	£30,000	£0	This was spent on the Autumn edition of the magazine which was delivered to residents from October 2023.
		Promotional video for business and events in TC	£5,000	£5,000	£0	This video promoted the use of UKSPF funds to support the Town Centre over the first two years of funding and is now available online
E9: Impactful Volunteering and/or Social action Projects	Project B- A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting	An externally commissioned green Volunteering Project to Improve Town Centre Green Spaces, Increase Volunteering and Improve Wellbeing.	£60,000	£45,000	£15,000	Five sites have been worked with throughout 2023/24 with 25 volunteers involved at 59 events. The sites are Maidstone Community Support Centre, Trinity House, Brenchley Gardens, Fairmeadow and planters in the Town Centre.
Management Overheads			£9,897	£7,423	£2,474	
Total:			£298,478	£238,933	£50,086	
				£289,019		

Agenda Item 12

Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee

5 March 2024

Draft Key Performance Indicators 2024/25

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Communities Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 March 2024
Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee	6 March 2024
Housing, Health and the Environment Policy Advisory Committee	12 March 2024
Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	13 March 2024
Cabinet	20 March 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	CABINET
Lead Head of Service	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Carly Benville Information and Analytics Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Committee are provided with an update on performance management arrangements for 2024/25 including to recommend to Cabinet the draft key performance indicators for 2024/25.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation to the Cabinet;

1. To agree the draft Performance Indicators at Appendix 1 and note the changes to reporting arrangements.

Draft Key Performance Indicators 2024/25

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve its priorities as the Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are aligned with the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives. They also cover a wide range of services and priority areas.</p>	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation(s) supports the achievement(s) of all cross-cutting objectives as the Key Performance Indicators and strategic actions are aligned with the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2019-45.</p>	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation. Performance indicators and targets are closely linked to the allocation of resources and determining good value for money. The financial implications of any	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

	proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and associated annual budget setting process. Performance issues are highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. Having a clear set of performance targets enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Legal	There is no statutory duty to report regularly on the Council's performance. However, under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended) a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. One of the purposes of the Key Performance Indicators is to facilitate the improvement of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Council services. Regular reports on Council performance help to demonstrate best value and compliance with the statutory duty.	Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Officer
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	The performance recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder.	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Procurement	There are no procurement implications.	Anna Collier - Head of Insight, Communities

		and Governance Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Performance management is a key tool to ensuring that the Council is delivering on its priorities, as set out in our strategic plan, and which indicates whether action is required to ensure that we improve our services, give value for money and good outcomes for the residents of Maidstone.
- 2.2 Performance Management has undergone a few evolutions both nationally and locally, with a general reduction in emphasis on performance monitoring. Nationally there has been a recent increase in focus. In July 2023, the Office of Local Government (OFLOG) launched a beta-version of a new online tool, which brings together a range of existing metrics across local government service areas, to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and support its improvement.
- 2.3 Not all metrics have yet been confirmed, however there are not currently any relevant indicators for this committee. The Local Authority Data Explorer can be found here: <https://oflog.data.gov.uk/>.
- 2.4 The government have committed to ensuring that OFLOG will develop all future metrics by July 2025, and under their current proposed future metrics, the following are relevant for this committee:
- Sport, Leisure & Recreational Services (inc. Libraries)

Draft Key Performance Indicator Set 2024/25

- 2.5 Proposed key performance indicators for consideration for the period 2024/25 are outlined in the tables over the page. Indicators have been developed based upon:
- New and potential Oflog indicators as described above,
 - Current Strategic Priorities,
 - Feedback from members over the course of the year,
 - Advice from Head of Services and key managers.
- 2.6 Seven indicators are proposed for this committee, an decrease from the current eight.
- 2.7 The indicators proposed to be dropped from this committee are:

- Percentage change in Utility costs for public use leisure assets
- Extra visits to the Borough for Events (HUQ)

2.8 The new indicator proposed for this committee is:

- Footfall at the Maidstone Carriage Museum

Reporting

2.9 Reporting will change in 2024/25 to increase transparency of the Council's performance. Dashboards of performance will be developed for each committee, which will be refreshed monthly for members.

2.10 In addition to the monthly dashboard, Committee can request more detail about performance from Heads of Service or Managers at committee on any aspect of the performance to feature on the Committee agenda.

2.11 A formal summary of performance will be reported biannually, with the annual report providing a more in-depth analysis including trends and benchmarking data.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Members of the Policy Advisory Committee can choose to recommend to Cabinet the draft key performance indicator set, as it set out at appendix 1.

3.2 Alternatively, Members can recommend to Cabinet to remove or add any indicators suggested as they feel are relevant for the committee.

3.3 Members could recommend that performance is not monitored but this is not recommended. Performance management is a cornerstone of a well-performing authority and this would reduce transparency and oversight of the Council's services and overall performance.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Members of the Policy Advisory Committee recommend the draft indicator set at appendix 1 to Cabinet, as this has been developed based upon aligning to national data sets, strategic priorities and expert officer advice.

5. RISK

5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The recommended approach reduces the risk to the Council. 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 Key Performance Indicators are presented to committees and cabinet throughout the year and feedback is continually collected and fed into the indicator review process at the end of the municipal year.
 - 6.2 Meetings have been had with Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and key Managers which has led to the draft set presented to committee today.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The development of a performance dashboard is currently underway and will continue once the final set of indicators is approved.
 - 7.2 Once the dashboard is at a stage of user-testing, the Chair and Vice-Chair of this committee will be invited to feedback on the contents and outputs of the dashboard, which will contribute towards its final view.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Draft Key Performance Indicators 2024/25
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Draft Indicators 2024/25 for comment
Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee

Thriving Place			
Indicator	Responsible Officer	Committee	Current/New KPI?
Footfall at the Maidstone Leisure Centre	Katie Exon	Communities, Leisure and Arts	Current
Footfall at the Museum and Visitors Information Centre	Natalie Moor	Communities, Leisure and Arts	Current
Footfall at the carriage museum	Natalie Moor	Communities, Leisure and Arts	New
Percentage of tickets sold at the Hazlitt	Katie Exon	Communities, Leisure and Arts	Current
Number of outreach projects/work undertaken by the Hazlitt	Katie Exon	Communities, Leisure and Arts	Current
Market Hall Occupancy Percentage	Alexa Kersting Woods	Communities, Leisure and Arts	Current

Homes and Communities			
Indicator	Responsible Officer	Committee	Current/New KPI?
Number of households at risk of (or in) financial crisis (LIFT data)	Anna Collier	Communities Leisure and Arts	Current

Agenda Item 13

Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee

5 March 2024

Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and Action Plan (refresh)

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
CLT	6 February 2024
Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	5 March 2024
Cabinet	20 March 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	CABINET
Lead Head of Service	Anna Collier, Head of Insight, Communities and Governance.
Lead Officer and Report Author	Orla Sweeney, Senior Policy and Communities Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	ALL

Executive Summary

The Council's Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy has been refreshed to respond to the change in need since the Strategy's original inception in 2021.

The current [Financial Inclusion Strategy](#) covers the period 2021 until 2026. It was implemented in response to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New actions have been developed to ensure it reflects the current challenges faced by Maidstone residents and staff so that the strategy continues to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities and Outcomes as set out in its Strategic Plan 2023-2045.

Purpose of Report

To note progress on actions supporting financial inclusion in the borough.

To consider and agree the revised strategy and actions for Cabinet decision.

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

1. To note progress on actions supporting financial inclusion highlighted at para 2.4 in the report and set out in the Strategy (Appendix 1)
2. To consider and agree the refreshed Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and action plan (Appendix 1).

Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and Action Plan (refresh)

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Strategy and its action plan will help support delivery of the Council's strategic plan objectives: Homes and Communities and A Thriving Place.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations help deliver the achievement of cross cutting objectives: Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Risk Management	Please refer to paragraph 5.1 of the report	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Legal	No impact identified.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes. However, some of the actions in the revised Action Plan could result in the collection and processing of personal data. Should this be the case, the Information Governance Team will be asked to review the processing of personal data affected and the associated will be updated accordingly, including a data	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance

	protection impact assessment.	
Equalities	The strategy and action plan support delivery of the Council’s EDI Policy and Public Sector Duty, recognising and responding to its local protected characteristic ‘Poverty’.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	Positive impact on crime and disorder in terms of understanding challenges faced by new and existing communities.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Procurement	No impact identified	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and it has been identified that there are actions that will support delivery of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council’s existing Financial Inclusion Strategy has been refreshed to respond to the change in need since the Strategy’s original inception in 2021.
- 2.2 The current [Financial Inclusion Strategy](#) covers the period 2021 until 2026. It was implemented in response to the negative economic impacts of the COVID- 19 pandemic.
- 2.3 The Strategy was due a refresh at a mid-point, particularly as the landscape in terms of financial exclusion and need is continuing to shift with the cost-of-living crisis and its wider impacts.
- 2.4 The existing action plan delivered a number of successful outcomes. These included:
- Delivering the One View project, using predictive analytics and data to prevent homeless supporting households at risk of crisis.
 - Utilising the Policy in Practice (LIFT Dashboard) to run Campaigns to increase the take of unclaimed benefits including Pension Credit, Council Tax Support and Severe Disability Premium
 - Increasing digital access with to increase uptake of Benefits. Training sessions delivered at Trinity House Community Hub

- Working with Southeast Water and using data to help low-income households to reduce their water costs by accessing social tariff.
- Designing an 8-page cost of living support information pull-out which was included in the Council's in-house magazine 'Borough Insight' delivered to 81,542 households in Maidstone.
- Organising and delivering a volunteering and funding event to groups across the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) with 1:1 mentoring sessions and keynote speakers.
- Supporting 56 groups with 3 rounds of funding totalling £142,305 from the Council's Community Resilience Grant Funding to support communities in their recovery from the pandemic.
- Delivery of the Household Support Fund, enabling a Welfare Fund for those in temporary housing to move into permanent housing, food larders for those experiencing food scarcity, and it has provided a Hardship Fund accessible to all residents experiencing financial hardship and A Welfare Officer post to support income maximisation and reduce debt.

2.5 It is proposed that some of these initiatives remain in the revised strategy as ongoing workstreams that continue to positively impact financial exclusion in Maidstone.

2.6 The current Strategy focuses on the following priority areas:

1. Maximising income for those who are at risk of or are in financial crisis.
2. Ensuring that residents experiencing problem debt receive appropriate and timely advice and support.
3. Fuel and water poverty - supporting residents to lower their energy and other household costs.
4. Supporting residents to gain the necessary skills and access to basic financial services to better manage their money.

2.7 The refreshed strategy has been informed by national and local context and led by data and insight. The rising global and UK cost of living, driven by increased food and energy prices, compounded by the conflict in Ukraine and across the world alongside the and the ongoing COVID-19 recovery has had an impact on Maidstone residents. This has led to a decrease in levels of financial resilience and an increase in need for support among some of the borough's most vulnerable. This includes low-income households, those with disabilities, refugees, as well as pensioners and unemployed residents.

2.8 In terms of the local context for Maidstone, data tells us that:

- Maidstone has four areas of deprivation which are within the top 10% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.
- 3,172 households are living in relative poverty with a monthly income that is, on average, £340.00 below the poverty line¹
- In October 2023 13,857 Maidstone residents were on Universal Credit, an increase of 9.4% on the previous year.

¹ <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/deprivation-and-poverty#tab-2>

- Unemployment across the borough stands at 3%, with High Street (6.9%), Park Wood (4.5%), Fant (3.5%) and North wards (3.0%) having the highest unemployment rates.
- 2.9 It is the impact of financial exclusion that the revised strategy and action plan seeks to respond to. Individuals and communities without access to common financial services are often, but not exclusively, excluded because of their socio-economic status. Financial exclusion creates barriers not only to financial services such as benefits and debt advice but also to education and employment and negatively impacts physical and mental health with reduced access to basic needs such food and warmth.
- 2.10 The revised strategy has been structured around 4 key priorities that support the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan and will contribute to the outcomes of its priorities: A Thriving Place and Homes and Communities and its cross-cutting objective: Deprivation is reduced, and social mobility is improved.
- 2.11 Essential to the Council's commitment to economic prosperity and a 'thriving place' are education and employment. In creating these opportunities, not only are skill levels increased, but the earning potential of residents is raised. This is reflected in Priority 1: Access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice and Priority 3: Education and employment in this Strategy.
- 2.12 There is an intrinsic link between health and housing and the consequences of poor health and housing on financial capabilities and vice versa. This strategy will seek to address those underlying causes through holistic and complimentary initiatives. This is reflected in Priority 2: Mental health and wellbeing and Priority 4: Food and fuel poverty in this strategy.
- 2.13 Each of the four priority areas within the revised strategy document include a number of commitments with associated actions to ensure their delivery.
- 2.14 Key to the successful delivery the strategy is ongoing collaboration, between internal services and external partners. This join up is illustrated across a number of actions in all four priorities, for example:
- Implementing 'a no wrong door' policy to ensure a joined-up approach to services relating to financial inclusion with local partners.
 - Partnering with local banks, GP surgeries, local chemists and the Job Centre to support those affected by domestic and/or financial abuse through the initiative 'Ask Ani'
 - Working with national and local organisations to advance physical access to good food in the borough (including looking into the overall nutritional value of emergency food aid).
 - Delivery of events including the annual Domestic Abuse Wellbeing Network event and the bi-annual Reframe for Resilience: Being Trauma Aware in Our Community

Next Steps

- 2.15 Once approved by Cabinet the updated Strategy document will be published (*subject to design changes*) on the Council's website and shared with responsible officers to ensure actions are delivered.

2.16 The action plan will continue to be monitored by the Inclusion Board and updates on the plan will be reported to the Cabinet Member.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The report asks the Committee to note the update and consider and recommend to Cabinet the Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and action plan (refresh).

3.2 Alternatively, the Committee could choose to recommend changes to the Strategy document, its areas of focus, add or remove actions from the action plan or ask for additional work to be completed.

3.3 The Committee could choose to recommend to Cabinet to retain the existing strategy and action plan. This would not be recommended as it would likely contribute to an increase in financial exclusion and result in negative consequences for some of the Council's statutory service areas, particularly homelessness.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Committee note the update on the existing strategy and action plan and recommend the refreshed strategy to cabinet as the new actions and themes have been informed by national and local changes and represent the best actions the Council can take at this time to support local residents.

5. RISK

5.1 National and local data insight identifies that financial exclusion is prevalent and needs to be addressed. Responding effectively to financial exclusion will help maximise opportunities for residents by removing barriers to services and maximising income. Increased financial exclusion has negative consequences for some of the Council's statutory service areas, particularly homelessness. Not responding to financial exclusion increases the risk to the Council in terms of its ability to meet a growing, local need.

5.2 The Council included Poverty as a local protected characteristic as part its Equalities Impact Assessment process. This forms part of its Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act 2010 and ensures that the financial impact of the Council's decision making is considered for all residents. This strategy demonstrates that ongoing commitment.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Progress on the existing Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan has been monitored by the Inclusion Board. Updates as part of the refresh of the strategy and action plan have also informed discussions with Wider Leadership Team and Cabinet.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Once approved by Cabinet the updated Strategy will be published on the Council's website (*subject to design changes*) and shared with responsible officers to ensure actions are delivered. The action plan will continue to be monitored by the Inclusion Board and updates on the plan will be reported to the Cabinet Member.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and Action Plan (Draft)
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Maidstone Borough Council
**Preventing Financial
Exclusion Strategy**



2024-2027
www.maidstone.gov.uk





FOREWORD

Claudine Russell, Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Arts and Leader of the Council.

45

Maidstone Borough Council's commitment to its residents is set out in our **Strategic Plan 2019-2045**, which sets the vision for the future, recognising that as a Council, we need to maintain the ability to be agile and responsive to changing needs. The past few years have presented significant challenges for everyone. The impact of a global pandemic, our recovery from it and the cost-of-living crisis have heightened the need for us to support our communities to be resilient.

A key feature of our Strategic plan is collaboration. In this Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy, we recognise the work we have achieved together in recent years – in partnership with our communities and local and national partners; from the individuals and community groups across Maidstone, including our Parish Councils who we have been fortunate to work with, and alongside, to our local, strategic partners.

Working together helps ensure that we utilise the available resources to increase accessibility and maximise support for our communities.

Essential to the Council's commitment to economic prosperity and a 'thriving place' are education and employment. In creating these opportunities, not only are skill levels increased, but the earning potential of our residents are raised. This is reflected in Priority 1: Access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice and Priority 3: Education and employment in this Strategy.

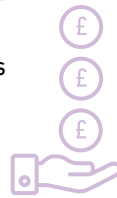
There is an intrinsic link between health and housing and the consequences of poor health and housing on financial capabilities and vice versa. This strategy will seek to address those underlying causes through holistic and complimentary initiatives. This is reflected in **Priority 2**: Mental health and wellbeing and **Priority 4**: Food and fuel poverty in this strategy.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to supporting vulnerable residents to ensure no one is left behind. On 25 January 2023, The Cabinet agreed that Poverty would be included as an additional, protected characteristic, as part of its Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act 2010. Those on low incomes and with certain protected characteristics are more likely to be paying extra costs for essentials, however, it is also important when considering the impact of Council decisions to look beyond preconceived ideas of poverty and disadvantage and consider the impact of poverty more holistically. This strategy is reflective of this assertion.

► **This strategy, and accompanying action plan, responds to local need and has been informed by local and national data and insight, this will provide an ongoing measurement of impact and inform its direction going forward.**

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Council's **Community Resilience Grant Fund** was established in 2020/21 to support our Voluntary and Community Sector with an ability to effectively support communities in their recovery from the pandemic. **To date three rounds of funding have been delivered:**



March 2022



We supported 20 groups with projects designed to build stronger communities and help prevent isolation and loneliness. **Total awarded £58,429.00.**

December 2022



We supported 17 groups with projects designed to build stronger communities and help residents with mental health and wellbeing. **Total awarded £29,586.00**

August 2023



We supported 19 groups with projects designed to improve physical and mental wellbeing. **Total awarded £54,290.00.**

✔ Our Helping You Home Scheme assists those who are ready to be discharged from hospital by preparing their homes in advance to ensure they are safe and have necessary support in place. **During 2020/21, 496 referrals were successfully dealt with under our Helping You Home Scheme**, despite the challenge that the pandemic brought.

✔ In partnership with Kent County Council, **we have delivered 6 bi-annual Reframe for Resilience: Being Trauma Aware in Our Community events** targeted at professionals to develop understanding around how to be trauma aware within an organisation

✔ In partnership with **Beam**, we have **supported 50 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness with finding employment and stable accommodation**

✔ The Council delivered **23 business support workshops in 2023 helping a total of 1,127 local businesses.**

Through the Household Support Fund, the Council has helped:

- **503 households with crisis support vouchers for food and fuel;**
- **292 households using the Hardship Fund for essential items or to reduce debt;**
- **93 households using the Welfare Fund; and**
- **Has increased income by a total of £62,913.85 in unclaimed benefits per annum.**



Throughout 2023, **the Council launched three community larders in Shepway, Park Wood and Trinity House which help 200-250 households each week** with food insecurity, improving their health, and supporting them with the increasing cost of living.

62 Voluntary and Community Sector groups have been funded to provide food, fuel and wider household essentials through local initiatives as part of a grant scheme funded from the Household Support Fund. **£294,800 has been awarded across the four tranches of the fund.**



The Council launched a pop-up Eco-Hub information centre in The Mall in 2023 to support residents in living more sustainably, saving money and reducing their carbon footprint **resulting in a total of 1926 visitors.**

We delivered **500 eco-bags** to residents that contained information and resources enabling them to live more sustainably.



We have acted against landlords with significant hazards in their homes, including upgrading energy efficiency and heating systems. **The EPC of 652 properties have been improved so far.**

OUR VISION AND PRIORITIES



In recent years the term ‘financial inclusion’ has become more prevalent in our everyday vocabulary.

However, with all of the focus on financial inclusion, far less people talk about or define financial exclusion. It is the impact of financial exclusion that this strategy seeks to respond to.

Individuals and communities without access to common financial services are often, but not exclusively, excluded because of their socio-economic status. Financial exclusion creates barriers not only to financial services such as benefits and debt advice but also to education and employment and negatively impacts physical and mental health with reduced access to basic needs such food and warmth.

By responding holistically to financial exclusion across 4 priority areas so we can maximise opportunities for our residents. Financial inclusion is a priority for the Council, and it will challenge exclusion wherever it occurs:

1

Priority 1: Access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice

2

Priority 2: Recognising the impacts on physical and mental wellbeing

3

Priority 3: Improving chances, through education, skills and employment

4

Priority 4: Tackling food and fuel poverty

OUR VISION AND PRIORITIES

Continued

This Strategy supports the Council's Strategic Priorities:

A Thriving Place and Homes and Communities and its cross-cutting objective:
Deprivation is reduced, and social mobility is improved.

48



NATIONAL CONTEXT

The rising global and UK cost of living, driven by increased food and energy prices, compounded by the conflict in Ukraine and the ongoing COVID-19 recovery, poses intricate challenges.

In November 2023, the UK unemployment rate stood at 4.2% with 1.46 million people aged 16+ unemployed. Unemployment levels increased by 16,000 since the previous quarter, by 216,000 on the year, and were 84,000 above pre-pandemic levels¹. Approximately 5.4 million people in the UK were claiming Universal Credit, up from around 4.4 million in January 2020, while 61% of that cohort were unemployed².

When asked about their experiences of paying energy bills in January of this year, 41% of UK adults found it very or somewhat challenging to afford them, while around half (45%) were reducing their fuel usage, including gas and electricity, due to the increasing cost of living³. 62% of adults reported spending less on non-essentials due to increased living costs⁴ and 27% of households stated they would not be able to afford an unexpected expense of £850 or more, with higher percentages among disabled adults (40%), renters (53%), and disabled adults who were renting (66%)⁵.

Although average house prices decreased by 1.2%, private rental prices in the UK have experienced a record-high growth rate, surging by 6.2% in the year to November 2023, marking the largest annual percentage change since 2016⁶.

Over the two-year period from November 2021 to November 2023, the overall price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by approximately 27%, compared to a 9% increase in the preceding 10 years. As such, nearly 4 in 10 (38%) adults reported spending more than usual on food shopping in the past two weeks, while approximately a third (36%) said they were buying less food, with higher food costs cited as the most common reason⁷.

These statistics indicate financial strain, with a notable percentage struggling to afford energy bills, leading to reduced fuel usage and cutbacks on both essential and non-essential spending.

They also expose financial disparities, particularly among disabled adults and renters, and a pervasive impact on daily life in our communities. Addressing these multifaceted factors is central to fostering economic resilience and ensuring a sustainable, equitable future for Maidstone.

1. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9366/>
2. https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=13383&mod-period=48&mod-area=E92000001&mod-group=AllRegions_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costoflivinginsights/energy>
4. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costoflivinginsights/spending>
5. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costofliving/latestinsights#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20living%20has,putting%20further%20pressure%20on%20prices.>
6. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/december2023>
7. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/november2023>

LOCAL CONTEXT

Low levels of financial resilience following the period of austerity and welfare reform combined with the impacts locally of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis have led to a decrease in levels of financial resilience and an increase in need for support among some of the borough's most vulnerable. This includes low-income households, those with disabilities, refugees, as well as pensioners and unemployed residents.

Maidstone is often considered to be an affluent borough in terms of financial capability and overall deprivation; however, it has four areas of high deprivation which are within the top 10% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. These four areas are located within the following three wards - Shepway South, Park Wood and High Street⁸. There are 3,172 households living in relative poverty in Maidstone with a monthly income that is, on average, £340.00 below the poverty line⁹.

Unemployment across the borough stands at 3%, with the High Street (6.9%), Park Wood (4.5%), Fant (3.5%) and North (3.0%) having the highest

Low levels of financial resilience following the period of austerity and welfare reform combined with the impacts locally of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis have led to a decrease in levels of financial resilience and an increase in need for support among some of the borough's most vulnerable. This includes low-income households, those with disabilities, refugees, as well as pensioners and unemployed residents.

unemployment rates. As of October 2023, 13,857 Maidstone residents were on Universal Credit, an increase of 9.4% on the previous year¹⁰.

This landscape has led to a rise in social welfare needs. Currently, 9,505 households in Maidstone are receiving council tax support. There are 4,022 children living in families with absolute low income, representing 11.9% of the child population in the area¹¹. Fuel poverty affects 5,855 households, equating to 8.5% of all households, while food security issues are also prevalent with 8.8% of households struggling to afford food, 9.7% concerned about their food supply, and 4.2% experiencing hunger¹².

The 2022/23 Council Residents' Survey reflects these sentiments, with 40% of low-income households stating they had stopped buying essentials. 26% of respondents reported using a food bank, while nearly a third (27%) of households revealed they had to choose between heating and eating.

Those who are financially excluded, typically those facing poverty or disadvantage, often grapple with meeting basic living expenses, managing money,

and planning for the future. They may also struggle with problem debt, rent arrears, homelessness, and encounter barriers to mainstream financial services. We recognise that financial exclusion can impact individuals and groups that may not have previously engaged in support services or sought help before. It is essential this strategy responds to the wider impacts of financial exclusion to ensure that no one is left behind. The actions to support delivery of this strategy are data led and whilst responsive to crisis and immediate need, it is intended that this strategy will contribute to longer term impacts to increase financial inclusion in Maidstone.

8. English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

9. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/deprivation-and-poverty#tab-2>

10. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment>

11. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/deprivation-and-poverty#tab-2>

12. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/deprivation-and-poverty#tab-2>

PRIORITY 1

Access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice



Why is this important?

► **Income maximisation and access to financial support is essential to the Council's ability to deliver on its strategic priority: A Thriving Place.**

Priority 1 aims to provide residents with access to skills and awareness of effective debt management tools to increase financial literacy and resilience. Together, access to financial services, income maximisation and debt advice fosters economic empowerment by covering basic needs, promoting savings and investments, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

In 2021/22, 6 million people were in 'very deep' poverty with an income far below the standard poverty line with the poorest families' income standing 59% below that line. In 2022, 3.8 million people experienced destitution where they could not afford to meet their most basic needs to stay warm, dry, clean and fed¹³. The number of people living in absolute poverty in the UK is projected to

rise by 300,000 in 2025¹⁴, whilst a record number of income-related benefits and social tariffs remain unclaimed¹⁵ and national debt continues to mount¹⁶

As of December 2023, there were 10,156 low-income households in Maidstone with 1,147 households in High Street ward and 1,053 in Park Wood¹⁷. 3% of the working age population were unemployed and in October 2023, 13,857 residents were on Universal Credit compared with 12,665 the previous year¹⁸. Throughout 2023, there has been a steady increase in the number of residents claiming Universal Credit, and 2023 represents the year in which the number of people claiming Universal Credit is at its highest since 2018¹⁹.

Further to this, the Digital Exclusion Index ranks one area in the Shepway South ward in the top 10% of most digitally excluded areas in the UK, with other areas of concern including Harrietsham and Lenham, Shepway North, East, Allington and Fant²⁰.

Low-income and digitally excluded households may be less resilient when faced with financial challenges putting them at greater risk of homelessness, spiralling debt, an inability to meet basic living costs, and/or simply unable to claim support available and suffer unnecessary hardship as a result.

13. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>

14. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2023/09/LSO-Summer-Update-2023.pdf>

15. <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/new-analysis-missing-out-19-billion-of-support-goes-unclaimed-each-year/>

16. <https://moneyadvisor.co.uk/average-debt-uk/#:~:text=Total%20debt%20in%20the%20UK,mortgages%2C%20stood%20at%20%2A365%2C756.>

17. Policy in Practice Low Income Family Tracker dashboard.

18. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment>

19. The transition from legacy benefit systems onto Universal Credit can account for some of this increase.

20. <https://britishredcross.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4b599f94d2d04d6496cc8b2d89911f62>

PRIORITY 1

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



52

Data-led Interventions

- 1 In partnership with our local registered social housing landlords, we have delivered campaigns to maximise the take up of unclaimed benefits amongst low-income households including Pension Credit and Council Tax Reduction (ongoing).
- 2 We have used Xantura's One View data platform to identify households who are at risk of homelessness due to financial exclusion and engaged with them via targeted interventions to prevent homelessness and improve financial resilience (ongoing).
- 3 Using Policy in Practice's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard, we have been able to quickly identify and access information on households in need of support, understand and improve residents' financial resilience, reduce problem debt, possible evictions and homelessness and food and fuel poverty, and increase maximum income of households across the borough. This has included campaigns to increase uptake of Council Tax support, Pension Credit and Severe Disability Premium (ongoing).

PRIORITY 1

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Income Maximisation and Debt Advice

- 1 We have assisted individuals with sustaining accommodation or moving on from temporary accommodation with targeted use of discretionary housing payments and exceptional hardship payments (funding due to end).
- 2 Maidstone's Citizen Advice Bureau has piloted a debt advice provision at the Council's community hub Trinity House, supporting residents in moving from temporary accommodation into permanent housing (ongoing).
- 3 The Council has created a single point of contact for residents experiencing financial hardship which acts as a conduit for internal and external services and aims to maximise support for vulnerable residents including help with completing application forms and signposting (ongoing).

PRIORITY 1

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



54

Partnership Working

1

In partnership with local organisations, we have delivered cost of living roadshow events across the borough which provided support and signposting to internal and external key services such as Council Tax, Benefits, Housing and Homelessness Prevention, Citizens Advice, Maidstone Mind, Princess Project, Fusion Healthy Living Centre, Involve, Golding Homes and more (one-off).

2

The Council has established an Inclusion Board comprised of representatives from key council services and external partners who monitor and respond to inclusion needs in areas such as digital, finance, health and housing (ongoing).

3

Working with the Illegal Money Lending Team and Golding Homes, we have delivered a number of events centred around the use of loan sharks to help increase awareness and engagement (ongoing).

PRIORITY 1

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Communication and Signposting

1

We have designed an 8-page cost of living support information pull-out which was included in the Council's in-house magazine 'Borough Insight' delivered to 81,542 households in Maidstone (one-off).

2

The Council organised and delivered a volunteering and funding event to groups across the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) with 1:1 mentoring sessions and keynote speakers (ongoing).

3

We have provided online events to share information and best practice on new and emerging funding and initiatives with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) (ongoing).

AREAS OF FOCUS

Priority 1: Access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice

Commitments	Actions	Responsibility	Start	Finish
<p>We will use data and partnership working to implement a place-based approach through service mapping and data sharing to ensure we have enough resources in the right places.</p>	<p>Ensure all resources regarding financial services, maximising income and debt advice are in one place and up to date on the Maidstone Borough Council website. NEW</p>	<p>Transformation and Digital Services/Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
	<p>Work with partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to fill the gaps identified through service mapping and data sharing. NEW</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement/Information and Analytics</p>		
	<p>Support the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through the remaining Community Resilience Fund with a small seasonal funding pot e.g., summer holidays and winter for schemes to support access to financial services, maximising income and debt advice. ONGOING</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
<p>We will work with local partners to ensure residents in need of support are never turned away or passed from service to service or organisation to organisation.</p>	<p>Implement a 'no wrong door' initiative via the Inclusion Board; explore with Inclusion Board partners an agreed mechanism to share information that provides immediate local join up, information sharing, contact and communication on all matters relating to financial inclusion. NEW</p>	<p>Inclusion Board/Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		

56

<p>We will support vulnerable groups at risk of financial abuse</p>	<p>Partner with local banks, GP surgeries, local chemists and the JobCentre to support those affected by domestic and/or financial abuse through the initiative 'Ask Ani'. NEW</p>	Housing and Inclusion		
	<p>Introduce a Housing Officer Domestic Abuse Specialist (HADAS) officer and continue to provide Domestic Abuse Champions. NEW</p>	Housing and Inclusion		
	<p>Continue to adhere to our statutory duty under the Modern Slavery Act in responding to Modern Slavery and Trafficking concerns, including referring and signposting potential victims to local services and support. ONGOING</p>	Community Protection		
<p>57 We will use predictive and preventative data to identify trends in vulnerable households that may benefit from support to increase financial inclusion.</p>	<p>Use monthly LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) data to deliver Pension Credit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme campaigns to increase uptake of available public funds. ONGOING</p>	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	<p>Use the OneView system to identify households who are at risk of homelessness due to financial exclusion and engage with them via targeted interventions to prevent homelessness and improve financial health. ONGOING</p>	Housing		

<p>We will help residents access support and funding to increase their income and financial resilience.</p>	<p>Provide single point of contact for residents, internal services and external organisations requiring support and advice in relation to financial hardship. ONGOING</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
	<p>Provide support and advice for residents with income maximisation, signposting and guidance including support with completing forms. ONGOING</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
	<p>Develop initiatives to support financial hardship including a means of providing crisis support. NEW</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
	<p>Deliver online events to share information and best practice on new and emerging funding and initiatives with the Voluntary and Community Sector. ONGOING</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
<p>58 We will inform and raise awareness of illegal money lenders and debt management.</p>	<p>Deliver events and awareness campaigns that offer practical financial advice and information on topics such as loan sharks, high-interest loans, illegal money lenders, high-cost credit among other things. ONGOING</p>	<p>Community Protection</p>		
	<p>Delivery of a debt advice service at Trinity House to support those in temporary housing in partnership with Maidstone's Citizens Advice Bureau. ONGOING</p>	<p>Community Protection</p>		

Connections to other plans

Strategic Plan 2023-2045
Domestic Abuse Action Plan
Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy
Community Safety Partnership Plan
Digital Strategy

PRIORITY 2

Recognising the impacts on physical and mental wellbeing



Why is this important?

► **Supporting physical and mental wellbeing can increase personal resilience and contribute to the Council's ability to deliver on its strategic priority: Homes and Communities.**

Priority 2 recognises that experiencing financial exclusion can adversely affect one's mental health and wellbeing. The impact of money worries, stress from creditors, the impact of going without essentials, and limited social activities due to financial constraints may contribute to a variety of mental health and wellbeing issues. Similarly, mental health conditions may impede the ability of residents to navigate the financial services market, affecting their capacity to choose and use appropriate products for money management.

Our objective is to respond appropriately to this link by continuing to maximize partnership working to support vulnerable groups and strengthen communities across the borough.

As of March 2023, an estimated 1 in 6 UK adults had experienced a 'common mental disorder' such as depression or anxiety in the past week, whilst 3.25m people accessed NHS mental health, learning disability and autism services in 2021/22²¹.

In February 2023, 1.5% of Maidstone's working-age population were receiving Incapacity Benefit or Employment & Support Allowance due to mental health related conditions with the highest number of claimants in Shepway South (3.5%), Bridge (2.3%), High Street (2.1%) and Park Wood (2.1%)²³.

The 2023 Community Needs Index ranked Maidstone 67.6, slightly below Kent's broader score of 69.0 but above England's national score at 64.3. Shepway South ward has three areas in the top 100 for the greatest community need, with Westmorland Road area ranking 26th²⁴.

The 'Connectedness' score, assessing connectivity to key services, digital infrastructure, isolation, and local job market strength, is 39.7 for Maidstone, below the national average of 43.4. Shepway South (75.2), North Downs (70.5), Headcorn (60.9), and Marden and Yalding (59.7) show higher connectedness scores, indicating greater need in those areas²⁵

21. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldfinexcl/132/13209.htm>

22. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06988/>

23. Accessed via Local Insight

24. <https://ocsi.uk/left-behind-neighbourhoods/>

25. <https://ocsi.uk/left-behind-neighbourhoods/>

PRIORITY 2

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Community grants to support vulnerable groups and strengthen communities

1

The Council's Community Resilience Grant Fund was established in 2020/21 to support our Voluntary and Community Sector with an ability to effectively support communities in their recovery from the pandemic. To date three rounds of funding have been delivered. (Ongoing)

1a

March 2022 – we supported 20 groups with projects designed to build stronger communities and help prevent isolation and loneliness. Total awarded £58,429.00.

1b

December 2022 – we supported 17 groups with projects designed to build stronger communities and help residents with mental health and wellbeing. Total awarded £29,586.00

1c

August 2023 – we supported 19 groups with projects designed to improve physical and mental wellbeing. Total awarded £54,290.00.

PRIORITY 2

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE

Partnership working

- 1 In partnership with the NHS, we delivered Tier 2 weight management classes to increase physical activity and improve mental health (one-off).
- 2 In September 2023, the Maidstone Domestic Abuse Forum hosted a full day Domestic Abuse Wellbeing Network (DAWN) event aimed at both professionals and the general public to meet a variety of organisations able to support those experiencing, or that have experienced, abuse (ongoing).
- 3 Our Helping You Home Scheme assists those who are ready to be discharged from hospital by preparing their homes in advance to ensure they are safe and have necessary support in place. During 2020/21, 496 referrals were successfully dealt with under our Helping You Home Scheme, despite the challenge that the pandemic brought (ongoing).
- 4 The Council co-ordinates and chairs the multi-agency Modern Slavery Working Group that is able to signpost and refer potential victims to support provided by the Council (ongoing).
- 5 Our rough sleepers' initiative provides those experiencing homelessness and complex mental health needs with access to clinical health practitioners and consultant psychiatrists 1-2 days a week at Trinity House (ongoing).
- 6 In partnership with Kent County Council, we have delivered 6 bi-annual Reframe for Resilience: Being Trauma Aware in Our Community events targeted at professionals to develop understanding around how to be trauma aware within an organisation (ongoing).
- 7 We have provided homeless people and those in temporary housing with access to a healthcare nurse at Trinity House (ongoing).
- 8 We worked in partnership with Maidstone United Football Club to deliver a White Ribbon event to help raise awareness of domestic abuse and support available in November 2022 (one-off).
- 9 The Council operates a One Stop Shop every Tuesday between 9:30 and 11:30 at Trinity House which offers free advice, information and support on domestic abuse from a range of agencies (ongoing).

PRIORITY 2

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE

Supporting staff and residents

- 1 In partnership with Mental Health England, the Council has trained some of its staff in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), the purpose of which is to offer employees a point of contact if they are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress (ongoing).
- 2 We have reviewed every internal post according to the level of contact with children and/or vulnerable adults and our Safeguarding Group has approved the minimum training requirements for each contact level (ongoing).
- 3 We also have 13 Safeguarding Champions – members of staff who act as points of contact for safeguarding concerns and are responsible for reviewing policies and action plans, conducting prevention work and sharing information (ongoing).
- 4 Our Housing team have embedded a trauma informed approach to service delivery for frontline staff (ongoing).
- 5 We have implemented a multi-agency online platform to improve local service provision to those who are at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse and raise awareness of support available (ongoing).
- 6 Together with Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, we provide monthly health checks at Trinity House for anyone with an open housing case (ongoing).
- 7 The Council delivers the Flexible Crisis Fund through professional referrals via the Domestic Abuse Forum for essential items for those in financial hardship at risk or fleeing domestic abuse when other avenues of support are unavailable (ongoing).
- 8 We have signposted residents to national grant funding available from the Department for Work and Pensions and the Home Office to support victims of domestic violence and abuse (ongoing).

PRIORITY 2

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE

Supporting staff and residents

Continued

- 63
- 9 We have 9 Domestic Abuse Champions who receive ongoing enhanced training to support residents and to inform wider internal staff and service areas. This supports the delivery of the Council's Domestic Abuse Action Plan and the delivery of the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation (ongoing).
- 10 The Council have delivered and maintain a digital directory which acts as an information pack on domestic abuse, what can be done about it and where to get local, specialised help, advice and support (ongoing).
- 11 Together with West Kent Health and Care Partnership, we conducted two health inequalities assessments in Shepway and Park Wood resulting in further mental health and wellbeing support (one-off).

12

In partnership with Fusion Healthy Living, we hold a monthly NHS Hypertension Heroes initiative at Park Wood Community Larder which supports residents with getting their blood pressure checked without having to make a GP appointment (ongoing).



AREAS OF FOCUS

Priority 2: Recognising the impact on physical and mental wellbeing.

Commitments	Actions	Responsibility	Start	Finish
<p>We will seek to respond to the impact on mental and physical health and financial capability when supporting residents with financial hardship</p>	Gather data by developing and including wellbeing questions in the Council's Resident Survey to support the needs of residents. NEW	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	Work to establish the link between and impact of financial hardship and mental health in Maidstone to increase residents' ability to cope. NEW	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	In partnership with Fusion Healthy Living, continue to deliver a monthly Hypertension Heroes initiative at Park Wood Community Larder. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	Undertake a review of the Council's policies and strategies to ensure mental health and wellbeing are addressed appropriately. NEW	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	Continue to deliver the Helping You Home Scheme to support residents being discharged from hospital. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	Provide access to clinical health practitioners and consultant psychiatrists 1-2 days a week at Trinity House to those experiencing homelessness and complex mental health needs. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		

64

	Support the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through the remaining Community Resilience Fund with a small seasonal funding pot e.g., summer holidays or winter for schemes to support physical and mental wellbeing. ONGOING	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
We will support vulnerable groups at risk of financial abuse.	Signpost residents to Kent County Council's public repository of support for mental health and the Help Through Hardship scheme by Mind, Citizens Advice and the Trussell Trust which helps tackle poverty and poor mental health by offering joined up services and advice. NEW	Transformation and Digital/Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	Maintain the existing digital directory which acts as an information pack on domestic abuse, what can be done about it and where to get local, specialised help, advice and support. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	Deliver trauma awareness for front line staff to increase access to services for vulnerable groups. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	Deliver the Flexible Crisis Fund through professional referrals via the Domestic Abuse Forum for essential items for those in financial hardship at risk or fleeing domestic abuse when other avenues of support are unavailable. NEW	Housing and Inclusion		
	Continue to provide Mental Health First Aiders, Domestic Abuse Champions and Safeguarding Champions for staff. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion /HR		

	Organise and deliver the annual Domestic Abuse Wellbeing Network event focused on service provision and barriers to accessing support which includes addressing financial hardship and improving access to employment. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	In partnership with Kent County Council, deliver the bi-annual Reframe for Resilience: Being Trauma Aware in Our Community to ensure service delivery is trauma informed and not contributing to financial exclusion. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
	Continue to deliver a One Stop Shop at Trinity House to offer free advice, information and support on domestic abuse from a range of agencies. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		

99 Connections to other plans

Domestic Abuse Action Plan
 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

PRIORITY 3

Improving chances through education, skills and employment



Why is this important?

► **Education and employment opportunities are essential to increasing skills levels earning potential, contributing to the long-term outcomes for the Council's strategic priority: A Thriving Place.**

Employment provides a stable income for basic needs and enhances financial service eligibility, while education imparts skills for employment and enables informed decision-making. Both drive social mobility and reduce inequalities, contributing to community development and improved living standards.

In November 2023, the UK unemployment rate stood at 4.2% with 1.46 million people aged 16+ unemployed. Unemployment levels increased by 16,000 since the previous quarter, by 216,000 on the year, and were 84,000 above pre-pandemic level²⁶. Approximately 5.4 million people in the UK were claiming Universal Credit, up from around 2.4 million in January 2020, and 61% of that cohort were unemployed²⁷.

As of August 2023, the number of young people who were aged 16 to 24 years and not in education, employment or training (NEET) increased in April to June 2023 to an estimate of 794,000, up from 770,000 in January to March 2023²⁸.

Unemployment across the borough currently stands at 3%, with the High Street (6.9%), Park Wood (4.5%), Fant (3.5%) and North (3.0%) having the highest unemployment rates. Latest statistics show that 13,857 Maidstone residents are on Universal Credit, an increase of 9.4% on the previous year²⁹.

As of Census Day 2021, 17.4% of adults (aged 16+) in Maidstone had no qualifications, while Shepway South ward had the highest percentage of adults with no qualifications (30.7%) followed by Shepway North (23.6%) and Leeds (20.4%)³⁰.



26. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9366/>

27. https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=13383&mod-period=48&mod-area=E92000001&mod-group=AllRegions_England&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup

28. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/august2023>

29. <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment>

30. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021

PRIORITY 3

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Employment

1

The Council delivered an annual jobs fair in July 2023 with the next one due to take place in Spring 2024 (ongoing).

2

In partnership with Beam, we have supported 50 people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness with finding employment and stable accommodation (ongoing).

3

We held an employment workshop for Ukrainian refugees at Trinity House in March 2023 (one-off).

4

The Council has continued its commitment to the Armed Forces Act 2021. It included the Armed Forces as a local protected characteristic as part of its Equalities Impact Assessment in January 2023 to reinforce its commitment to serving personnel, veterans and spouses and to ensure due regard in line with the Armed Forces Act 2021 (ongoing).

5

We have enabled an environment for jointly tackling issues with Anchor Institutions in which we share best practice, opportunities to work together and disseminate information regarding education and employment opportunities across the borough (ongoing).

PRIORITY 3

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Business Support

1

The Council delivered 23 business support workshops in 2023 helping a total of 1,127 local businesses (ongoing).

2

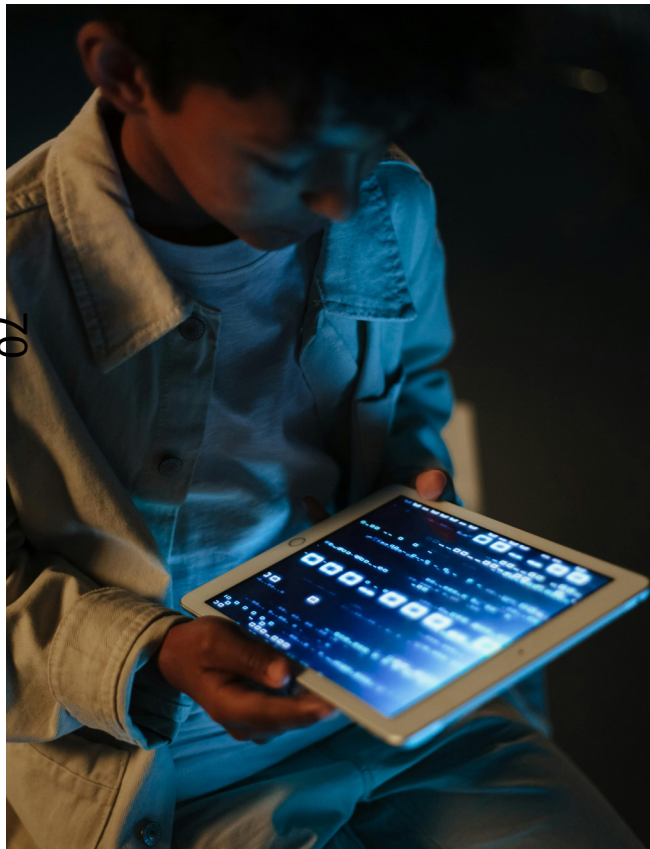
We work with the Kent Foundation Charity on an ongoing basis to target 17–30-year-olds with business startup support and mentoring (ongoing).

3

We continue to promote and support the Rebel Business School self-employment programme across Kent (ongoing).

PRIORITY 3

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Digital Accessibility

1

The Council supports digital connectivity in rural communities via the Building Digital UK Fund from January 2024 (ongoing).

2

We have supported residents with basic IT skills, enabling them to complete online benefit applications (ongoing).

3

In partnership with DigitalKent.uk, digital advisors attend our Shepway, Park Wood and Trinity House Community Ladders on a monthly basis to support residents with digital assistance (ongoing).

PRIORITY 3

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Education/Skills

- 1 The Council works with the government and ESOL providers to deliver English language courses to support refugees through the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement Programme (ongoing).
- 2 We have shared funded basic skills training provision and courses with community-based colleagues to support residents (ongoing).
- 3 The Council is Co-Chair of the District Contextual Safeguarding meeting where partners work together to support young people back into education, improving attendance and enabling a safe space (ongoing).

AREAS OF FOCUS

Priority 3: Improving chances through education, skills and employment.

Commitments	Actions	Responsibility	Start	Finish
<p>We will facilitate and support access to education and employment within the wider community.</p>	<p>Develop a webpage for signposting to local education and employment offers including volunteering opportunities to raise awareness, for example Mid Kent College and JobCentrePlus Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) scheme. NEW</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement /Economic Development and Regeneration</p>		
	<p>Participate in an ongoing partnership with Beam to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness into employment as well as suitable accommodation. ONGOING</p>	<p>Housing</p>		
	<p>Delivery of an annual jobs fair. ONGOING</p>	<p>Economic Development and Regeneration</p>		
	<p>Support the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through the remaining Community Resilience Fund with a small seasonal funding pot, e.g., summer holidays and winter for schemes to support education, skills and employment. ONGOING</p>	<p>Policy, Communities and Engagement</p>		
	<p>Delivery of drop-in sessions to people under the age of 25 who are not in employment, education or training to support with professional development. NEW</p>	<p>Community Protection</p>		

72

	Support young people back into education via the District Contextual Safeguarding meeting. ONGOING	Community Protection		
	Continue to share funded basic skills training provision and courses with community-based colleagues to support residents. ONGOING	Economic Development and Regeneration		
	Fulfil our legislative responsibilities as part of the Armed Forces Act 2021. ONGOING	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	Facilitate Anchor Institutions to provide a forum for sharing best practice, opportunities to work together and disseminate information regarding education and employment opportunities across the borough. ONGOING	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	Work with the government and ESOL providers to deliver English language courses to support refugees through the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement Programme. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		
We will facilitate and support access to digital skills to help remove barriers to education and employment opportunities.	Support digital connectivity in Maidstone's rural communities to increase accessibility to education and employment opportunities (BDUK funding from January 2024). NEW	Economic Development and Regeneration		
	Continue to provide access to digital skills support at Trinity House. ONGOING	Housing and Inclusion		

<p>We will support local residents with enterprise and start-up training and opportunities.</p>	<p>Ensure that local residents – in particular young people – can access skills and employability support including specific opportunities for re-training, business start-up, and developing digital/e-commerce competencies. ONGOING</p>	<p>Economic Development and Regeneration</p>		
	<p>Work with partners to deliver a range of business support workshops in Maidstone via the Business Terrace and other channels. ONGOING</p>	<p>Economic Development and Regeneration</p>		
	<p>Continue to promote and support the Rebel Business School self-employment programme across Kent. ONGOING</p>	<p>Economic Development and Regeneration</p>		

Connections to other plans

- 74 Economic Development Strategy
- Community Protection Partnership Plan
- Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy

PRIORITY 4

Tackling food and fuel poverty



Why is this important?

► **Alleviating food scarcity and addressing fuel poverty will ensure fundamental needs are met. This will impact positively on all other priority areas of this strategy as well as contributing to the Council's ability to deliver on its strategic priority: Homes and Communities.**

Food and fuel poverty have far-reaching impacts on communities. Beyond affecting basic human needs and health, educational challenges may arise with children facing difficulties in concentration and academic performance, whilst vulnerable groups may come to rely on less sustainable energy sources and become less resilient to external shocks. Addressing these issues necessitates strengthening community resources and supporting financial inclusion.

In 2022, there were an estimated 13.4% of households (3.26 million) in fuel poverty in England, with the average fuel poverty gap estimated to be £338, an increase of 33% since 2023³¹.

Citizens Advice reported a national surge in people seeking assistance for homelessness, food banks, and energy bill support due to the challenging cost of living crisis, while in 2022/23 the Trussell Trust supplied 2.99 million three-day emergency food parcels, the highest recorded number and an increase of 37% on the previous year³².

While Maidstone has the third lowest fuel poverty rate overall among all Kent local authorities at 8.1%, the wards with the highest fuel poverty rates in the borough as of 2021 were North Downs (13.7%), Sutton Valence and Langley (11.6%), Marden and Yalding (10.9%) and High Street (10.7%)³³. The food vulnerability index ranks Shepway South and Park Wood as areas of high vulnerability with scores of 361 and 300 respectively, with Maidstone as a whole scoring 200.0³⁴.

In recognising the extent of food vulnerability in Maidstone, over the course of 2023 the Council introduced three community food larders in Shepway,

Park Wood and Trinity House which received 449, 213, and 168 visits respectively in December 2023. The number of visits to each of the borough's community larders have increased since their inception, while a total of 126 signposting referrals have been made at the Shepway and Park Wood larders for further support. Similarly, data from FareShare Kent & Family Food Banks shows a growing need for residents requiring support, having provided 20,143 meals in 2023-24, an increase from 13,171 the previous year.

31. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63fcdcaa8fa8f527fe30db41/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-lilee-report-2023-2022-data.pdf>

32. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9209/>

33. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-2023-2021-data/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-in-england-2023-2021-data>

34. <https://britishredcross.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4b599f94d2d04d6496cc8b2d89911f62>

Community wellbeing and support

76

1

Through the Household Support Fund, the Council has been able to deliver a number of initiatives. The funding has supported a Welfare Fund for those in temporary housing to move into permanent housing, it has supported the Council's food larders for those experiencing food scarcity, and it has provided a Hardship Fund accessible to all residents experiencing financial hardship which has provided access to essential household items, crisis vouchers and help with debts. A Welfare Officer post has also been funded to provide advice, signposting, support with completing benefits and other applications to increase incomes and reduce debt. As a result, in 2023-24 we helped:

1a

503 households with crisis support vouchers for food and fuel

1b

292 households using the Hardship Fund for essential items or to reduce debt

1c

93 households using the Welfare Fund

1d

Increased income by a total of £62,913.85 in unclaimed benefits per annum.

2

Throughout 2023, the Council launched three community larders in Shepway, Park Wood and Trinity House which help 200-250 households each week with food insecurity, improving their health, and supporting them with the increasing cost of living (ongoing).

3

62 groups have been funded to provide food, fuel and wider household essentials through local initiatives as part of a grant scheme funded from the Household Support Fund. £294,800 has been awarded across the four tranches of the fund (The Council's ability to deliver these initiatives will be dependent on future funding awards from government).

PRIORITY 4

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



Housing standards and energy efficiency

1

We have partnered with Greater Southeast Net Zero Hub to deliver the Home Upgrade Grant to eligible households (ongoing).

2

In partnership with EON, we are working to extend ECO4 to more households (ongoing).

3

The Council are working to deliver various grants including the Home Hazard Grant, Disabled Facilities Grant, and Energy Efficiency Top-up Grant to support residents with fuel poverty (ongoing).

4

We have acted against landlords with significant hazards in their homes, including upgrading energy efficiency and heating systems. The EPC of 652 properties have been improved so far (ongoing).

5

We are working to encourage and signpost residents to participate in national schemes such as the Great British Insulation scheme, Solar Together and Social Housing Decarbonisation (ongoing).

PRIORITY 4

WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY DONE



78

Biodiversity, climate change and community education

1

We have provided energy savings tips and information to residents on the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity website (ongoing).

2

The Council launched a pop-up Eco-Hub information centre in The Mall in 2023 to support residents in living more sustainably, saving money and reducing their carbon footprint resulting in a total of 1926 visitors (ongoing).

3

We delivered 500 eco-bags to residents that contained information and resources enabling them to live more sustainably (one-off).

AREAS OF FOCUS

Priority 4: Priority 4: Tackling food and fuel poverty.				
Commitments	Actions	Responsibility	Start	Finish
<p>We will use data to identify residents experiencing food and/or fuel vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Continue to identify those at risk of food and fuel poverty using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard and the Xantura One View system to enable targeted intervention. ONGOING NEW FOCUS</p>	<p>Information and Analytics/ Housing</p>		
	<p>Data showing those entitled to Council Tax support will be shared with Southeast Water to increase access to social tariffs for residents on an ongoing basis (WaterSure scheme). ONGOING</p>	<p>Revenues and Benefits</p>		
<p>We will work with partners in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors to maximise access to funding, awareness raising and support.</p>	<p>Continue to work with partners to address fuel poverty by providing information, including money saving initiatives, grants/funding, and signposting, to residents and landlords via email, letters, press releases and making information available on the Council website. ONGOING</p>	<p>Housing Standards/ Biodiversity and Climate Change</p>		
	<p>Deliver a pop-up information centre aimed at supporting residents to live more sustainably, save money and reduce their carbon footprint. ONGOING</p>	<p>Biodiversity and Climate Change</p>		

79

	<p>Hold outreach and surgery sessions with fuel poverty providers and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) at local community hubs with targeted sessions on maximising income. NEW</p>	Biodiversity and Climate Change		
	<p>Continue to ensure that social tenants have access to comprehensive information and advice on how to reduce fuel bills and take-up energy efficiency measures via the Council website. ONGOING</p>	Housing Standards/ Biodiversity and Climate Change		
	<p>Support the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through the remaining Community Resilience Fund with a small seasonal funding pot e.g., summer holidays or winter for schemes to help tackle food and fuel poverty. ONGOING</p>	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	<p>Maintain the council website (cost of living pages) with up-to-date energy and funding advice. ONGOING</p>	Policy, Communities and Engagement		
	<p>Use the Council's social media channels, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) liaison, VCS events and the Borough Insight magazine to promote new schemes and raise awareness. ONGOING</p>	Policy, Communities and Engagement/ Communications		
	<p>Continued attendance and membership at the National Residential Landlord Association to inform residents and landlords about appropriate legislation. ONGOING</p>	Housing Standards		

We will work with partners and national and local providers to ensure residents can access healthy food to support physical and mental health.	Work with national and local organisations to advance physical access to good food in the borough (including looking into the overall nutritional value of emergency food aid). NEW	Housing and Inclusion/ Revenues and Benefits		
	Undertake an up-to-date mapping of healthy food providers to identify gaps in local provision and opportunities for join up. NEW	Housing and Inclusion		
	Ensure the current Community Larder provision is sustainable. ONGOING NEW FOCUS	Housing and Inclusion		

Connections to other plans

- ∞ Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan
- Housing Strategy
- Communications Plan

Agenda Item 14

Communities Leisure & Arts PAC

5 March 2024

Arts Hub & Maker Space

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
PAC	5 March 2024
Cabinet	20 March 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ann-Marie Langley, Arts & Culture Officer
Classification	<p>Public report with an exempt appendix.</p> <p>The information within Appendix 5 is considered exempt under the following paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).</p> <p>Public interest test:</p> <p><i>To ensure the council achieves value for money for the benefit of council tax payers the information in appendix 5 should be excluded from the public report and treated as confidential.</i></p>
Wards affected	High Street

Executive Summary

In 2021 a Community Arts Hub & Creative Maker Space was included in the Local Investment Plan for UKSPF. As a first stage a feasibility study was commissioned this year to look at options for that space (Appendix 1). Following the study a number of

potential options for such a space have been considered. This report sets out the options for consideration by the CLA PAC before being passed to the Cabinet.

Purpose of Report

Recommendation to Cabinet

This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation to the Cabinet

To approve the creation and trial of a Creative Maker Space and Arts Hub in Granada House in 2024/25 to run for a three year trial period.

Arts Hub & Maker Space

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Setting up and supporting an Arts Hub and creative maker space in the Town Centre will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve its priorities for a Thriving Place.</p>	Head of Service or Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations could support a number of cross cutting objectives through providing support to the creative sector in Maidstone.</p>	Head of Service or Manager
Risk Management	There will be risk associated with creating an arts hub and maker space as this will be a trial for the council. See section 5	Head of Service or Manager
Financial	<p>Funding of £45,000 has been identified in the Local Investment Plan.</p> <p>We may also be able to secure grant funding from Arts Council England, and possibly the National Lottery Heritage Fund (if we were to look at an historic building)</p> <p>S106 / CIL funding may also be available.</p>	Mark Green, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	Depending on the size and scale additional staffing may be needed, a smaller scale	Head of Service

	venture in a council owned building would decrease this.	
Legal	MBC has the power to create an arts hub in the town centre. Funding for the project will need to be finalised before any formal contracts are entered into.	Team Leader Contracts and Commissioning, MKLS 26 February 2024
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Lauren McNicol, Information Governance Team
Equalities	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore an EQIA will be completed once an option has been identified	Orla Sweeney, Policy & Information Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Shafiqullah Hemat Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Head of Service or Manager
Procurement	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for [listed parts of the action]. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules	Mark Green, Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change related to this report. In keeping with the Council's biodiversity and climate change action plan, general provision for reducing waste, single use plastic, and provision of recycling, and purchasing local products and services connected to the Community Arts Hub should be prioritised to reduce carbon emissions related to events.	James Wilderspin, Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In June 2021 the Council created and submitted its local investment plan for UKSPF. A Community Arts Hub and Maker Space was included as a project with the following description:

Community Arts Hub & Maker Space

Utilise an empty unit/building in the town centre and repurpose to provide:

- Low cost exhibition space for local artists and creatives
- Space to deliver arts activities and workshops for the local community
- Retail area where creatives can hire a shelf/unit to sell their products
- Space for community arts groups to meet/rehearse (e.g. local choirs)
- 6 – 8 low-rent studios for use by local artists and creatives
- Mix of clean and messy studio spaces
- Informal meeting area(s) to facilitate networking and collaboration
- Potential to employ an 'artist in residence' to lead activities or to work with different artists/groups to deliver
- Focal point for arts in the town
- Base for town centre events and festivals

Artists and creatives can be offered discounted hire rates in exchange for giving some of their time to lead workshops and/or help manage the facility.

If the right premises can be identified there is potential to enhance the offer to include small-scale theatrical productions/music performances/open-mic sessions/comedy nights/poetry readings, etc. which could also contribute to the early evening and night-time economy.

- 2.2 In year 2 of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, £5,000 was allocated for a feasibility study, this is attached at Appendix 1 for information.

- 2.3 The feasibility study identifies evidence of a need for creative maker space in Maidstone at page 16. This includes a recent survey carried out by Maidstone Arts Group amongst 100 creatives, with responses from 90 of them. 100% were supportive of a creative arts hub for the town
Main things they would like to see in the hub are: Artist's Studio Space, Music Studio Space, low cost exhibition/gallery space, live music area, café, workshop space

This reinforces earlier research from a gathering of over 50 creatives held in 2021 when the lack of venues, flexible spaces and a focal point for the arts were identified as key issues for the sector.

Further research has also been carried out by KCC on the needs of creatives across the county (Appendix 2):

- Venues and spaces – general maker spaces with opportunities to meet other creatives
- Financial support – grants to support core operation, acquire assets and upskill

- Practical support – shared tools, data and equipment, childcare, careers advice and training
- Business skills – fundraising, accounting and legal, PR and marketing
- Peer and networking opportunities

Recent work by We Made That as part of the Town Centre Strategy also reinforces this view.

2.4 Cushman and Wakefields market assessment completed for the purpose of the Town Centre Strategy identified the following:

"The Government definition of a Makerspace is "a physical location where people gather to co-create, share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network, and build"; it is in effect a flex space as described in the "Flexible Office Space" section of this report, with a focus on light industrial and manufacturing uses, which will typically include provision of workbenches, tools and other appropriate technology required by the industry specifically being targeted. Makerspaces are often operated/ funded by Councils and charitable funds due to the viability challenges associated with their low rent, high-turnover of occupants, which can make including them in a scheme challenging.

However, there are a number of potential benefits to such spaces being made available that may be to the long-term benefit of Maidstone Town Centre, in particular by providing an opportunity for businesses to access resource and support, enabling them to develop new products and services in a cost-effective manner. This can lead to reduced lead or manufacturing times, thus increasing their national and global edge and therefore capacity for growth. Furthermore, the presence of such space unlocks capacity to provide tutored workshops; these allow local residents of all ages to "upskill", ideally under the stewardship of larger businesses, increasing the local skill base and attracting new businesses to the area.

Manufacturing is a small part of the overall composition of industrial provision in Maidstone, with the majority of the space in the Borough being the c. 640k sqft Marley Plumbing & Drainage site. This indicates there is not currently a large manufacturing base in Maidstone; whilst this presents some issues delivering light industrial space in the town centre; there is unlikely to be a significant amount of demand for space in the town centre and viability will be a challenge as a result. In spite of this, the less commercial approach of makerspaces presents an opportunity – whilst such space is unlikely to contribute to a viable scheme, it could be a positive contributor in the town centre, by increasing footfall or occupying commercial space that may otherwise be vacant such as off-pitch retail, for example."

2.5 Beyond the wider impact on communities and the benefits for the arts, consideration has also been given to the economic benefits of a creative maker space and arts hub in the town centre. Looking at the number of units and occupancy up to 40 jobs could be created. There is also synergy with other services and we are proposing that the business advisor support we have in our economic development function is made available to tenants of the hub.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Unit 7 – 8 Granada House** is a potential option, being of reasonable size and already owned by the Council

We understand from the Property team that the current occupant is looking to relocate and the unit will soon be vacant. Assuming Pages Schoolwear move into Units 4 – 6 Granada House, then there are currently no other MBC-owned properties within the town centre of a suitable size for the Arts Hub. The only other option would be a commercial unit which would require significantly more financial commitment.

Officers have visited Granada House and we believe it has potential to offer a variety of uses which could help us establish where there is greatest need (e.g. studio space/exhibitions, retail, workshops, etc) and could also allow us to maximise opportunities for income-generation.

A proposed layout for the space is included at Appendix 3.

Costs

The Property team have provided some rough costings for carrying out the necessary refurbishments. These are included in Appendix 5.

We have put together a business case for the Arts Hub (Appendix 4) and some basic financials to indicate the likely costs and potential income for the project (see Appendix 5).

If projected income is achieved the project will only need additional funding up to year 3 with the largest cost in year 1 for fit out. There are business rates costs associated with the project and these have been included in the costs. Rent has not been included in the cost as this is a council owned property, however the opportunity cost of lost rent should be noted of £24,000p.a. and this is part of the Council's contribution to the project. Occupancy rates have been assumed of 50% in year 1, 75% in year 2 and 90% in year 3, there is a risk that these rates may not be achieved.

3.2 Managing the facility

There are two options for managing the day-to-day running of the Arts Hub.

Option One – MBC takes on direct responsibility

Employ one or two members of staff (part-time/job share)

Responsible for staffing during opening hours

Manage bookings for the meeting room(s), workshop space(s) and gallery

Provide a point of contact for the artists and creatives renting studio space and retail space

Encourage artists/creatives wanting to sell in the retail space to share responsibility for staffing it (e.g. reduction in rent for X hours worked per month)

Appoint an 'Artist in Residence' to deliver a programme of public engagement activities during the course of the trial period, offering regular weekly/monthly activities, and also assisting with other MBC arts/cultural events as necessary. This person could be one of the two job-share employees.

On this basis, we could run the Hub as an MBC initiative initially, working closely with partners to work towards the project being operated by a creative organisation in the future.

Option Two – open call to local creative/arts organisations

Go out to tender for a local arts organisation/charity to take on responsibility for running the facility

They would pay rent to MBC and operate the hub themselves

Reduced/no business rates if a charity or CIC

MBC could provide business support via the Business Terrace for the studios/maker spaces

3.3 Funding

£45,000 from UKSPF

*Up to £150,000 from s106

*These funds could be used to cover the refurbishment and fit-out of the unit.

We will need to apply to Arts Council England (ACE) for a grant to support the Hub for a trial period (ACE will usually fund projects that last up to 3 years). This will help to cover running costs, including salaries, as well as materials and equipment to deliver a programme of public engagement events/activities. If this is unsuccessful we will need to use alternative resource to support the hub for example the business rates pool.

Arts Council England (ACE) funding options

1. Project grant of up to £100,000. If we want to include any 'build' costs as part of this, we will need to contact ACE before submitting a full application.
2. Project grant of more than £100,001 – if the project doesn't relate to one of ACE's Strategic Strands then we must contact them first. The guidance states: "We want to make sure that a project of this size has the

potential impact that we would expect before you invest time in developing a full application. We will also think about where we have budget available. We will confirm in writing whether you can apply.”

3. Major Projects Strategic Strand - to be eligible for this, our application needs to:
 - Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
 - Meet the ACE definition of a Major Project. A Major Project is defined as an ambitious, high-quality project that is likely to leave a legacy beyond its funded life.
 - Major Projects applications must be grounded in at least one Element of the Creative and Cultural Country Outcome of the ACE strategy. There are two Elements that might be relevant for our proposal:
 - Element Q: Giving more opportunities to people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) to start a professional career in the creative industries
 - Element R: Ensuring people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) have opportunities to sustain their careers and fulfil their potential in the creative industries.

4. Place Partnerships Strategic Strand – to be eligible for this, our application needs to:
 - Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
 - Be for a strategic place-based intervention that is intended to make a long-term difference to the cultural or creative life of the local community;
 - Make a clear step change in provision in that place where a relevant partnership exists to deliver the project
 - Be informed by robust needs analysis and respond to relevant local strategies and
 - Be led by a consortium of partners who are relevant to delivering the project

To apply for either the Major Projects or Place Partnerships Strands, we would need to submit an Expression of Interest in the first instance. If approved, we could then proceed to a full application.

3.4 Approach to letting units

For units 1-4

Our policy will be these spaces are for 'start-up businesses' trading for less than 24 months prior to starting their tenancy.

Businesses can occupy an incubator unit for up to a maximum of two years, which has been split into 2x6 month licences, followed by a 12 month licence agreement.

Units 5-7 more market rates as established business.

Business Support:

1. Arts, Culture and Events Officer to contact ED with perspective tenant details to arrange a business advisory session.
2. Start-up meets Economic Development's External Business advisor to run through their business idea and business plan.
1. Business advisor to advise MBC that the business start-up is as financially viable as can be checked as a start-up, the business idea is viable and is able to take on the liability of a licence agreement.
2. MBC agrees licence.
3. As the business grows, they can go back to the Business Advisor for additional support and guidance.
4. The business would automatically be invited to join Economic Developments business database for invites to future business networking events, available grants and business support workshops.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Preferred option would be to trial the Arts Hub & Creative Maker Space in Granada House. In terms of operation of the hub, we only have £45,000 for 24/25 from UKSPF and this will not cover the operating model or the costs of refurbishment so we will need to apply for grant funding or use other resources, for example up to £150,000 from s106 – could be made available towards refurbishment and fit-out as capital spend leaving the UKSPF money to fund service costs, business rates and staffing. See 3.3 above for potential sources of funding.

5. RISK

- 5.1 As identified in the Cushman and Wakefield Report: "Makerspaces are often operated/ funded by Councils and charitable funds due to the viability challenges associated with their low rent, high-turnover of occupants, which can make including them in a scheme challenging."
- 5.2 The proposal would be to launch the initiative in 2024/25, to operate for a 3 year trial with the first full financial year in 2025/26 to see if it could be viable for Maidstone. The Cabinet Member will be fully briefed and regularly updated on project progress, a six monthly reporting cycle is planned for transparency. The proposed exit strategy is to move towards a Community Interest Company to take over the project if viable.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The creation of an Arts Hub & Creative Maker Space was agreed as part of the Local Investment Plan in 2021, involving anchor institutions in the plan making process as well as Policy Advisory Committees and the Cabinet.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 CLA PAC for discussion in March

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Feasibility Study
 - Appendix 2: Needs of the Kent Creative Sector
 - Appendix 3: Proposed layout for Units 7 - 8
 - Appendix 4: Business Case
 - Appendix 5: Financials
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Investment Plan for UKSPF

Maidstone Borough Council Creative Arts Hub Report

Report Issued - August 2023



RETAIL  INSPIRED

Contents

Page 3	Report Details
Page 4	Project Brief
Page 5 - 12	Executive Summary
Page 13	Consideration and identification of the location and size of unit being suitable for a Creative Arts Hub that could include creative spaces, studios, makers, and sellers space, exhibition space, music studio, music venue and a community café
Page 14	What are the Potential levels of rental income that MBC could generate?
Page 15 - 17	What type of business models could be adopted by Maidstone Borough Council?
Page 18 - 22	What are the current town centre opportunities available to Maidstone Borough Council? Including the possibility of Len House
Page 23	Consideration of the risks of Maidstone Borough Council undertaking the project of creating a town centre Creative Arts Hub and how these risks could be managed?
Page 24	Summary
Page 25	Appendices

Report Details

This report has been prepared by

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Project Brief

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is looking at ways of supporting The Arts in Maidstone to boost the creative industry and facilitate the launch of a Creative Hub and maker space within the town centre. The objective of this feasibility report is to provide direction and advice to Maidstone Borough Council regarding the development of a strategic approach towards identifying potential business models, type of businesses, potential rental income and locations to launch a Creative Arts Hub and maker space. This will support the town centre regeneration and create longer term solutions to improve The Arts offer within the borough.

This report will look at the viability of creating a Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone Town Centre:

Consideration and identification of the location and size of unit being suitable for a Creative Arts Hub that could include creative spaces, studios, makers and sellers space, exhibition space, a music studio, music venue and a cafe.

- What potential levels of rental income could Maidstone Borough Council expect?
- What business models could Maidstone Borough Council utilise?
- What options are available to MBC regarding the type of businesses that could potentially be included in a Creative Arts Hub?
- What are the current town centre opportunities available to MBC? Including the possibility of Len House
- What are the potential risks of MBC undertaking the project of creating a Creative Arts Hub? How could these risks be managed?

Retail Inspired are pleased to have been commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council to produce a feasibility study to help them explore the possibility of launching a Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone Town Centre to help to boost the creative industry across the borough and facilitate the project working alongside Arts organisations currently operating within the borough. By commissioning this feasibility report MBC hope to develop a more strategic approach to towards the longer term viability and growth of The Arts in the town centre and across Kent.

Executive Summary

It is recognised that the once dominant retail model within Town Centres up and down the country is in decline, and that the pandemic accelerated some of the already emerging trends as to the way communities shopped, interacted and used their town centres changed. Town Centres continue to be pivotal and at the heart of our communities, and there is an opportunity to support the structural changes that are happening with creative solutions that will not only support current high street issues including the reduction in retail, but create cultural opportunities to support the evolution and sustainability of our high streets and the development of the creative sector.

Covid 19 inevitably changed consumer behaviour as people sought ways to support their local high streets digitally and those businesses that were able to adapt have continued to evolve. The pandemic has also changed the way people live and work which is opening up opportunities for new business types to emerge and support a more localised economy.

This localised creative sector trend is emerging across the UK, including Kent and will continue to play a vital role in contributing to the revival of our town centres. It is vital to understand how our town centres, businesses, local authorities and other stakeholders innovate and evolve to meet the needs of customers, creating unique experiences and experimental uses supporting town centres to have a diverse retail, Arts and leisure mix, supporting job creation and the viability of the local economy.

Maidstone, as with many other Town centres across the UK is facing a period of change and face issues that require sustained structural and creative solutions. A new purpose and balance of businesses to support the existing town centre offer, including Fremlin Walk, The Mall and other stakeholders including One Maidstone need to reflect the changing consumer habits, thus embracing growing 'creative' and culture sector trends. The recent emergence of Creative Arts Hubs in other areas within Kent supports the narrative of addressing current high street challenges and creating initiatives supporting wider town centre placemaking strategies. Supporting and facilitating creative start-ups, occupying vacant retail units with innovative uses or transforming historic buildings to boost local employment and skills will support the local economy and increase tourism.

Maidstone is home to more than 7,000 businesses and 180,000 residents and is placed at the forefront of growth and innovation within Kent, with so many start ups choosing Maidstone to open their business there is an opportunity for MBC, as a wide and exciting range of SME's and creative industry companies are already based within the borough. This Kentish town is only 37 miles away from London with two train stations making this an accessible and attractive place to work and live.

Maidstone Borough Council is currently enhancing the town centre to further improve the destination as a high-quality location for retail and leisure and has commissioned We Made That to undertake a Town Centre Strategy. A major programme of works is underway to improve the public realm, giving the town centre a more pedestrianised feel, to create a fantastic and accessible environment to live and work in.

As a result of the regeneration, the connectivity and aesthetics of Maidstone town centre will be enhanced, enabling Maidstone to maintain its place as one of the premier town centres in Kent. 'Kent's County Town'. The project will deliver a distinctive, safe and high-quality place that befits a 21st Century County Town. Maidstone Borough Council and their property team has already transformed The Lockmeadow complex as a key destination for leisure activities in the town centre and to support one of its five strategic priorities to make Maidstone a 'Thriving Place'. MBC launched an exciting Food Hall in 2021 attracting new local food and drink businesses making the complex an attractive and compelling destination for residents and visitors.

Our experience and recent research shows that Maidstone being Kent's premier town has a number of number of Arts organisations operating within the borough including Maidstone Area Arts Partnership (MAAP), Maidstone Arts Group and Maidstone Art Society supporting creatives within Maidstone and delivering a number of initiatives for the community. Our research has also highlighted the distinct lack of a physical space to bring together some of the great projects that are delivered by the creative businesses within Maidstone. This is an opportunity both in terms of bringing variety, identity and subsequently adding prosperity and footfall to the town centre as a whole.

From our knowledge of high streets and the creative industry both in terms of the rise in the number of Arts organisations, Arts businesses, CIC's and social enterprises operating within the borough and the proactive Arts groups within Maidstone borough, it is evident that by developing a Creative Arts Hub within the town centre would help elevate Maidstone to the forefront of providing an Arts provision for the creative community and assist the evolution of the high street. Other town centre businesses would undoubtedly prosper in this County town due to an increase in footfall.

From here we would recommend that MBC considers supporting the launch of a Creative Arts Hub to support the town centre and offer creative businesses operating within Maidstone Borough a platform to promote what they do, support others within the Arts and the future prosperity of the high street.

Our report has considered the options available to Maidstone Borough Council to be able to launch a Creative Arts Hub within Maidstone Town Centre:

The findings and recommendations of our report are:

- The location and flexibility of the space offered by Len House gives MBC the opportunity to establish a Creative Hub space suitable for incorporating a majority of what is being requested by the local Arts organisations including exhibition space, working space (studios) for local creative makers, a sound proof music studio/rehearsal space, rooms for hire and a shopfront to sell maker's product and include an element of incubator space. The location and flexibility of the additional properties detailed within Page 18 of this report each demonstrate the option of MBC operating a pop-up incubator Creative Hub in a smaller unit from around 700 -1500 sqft within Royal Star Arcade to a much larger, longer term unit such as 2-4 Granada House which is 3,000 sqft and offers the flexibility within the unit to include more of the requirements such as a café, makers selling space, exhibition space, creative co-working and workshops.
- Potential level of income would depend on the number of businesses, level of investment and number of studios available to rent and other commercial space, taking into consideration a variety of leasing options to allow creative businesses to test and operate their models.
- MBC have two main models to adopt depending on whether an operator is brought in to launch and manage the Creative Arts Hub as a Community Interest Company (CIC) or MBC retain control of leasing an agreed premises and nurturing creative businesses to support their future growth and success in Maidstone. Our recommendation is that MBC become the head leasee, managing the agreed premises and work closely with local Maidstone Arts organisations to attract their members and others in the community to operate their businesses from the Creative Arts Hub.
- The risks have been assessed, considered and documented; however launching a Creative Arts Hub would be one of the first in Kent and greatly support increasing the growing number creative sector businesses, the evolution and diversity of the town centre offer, increase dwell time and therefore contribute to the councils aspiration of Maidstone creating a place to work, live and play.

Creative and Cultural Sectors supporting Town Centres

There are many examples of the rise of the creative sector businesses and Community Arts Hubs opening across the UK including Kent and London. Stakeholders that are taking advantage of this opportunity within the creative sector are experiencing the direct benefits of establishing cultural and creative businesses within their high streets embedded as part of the wider town centre strategy – including job creation, increased footfall, dwell time and a more vibrant high street with a sustainable future.



Coachworks in Ashford is a unique example of a Creative Hub that combines an indoor and outdoor multi-use work space for start ups based in a building steeped in history. Meanwhile co-working space, studios and event hire. There are spaces to suit all creatives from market place studios that can be branded to suit your business type enabling businesses to choose opening hours with smaller overheads than your typical high street shop or space. There are also office studios to allow creatives to work alongside other SME's including meeting rooms and space to collaborate and grow. Additionally they offer monthly creative co-working spaces available, plus food and drink venues. This venue is a 'creative campus' a new social and cultural meeting place.

You will find: 1,571 metres of indoor and outdoor space, 12 studios, an artist in residence program, 7 food kiosks run by fledgling businesses, a hole in the wall barista, 2 bars, internal and external event spaces, exhibition space, market space and public space for community events.

This development demonstrates what can be achieved to inject life into a town centre and create a meanwhile use for a council owned site. The Council purchased the site in 2014 and asked for submissions and ideas for an interim use and Coachworks was developed by Turner.Works. The company converted a collection of historic warehouses and industrial sheds into a innovative start-up workspace with a co-working incubator. The Council who invested in the construction and owns the land, receives part of the profit from their annual income.

The UK's town centres are undergoing a complete transformation as high streets struggle to fill empty units and buildings will need to reimaged by stakeholders working together to create new experiences for customers and this includes the introduction of creative Hubs offering exhibitions, workshops, unique shopping experiences, intimate music venues and more.

Further Case Studies

The following case studies have been selected to demonstrate successful creative Hubs launched to support the current challenges being faced by high streets – they are each unique and provide a platform and space for The Arts, makers, education or event space and different types of ownership models.

Case Study – St George's Creative Hub, Gravesend

St George's Art Centre is an example of a Council owned asset that has been re-purposed and is being managed and run by Gravesham Borough Council. This new Arts Centre is an exhibition and arts space in the heart of Gravesend developed by Gravesham Borough Council in 2020 and is housed in the Council owned asset St George's Shopping Centre with two reconfigured former empty units. The Arts Centre promotes creative activity within the town centre with a state of the art exhibition space for 2D and 3D works, including digital installations. There is also a workshop and drop in space to meet local artists and enjoy a coffee in the community café whilst viewing the exhibitions or taking part in the community workshops. The Local authority have plans to develop the centre further to provide accommodation for an artists co-operative.



Case Study - Nucleus Arts

Nucleus Arts is home to 45 self contained artists studios, a gallery, meeting and community rooms for hire and a selection of café bars. They are one of the main studio providers in North Kent, so vacant spaces get snapped up quickly and there is currently a long waiting list. Studios vary in size and layout with prices starting from £100 per month and include utilities. There are many benefits to being part of the Nucleus Arts team including exclusive discounts to the café, creative opportunities and support unavailable elsewhere. Artists also find endless inspiration and support from being surrounded by fellow creatives working with varied mediums and styles, leading to collaborative opportunities and the chance to showcase work in multiple exhibitions at the Halpern Gallery.



Nucleus Arts have created more than just a space to rent a studio, as with the gallery, café and community workshops; as an artist you are part of a community being showcased to the wider public and building longevity and opportunity for your business in the creative sector.



Case Study - Beach Creative, Herne Bay

Beach Creative is an example of a vibrant creative hub in heart of Herne Bay, Kent. This creative space runs with a social purpose and offers a place to try new concepts, meet people, share ideas and experiences and a space to hire. This is run as a Community Interest Company (CIC) and they support people on their creative journey and give artists and makers space to create and show their work and bring people together through creative experiences. Their exhibitions, events and learning opportunities are delivered to support the local people in Herne Bay by local artists. Also set within Beach Creative's ground floor there is a café that is run separately by an independent business and encourages footfall to the Creative Hub opening up opportunities for visitors and artists alike. There are studio spaces upstairs, a dark room, you can hire either of the two gallery spaces and one of the four rooms for events or meetings. The venue can also accommodate intimate music events or spoken word productions, so is a flexible venue space.



Case Study - Made in Ashford and The Craftship CIC

Made in Ashford started its life originally as a pop up shop in 2015 developed by Ashford Borough Council and is an excellent example of a Council owned asset being brought to life to support the evolution of the high street and supporting the creative industry. Fast forward to 2023 and Made in Ashford is now a CIC – a collaborative shop and The Craftship CIC, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting local artists and creative businesses as well as helping more people access creativity in the local community.

This project is still supported by the local council and also promoted through Love Ashford a digital high street managed by Ashford Borough Council. Made in Ashford has grown and is now home to over 70 Kent based artists and makers and there has been the addition of The Craft Ship Enterprise, a workshop space supporting the Made in Ashford team to offer an array of community workshops, including pottery painting, Jewellery making, watercolour painting, additionally this space can also be hired for external workshops and meetings. Some of the makers/artists from Made in Ashford have developed 'craft kits' that can be purchased from The Craftship to take home and make, or allow customers to utilise the workshop space to create product.

Made in Ashford have seller's spaces that are permanent and fixed, keeping the continuity of the aesthetic and have tailored sections to suit individual makers needs from shelf only spaces to wall and shelf spaces, ranging from £5 - £9 per week and 25% commission on every sale. They have created licences that don't require makers to work instore and created incentives for those who do, reducing commission payable depending on the number of days worked. Designer makers benefit both financially and from gaining insights into consumer behaviour giving them the opportunity to learn and grow their business.

From our experience of launching pop up shops to permanent shops, Jo Wynn-Carter created the original Made in Ashford brand, a shop share as part of Ashford Borough Council's purchase of Park Mall Shopping Centre showcasing designer makers to test the high street for a longer period. She worked closely with the designers to develop the brand strategy and promote the shop more widely, offering tailored business support and devising marketing campaigns. This unique approach ensured that Made in Ashford complimented the high street offer with bespoke handmade products by talented local makers from Kent, elevating Ashford town centre's consumer footfall within the south east to discover unique businesses, resulting in the subsequent evolution of Made in Ashford to what it is today.



RETAIL  INSPIRED

Consideration of the Location and Size of the Units being suitable for a Creative Arts Hub

There are a number of factors when considering the location of a Creative Arts Hub within a Town centre:

Place, community and location are all elements to consider when taking forward a project to support the high street and the creative sector, and Hubs are as much sociable and building network spaces as they are for doing business, so this is something that is valued by creatives who often work alone and find connectivity with likeminded individuals limited.

Location:

Areas within a town centre where there already clusters of independent businesses that have organically grown can be beneficial when exploring where to launch a Creative Hub, as this will build the connectivity into the project with existing businesses supporting, engaging and using the facilities.

The case studies featured in this report demonstrate the importance of launching projects to connect with local creatives, building longevity and supporting the wider town centre aspirations and strategy, a shared vision between local authorities, stakeholders and the local community for the growth of creative businesses operating within the town centre.

Size:

Once again the case studies featured show examples of successful smaller high street locations with shop frontage and space from 2,000 sqft to larger scale examples up to 17,000 sqft in the case of Coachworks.

The space requirements of artists/maker studios vary depending on the nature of their business and practice, but the average studio size is anything from 150 to 350 square feet.

What potential levels of income could Maidstone Borough Council expect?

When considering the levels of income that Maidstone Borough Council could expect to achieve, it is vital to first identify if MBC would be the head lessee and then invite a Maidstone Arts Organisation CIC to operate the Creative Hub and pay rent to MBC or if MBC would be managing the Hub and operations directly. There are both models within our case studies and in the case of Made in Ashford the project began as a Council initiative with the intention of working closely with partners to work towards the project being operated by a creative organisation in the future.

Len House costings would obviously correlate with MBC's commitment to square meterage leased, and types of artists encouraged into the project. To create momentum initial support would be beneficial to the program to fill the available space.

What type of business models could be adopted by Maidstone Borough Council?

The traditional business model is to lease a retail unit on either a one year licence or stepped lease agreement of up to 3 years and then enter into a short to medium term agreement with individual creatives to rent a space within the unit. Typically you would ask creative businesses to enter into a minimum agreement of 3 months and then offer a rolling contract giving both parties the option of giving one months notice.

Local Authorities who own an asset within the town centre have also taken on the role of owner and operator and entered into short term agreements with creative businesses.

Pop up Business/incubator

Pop up operators/business incubators could form part of the overall strategy for a Creative Hub in Maidstone whether the council leases the site to an operator or manages from within the local authority.

Popups provide a perfect opportunity to bring something new to the town centre, a test bed for a future aspiration bringing creatives to the town centre, all driving awareness and footfall by offering experiences and products at limited availability.

It is important to identify and work with fledgling businesses who are looking to move to the next level, effectively giving these local creatives/makers or Art organisations the chance to launch and operate with less risk.

As we have seen in many other towns, pop ups can be used to create relationships with potential future creative businesses and help regenerate areas that have a concentration of empty shops. There are many successful examples, giving support to small brands that are discovering new ways to learn about their customers, building loyalty through pop up operations and experimental uses via business incubators.

As we have seen with the launch of Made in Ashford, firstly a pop up shop for 18 months and following the success of this project later became a permanent business in 2015 within a council owned asset. This project was a test bed for the Council and helped to develop and support new creative businesses to the high street with the longer term view of them being confident to take on empty units, this organically created a business network and opportunities.

Emerging creative brands have a clear strategy to develop and collaborate with others creating opportunities. Maidstone Borough Council could capitalise on this to ensure that the overall offer in the town is serving the community, thus future proofing the high street with innovative solutions.

Retail Inspired has connected with local arts organisations operating within the borough of Maidstone including Maidstone Area Arts Partnership, Maidstone Arts Group and Kent Arts and Wellbeing which has been vital for this feasibility report, as this valuable feedback from the organisations gives an indication of the potential benefits of developing a Creative Arts Hub in the town centre to support the future of creative businesses.

The Maidstone Area Arts Partnership (MAAP) have previously worked on a conceptual project in collaboration with the Maidstone Art Society to consider opening an Arts Hub in a retail unit in Fremlin Walk as a test bed for the wider aspirations of a Creative Arts Hub project. There was much research undertaken to move forward with a 6 week trial and Maidstone Art Society with over 100 members have previously showcased their work in town centre Art Exhibitions within vacant units. Maidstone Arts Society are currently planning their 2023/2024 programme which will include demonstration evenings, practical evenings, Saturday workshops as well as urban sketching and painting days for their members.

There has also been a recent survey undertaken by the Maidstone Arts Group (MAG) amongst its members, which further supports the aspirations of the creative community for a Creative Arts Hub being developed within the town centre.

They surveyed over 100 creatives and received 90 responses from the following questions:

1. Would you support a Creative Arts Hub?

100% of respondents answered yes to this question.

2. What would your Arts Hub Include?

Artist's Studio Space, Music Studio Space, low cost exhibition/gallery space, live music area, café, workshop space.

3. What would you like to see in a Maidstone Arts Hub?

There were many responses and below is a snapshot of the responses:

"An arts space that feels like it is for the community"

"A place where people can meet and exchange ideas – I believe it could bring a variety of the arts together"

"It would be fantastic to have an Arts Hub in Maidstone, providing a vast number of opportunities to creatives, those wanting to learn, a social space for gathering and connecting the Arts and for many who often feel on the fringes of the business and academic world. It would be great to see Maidstone celebrate and support the town and Borough's creative talent and support the learning of the Arts in local schools."

"A creative area with business support for creative businesses"

"I would like to see somewhere artists of all genres could meet and collaborate. An information centre for Maidstone Arts is sadly lacking."

What are the current town centre opportunities available to Maidstone Borough Council? Including the possibility of Len House

The current opportunities available to MBC and for consideration are as follows:

Royal Star Arcade

Royal Star Arcade is an option that would allow MBC to explore a pop-up pilot option in one of the smaller vacant units, with a view to growing into a larger unit within this unique shopping centre before considering taking on a lease for a larger property elsewhere within the town centre. Royal Star Arcade is steeped in history, built in the 16th century, the original Star hotel was an important landmark and coaching inn popular with those travelling between London and Folkestone. In the 19th century the hotel was visited by Queen Victoria and then the Medway Rooms were built in the coach yard. Another interesting historical feature is the Disraeli Balcony where Benjamin Disraeli made his parliamentary acceptance speech. The Royal Star Hotel was converted to an indoor shopping centre in 1989 and today retains many of the original architectural features, establishing a home to many local independent businesses. This would be a good location to consider launching a creative hub.

There are several current vacant opportunities within Royal Star Arcade for MBC to consider:

Unit 42
668 SQFT (1st floor)
£12,000 per annum
£1,000 per calendar month (inclusive of service charge)
Rates exempt
£15.24 per sqft

Unit 35
Ground Floor & 1st floor
972 SQFT
£20,000 per annum (inclusive of service charge)
£20.57 per sqft

Unit 32
1473 SQFT
Ground and first floor
£25,000 per annum (inclusive of service charge)
£16.97 per sqft

Granada House

We have also reviewed current suitable properties in terms of size vacant units within the town centre and 2-4 Granada House located on Lower Stone Street offers space and flexibility with excellent high street frontage.

3,026 sqft
£30,000 per annum, £2,500 per calendar month
Annual service charge £4,060

2-4 Granada House is located within a high footfall area leading to the town centre and high street. It is also adjacent to The Mall shopping centre. This unit was once occupied by Nucleus Arts one of the case studies included within this report and was used as a gallery space for creatives and a commercial coffee shop from the unit which has double frontage, offers the space to create a robust Creative Hub to include a gallery and exhibition space, workshop space, co-working desks area, studios/makers space and café all with excellent shop exposure. A substantial unit of this size would allow MBC to create a hub with many of the requirements detailed within this report and support the aspirations of the local authority.

Other units comparable to the size of Coachworks, one of the case studies within this report, is the former menswear Marks and Spencer store 30-32 Week Street that is currently under offer as of July 2023 and has a total of 19,008 sqft, formerly being marketed at £230,000 per annum with a rateable value of 247,000.

Building to the rear of St Francis Church, Maidstone Town Centre

There is a building in the town centre which is located to the rear of St Francis Church, the property is derelict with outdoor space, but this building is not currently listed as being available. This is a project that potentially MBC property resources could explore further.

Len House

Len House is located in the heart of Maidstone and was built in the 1930's as a purpose built showroom and manufacturing facility for the Rootes Group, famed for the construction of vehicles. In 2020 planning and listed building consent was granted for a mixed use scheme seeing the building being converted into 80 apartments with retail units on the ground floor. To give access to the retail units on the ground floor a new cantilevered walkway is being constructed.

Although this is largely a residential development it is in the heart of the town centre and would offer MBC the flexibility to consider part of the ground floor retail space

as a Creative Arts Hub. Due to the nature of this being residential it would not be possible to accommodate a music venue, but a music/rehearsal space could be sound proofed and give local musicians the opportunity to hire the space. The flexibility of the available space could give MBC the opportunity to configure the optimum square footage for a permanent gallery area, flexible exhibition space and studios for businesses, workshop rooms, co working areas and selling space for creatives.

Cost of works:

Fit out costings are totally dependant upon the unit acquired. A property formerly used as a retail outlet, for example, with existing fixtures and fittings included could be repurposed at little cost. An empty building could be reconfigured with careful budgeting for £10 -£15 per sqft. This figure could rise considerably depending on the structural state of the unit selected and the maintenance terms of the lease.

A budget also has to be considered for legal expenditure and lease negotiations, although this could potentially be delivered in house by the MBC legal team. Additionally, consideration needs to be given to branding of the project, including external signage, window decals, internal presentation and marketing. A budget of £4,000 - £5,000 should be allowed. Again, this could be negated partially with the inclusion of the MBC comms team.

Types of businesses:

A Creative Arts Hubs opening in Maidstone Town Centre would attract an array of businesses from local Kent artists, designer makers, digital businesses including media, marketers, web designers and other creatives.

Facilities:

These are some of the shared spaces and other resources that could be considered and included within a Creative Arts Hub to support tenants and generate the required income for the project:

- Start up/Independent business studios
- Café
- Music room
- Creative Community shared space
- Small theatre/rehearsal space
- Makers selling space with shopfront
- Meeting rooms
- Exhibition space
- Office Studios
- Makers Studios
- Co-working Desks

Makers/Artists Studios:

Providing Makers and Artists Studios within a Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone is vital for helping local artists and makers to develop links with other creatives and fellow studio occupants. The spaces available if developed as part of a connected gallery space would have a positive impact on the Maidstone Arts scene.

In our experience the optimum individual studio size of around 150 sqft is suitable for most mediums, but there are variables with smaller units for digital artists and other uses and with the rent including service charge covering all utilities and repairs, and a minimum of 3 months contract/agreement and one months notice period required. Shared use of kitchen and WC and the ability to book rooms within the hub and exhibit their work within curated exhibitions. Resident Artist studios are on average between £100- £150 per month in Kent.

Potential Income from the hire of exhibition space:

Depending on the size of the exhibition or gallery space there is a potential to generate an income of between £150 and £175 per week, this is based on our extensive research and a space could also be used for other external events or talks and allow this space to be utilised on a daily basis too. Potential income for workshop space would be between £12 and £15 per hour based on what is being charged by other organisations with workshop space either within the gallery or separate spaces/rooms.

You could also consider having two adjoining rooms with the flexibility of using both for an event or two events running concurrently to increase potential income for the Creative Arts Hub.

Makers Collective Retail Outlet:

As documented within this report from the featured case studies, offering a space for makers to sell their wares as part of a creative hub is an opportunity both in terms of developing local creative businesses within the hub and supporting the staffing of the wider hub. This can be achieved by either offering a reduction of studio rent, offsetting against the number of days worked in the retail unit or if a creative business is a stockist without studio space then the amount of commission retained by the hub per transaction can be reduced on a sliding scale from 25% when not working in the hub to 10% when working either 2 days or 4 half days for example.

Typically, a retail area of 1,000 sqft within the overall area could comfortably showcase around 50 makers/artists products each renting a permanent fixed space either on a wall or shelf, all tailored to the product to help showcase their wares. Typically, rental would be £10 per week and then commission on each product of between 25% to as little as 10% if the business is available to work up to 2 days each month.

Business Support:

Creative Hubs offering an element of business support will attract creatives to consider being part of the hub due to the collaborative inclusive nature of the operation, therefore having a clear programme of workshops to support the creative businesses will be beneficial in the long term.

Connecting and partnering with business support organisations and 'The Business Terrace Maidstone' to offer peer to peer support, workshop and networking opportunities will help these creative businesses to develop their offer and flourish within the hub. In our experience Local Authorities offering business support as part of the joining package will give you an advantage over other Creative Hubs and vital for the growth of the businesses. This could be anything from helping to improve their online presence to finance and pitching their product offer to larger retail companies.

Retail Unit within the town centre:

There is also an opportunity for Maidstone Borough Council to consider launching a smaller project as a test bed within a retail unit within the town centre to include a gallery space, retail makers space and workshop opportunities to test the concept of a Creative Arts Hub, connecting with the local Arts Organisations and their members whilst developing the plans to launch in a larger premises such as Len House. This approach will help to build interest in studio spaces, retail space, future exhibitions and so much more, enabling Maidstone Borough Council to develop a clear business case for the project and wider aspirations to support art and culture within the borough.

Consideration of the risks of Maidstone Borough Council undertaking the project of creating a town centre Creative Arts Hub and how these risks could be managed?

The risks involved with launching Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone are as follows:

Depending on the type of model adopted to launch a Creative Arts Hub there must be consideration of:

- Occupancy levels to maintain expected income levels
- A business plan formulated in conjunction with the town centre strategy currently being developed
- A clear pricing structure and procedures for hiring the spaces available
- A competitive pricing structure and model for makers renting space
- Operational considerations including business rates and whether to operate as a CIC with a social purpose
- A streamlined and affordable business model to attract makers and artists and ensuring 100% occupancy levels are maintained
- Consideration of the type of businesses working alongside each other to compliment the hub and encourage collaboration
- Maintaining optimum staffing levels to ensure the Hub is open and managed during normal hours
- Local authority digital strategy and comms plan to promote the project to the local community and nationally

Summary

Local authorities connected with their communities play a vital role in kick starting a renewal of business performance and perception of their town centres, supporting businesses in adapting and creating new opportunities.

Creative organisations play a key role in supporting the regeneration and reimagining of our town centres in a post pandemic world and as we have documented within this report traditional retailing has been on a decline with the increase in online digital retail and changing consumer habits exacerbated by Covid 19 and more recently the cost of living crisis; therefore, a collective response is required to support more diverse and sustainable high streets.

Visitors to Maidstone are generally local and within 20 to 30 minutes away, by road or public transport which makes Maidstone Town Centre an ideal place to consider opening a Creative Arts Hub.

The Creative sector will continue to grow with more people opting to start their own businesses and therefore launching a Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone Town Centre is an opportunity for MBC to work with the existing Arts Groups and their members towards a shared goal that supports Arts and culture in Maidstone, encouraging creative businesses to have a presence in the town centre.

High Streets will continue to evolve to respond to these different uses of space and a Creative Hub in the heart of Maidstone opens up exciting opportunities for local creative businesses, including self employed makers, photographers, artists, musicians and other creatives that want to be part of a collective of creatives and build synergy between themselves and others in the town centre.

The addition of a Creative Arts Hub in Maidstone Town Centre will bring together likeminded businesses, accelerate the recovery of the boroughs creative sector and high street revival post pandemic and support new living and working patterns, bringing increased footfall and dwell time to the town centre. A facility like this will compliment the existing cultural offer and the program of events currently being delivered MBC and other key stakeholders within the town centre.

Appendices

Creative Arts Hubs in Kent:

www.coach-works.co.uk/
m.facebook.com/StGeorgesArtsCentre
www.nucleusarts.com/
www.beachcreative.org/
www.madeinashford.com/

Arts Organisations

maidstonearts.org/
maidstoneartsgroup.co.uk/
www.maidstoneartsociety.com/
kentartsandwellbeing.org.uk/

Len House - civicengineers.com/project/len-house-maidstone/

Royal Star Arcade - royalstararcade.co.uk/

Fremlin Walk Shopping - www.fremlinwalk.co.uk/

The Mall - www.themall.co.uk/maidstone

One Maidstone - www.onemaidstone.com/

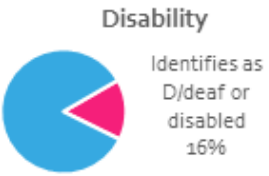
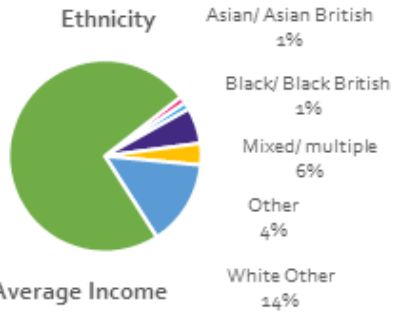
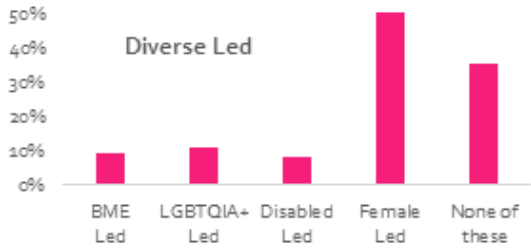
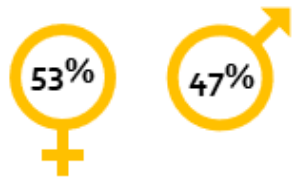
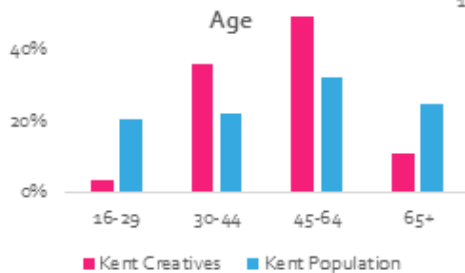
Hazlitt Theatre - www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/hazlitt-theatre

Maidstone Museum - museum.maidstone.gov.uk/

Rental Properties - www.rightmove.co.uk/commercial-property-to-let/Maidstone.html

What the Creative Sector in Kent Needs

Who are the Creatives and how do they work?



What do Creatives in Kent want?



Creatives want more support to connect and grow

- Venues and Spaces:** general maker space with opportunities to meet other creatives
- Financial support:** grants to support core operation, acquire assets and upskill
- Practical support:** shared tools, data and equipment, childcare, careers advice and training
- Business skills:** fundraising, accounting and legal, data analysis, PR and marketing
- Peer and networking:** peer-brokerage, creative hubs, hybrid workshops and networking
- Mental wellbeing:** addressing areas above would aid this, plus fair pay, supervision and counselling

Our recommendations

Be a broker

- Link up national, regional and local initiatives with businesses/ creatives in Kent
- Signpost to existing and future support
- Identify need and offer targeted support

Data from a Creative Sector in Kent snapshot survey conducted on behalf of Kent County Council by RM Research, with 125 valid responses from those working in the Creative Sector in Kent. For more, please see the full evaluation report by RM Research: <https://rmresearch.uk/bbb>

Needs of the Kent Creative Sector

This section draws on data from our survey, interviews and focus group to consider the needs of the Kent Creative Sector, outlining the shape of the sector and its challenges, presenting requests for support from creatives and their businesses in Kent, and provides a series of recommendations based on these.



Figure 15 Map of postcodes provided by Kent creatives via the survey. Base = 89

1.19. Shape of the Kent Creative Sector

The Kent creative sector is broad and diverse, with evidence of creative clusters around more populous areas of the county, drawn to Kent for the quality of life and opportunities available.

Many of these figures are compared with a similar recent survey from the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), from which the survey questions were based. For more on this, see the Appendix.

1.19.1. Where the creatives are based

Large numbers of survey respondents were from four main areas: Folkestone, Thanet, Canterbury and Swale. Similar ratios were found in the Build Back Better grant applicants¹⁵ and shows evidence of creative clusters in these areas.¹⁶

Figure 16 compares where Kent creatives told us they live, against population estimates for each of the Local Authorities¹⁷, to see if the larger groups are simply due to larger populations in those areas. However, we can see that far larger numbers of creatives responded to the survey compared to the population for the four areas highlighted. This suggests some creative clustering that warrants further investigation. To explore this pattern, Kent County Council could look at developing further creative activity in some or all of these four areas.¹⁸

¹⁵ For more, see Section 1 in the full report <https://rmresearch.uk/bbb>

¹⁶ Please note - this data may be skewed by the word of mouth form of dissemination of the survey and to truly map the geography (and size and value) of the creative sector of Kent, further research should be commissioned to interrogate national statistics using business codes.

¹⁷ https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/14725/Mid-year-population-estimates-age-and-gender.pdf

¹⁸ For more on how to achieve this, see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115486/Understanding_the_growth_potential_of_creative_clusters_-_accessible.pdf

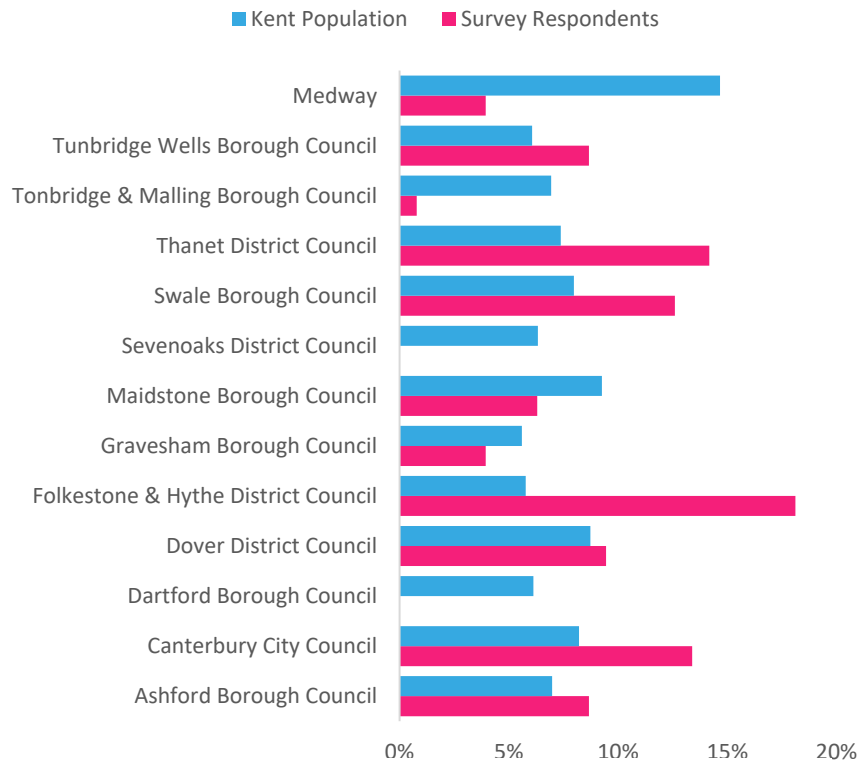


Figure 17 Local authorities wider sector survey respondents are based in. Base = 127

1.19.2. Kent creatives' work patterns

The creatives of Kent report a variety of workplace location – whether by choice or financial or practical necessity.

23% of people in the Kent creative sector travel to their work premise, such as a studio, workshop or office, compared with 43% in the ASELA survey. 8% have adopted a 'nomadic' work practice – travelling between coffee shops, trains, and co-worker spaces. 43% of people are working from home (WFH), 29% out of choice, and 14% out of necessity. 26% combine a mix of these working styles.

I mostly work from home until I am needed on set/location

Member of the Kent Creative sector

Of those who work from home, either by necessity or by choice, 41% find that it suits them, or is convenient, 13% do so because they have caring responsibilities.

17% would like to have a work premises but everything is too expensive for them, less than the 27% in the ASELA survey, and 21% would like a work premises but their income is not sufficient enough yet to warrant this, meaning overall 19% of creatives are held back from securing a premises due to cost.

Other considerations include that their home is warmer than their studio in winter, likely to be a bigger issue this year due to the fuel crisis than in previous years.

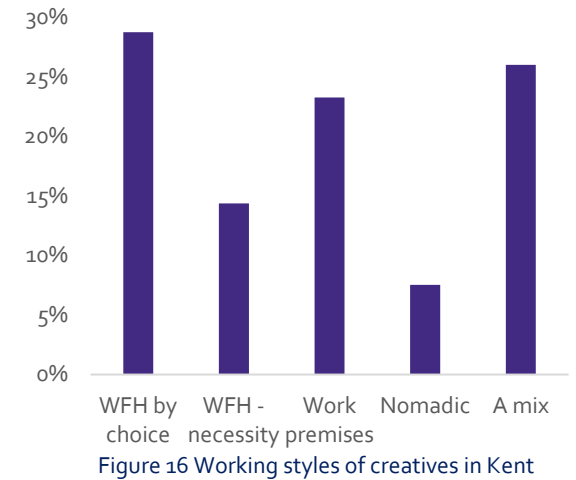
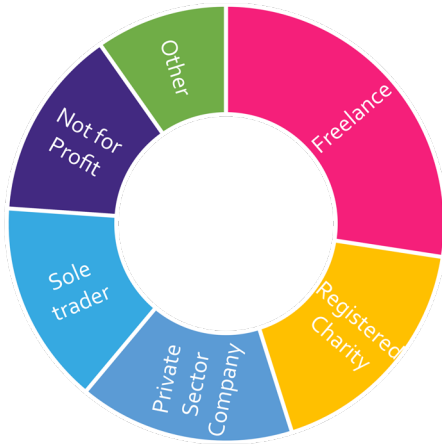


Figure 16 Working styles of creatives in Kent

1.19.3. About their creative business or practice



Kent Creatives operate across most disciplines, with clusters around film, visual media and art, crafts and festivals.

58% of creatives chose more than one creative discipline.

42% are freelancers or sole traders, with another 32% working for not-for-profit organisations.

Figure 18 Types of creative practice/ businesses within the creative sector. Base = 113

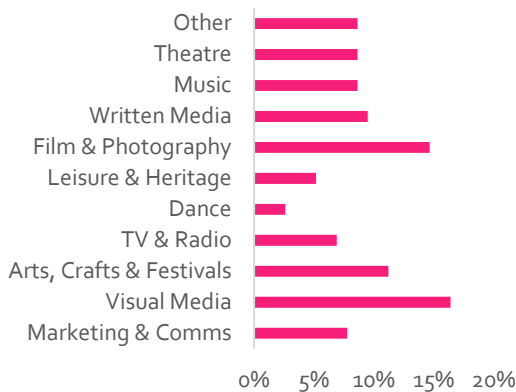


Figure 19 Main creative disciplines of Kent creatives. Base = 232

or business in another way, such as public sector companies or as a creative individual, whose creative practice is not their main business.

The creatives in Kent reported coming from a wide range of types of creative practices or business, but the clear majority, 42%, work for themselves, either as a sole trader or in a freelance capacity. 32% represented either registered charities or Not for Profit organisations. 10% described their practice

On average, the creatives in Kent have been practicing for 16 years, although this ranged from as little as 1 year, to as many as 50.

57% of people started their creative business in Kent, with 4% saying they move around based on the best opportunities for their practice or business.

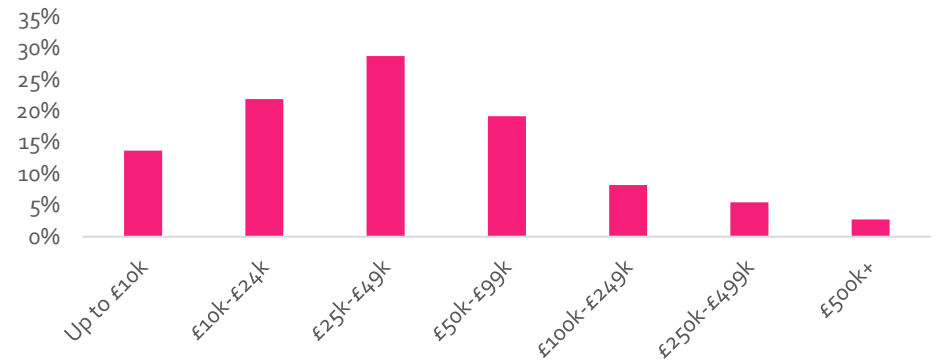


Figure 20 Average annual turnover/income from creative business/ practice. Base = 85

40% have been operating from Kent for at least some of the time, with half moving to Kent for the quality of life on offer, just over a third for family reasons, and 13% for the business opportunities.

Creative income or turnover ranged from £100 a year, to £1.1 million, with an average of nearly £120,000. The chart above shows a breakdown of average annual turnover/income from creative practice, which shows a good distribution of responses from across the breadth of the sector. The chart below shows a comparison of average turnover between types of Creatives and businesses. There are three natural stages: freelancers and sole traders are earning the least, Not for Profit organisations and Registered Charities are in the middle band, and private and public

sector companies are turning over the most money. Creative individuals did not report any income or turnover from their creative work.

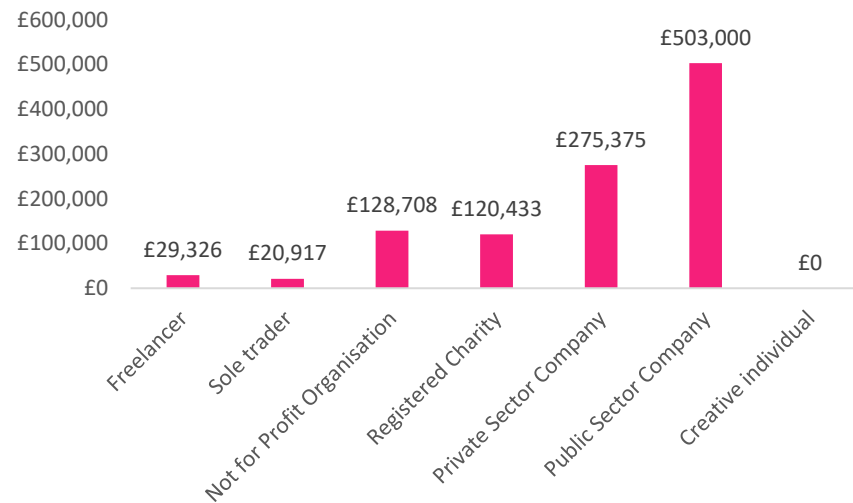


Figure 22 Average annual turnover/income for each creative business/ practice. Base = 85

38% regularly use physical production facilities outside of their own workspace or studio, 22% in Kent, 11% in London, and 5% elsewhere, including the rest of the UK, Europe, and beyond.

68% of creatives are PAYE employers, most commonly (over 60%) having between one and four employees, or regularly engage with freelancers, with a yearly average of around 13 freelancers. **61% have taken part in a skill development scheme, the most common being enlisting volunteers (32%) and informal mentoring (30%)**, with 83% saying they found

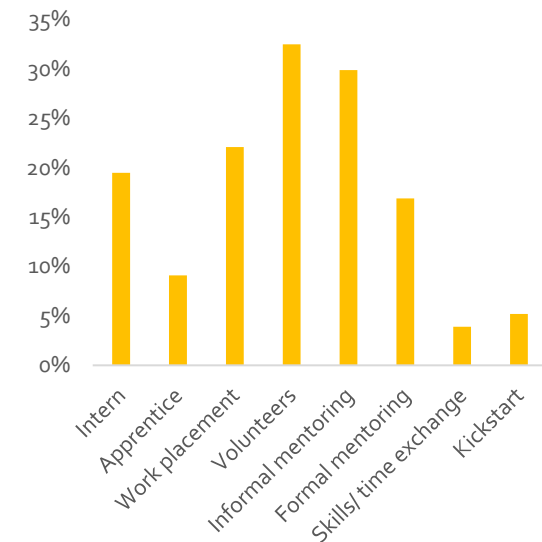


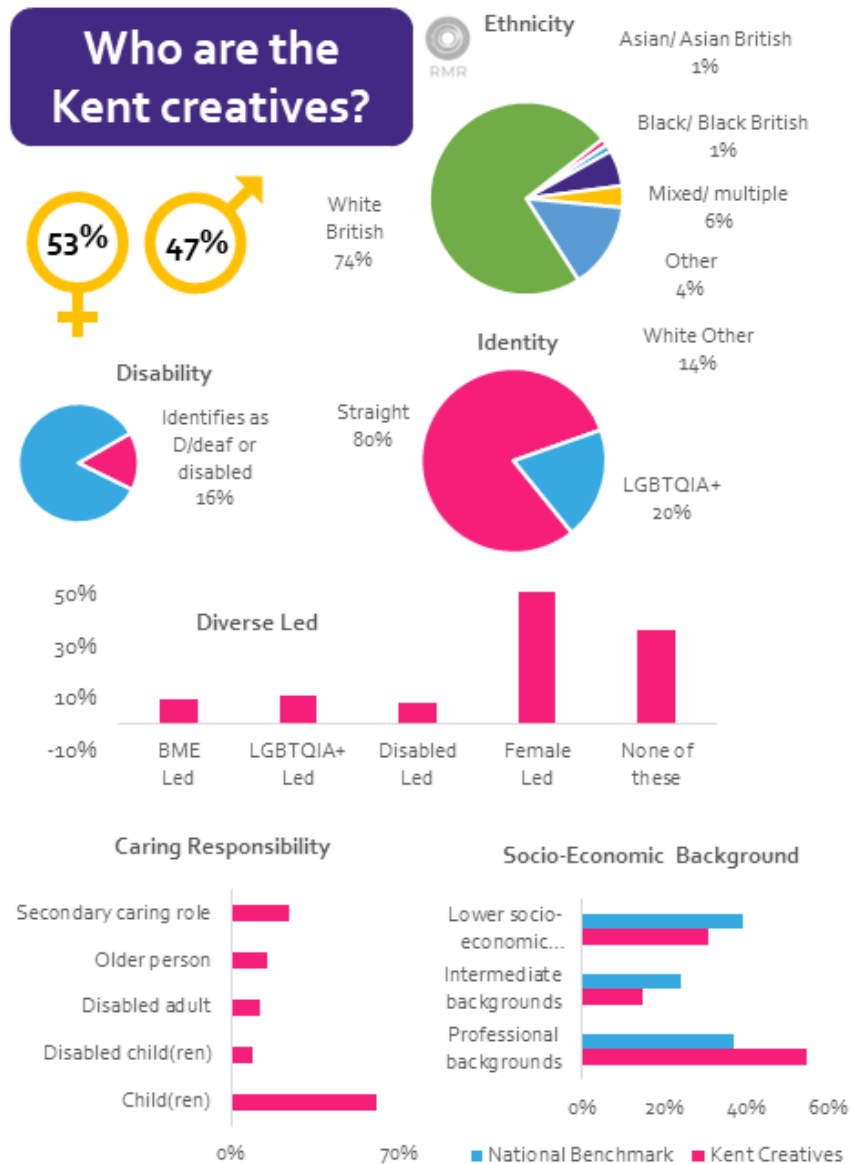
Figure 21 Uptake of skill development schemes. Base = 77, with 107 responses

them useful. Those that hadn't participated most often lacked capacity (20%) or lacked awareness of how to access them (20%).

1.19.4. About the creatives themselves

The infographic here provides an in-depth look at the demographic information provided by creatives in Kent. These demographics are largely in line with those for Kent, although more people identify here as LGBTQIA+, and there is a larger global majority, or less White British, than found in the Kent population in general.¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent>



Data from a Creative Sector in Kent snapshot survey conducted on behalf of Kent County Council by RM Research, with 125 valid responses from those working in the Creative Sector in Kent. For more, please see the full evaluation report by RM Research: <https://rmresearch.uk/bbb>

1.20. Challenges of the Sector

We find a sector still reeling from the lockdown restrictions of the Covid19 pandemic, now thrust into a cost-of-living crisis, only exacerbating existing challenges such as the inherent culture of freelancers and volunteers in the creative sector and issues around size and capacity of these creative businesses and practices.

KCC needs to have more face to face meetings - even if only on Zoom in order to understand what organisations are going through to try and survive.

Applicant to Kent County Council's Build Back Better grant

1.20.1. Culture of freelancers and volunteers

68% of creatives polled employ people or engage regularly with freelancers. Of these, just 3% are purely PAYE, with 57% contracting freelancers and 41% doing a mix of both. These findings highlight the culture of freelancer work within the sector, which provides certain opportunities and flexibility, but in exchange for financial insecurity, risk of isolation, and less access to sufficient capacity and resources.

Grant reliant organisation, all bid writers are volunteers. We submit funding bids whenever time allows.

Unsuccessful Build Back Better applicant

Only 43% of the creatives felt they were able to find employees or freelance collaborators with the skill set, training and experience they needed. Some feel there are a lack of people with the experience or skills they need, especially in the local area:

All staff are volunteers and hard to find.

Member of the Kent creative sector

Music theatre professionals are mainly based in London and musicians with relevant experience can be hard to source in Kent.

Member of the Kent creative sector

Most of the experienced crew I need are clustered in London or other major cities.

Member of the Kent creative sector

One person highlighted that they feel like the creatives are out there, but they lack the networking opportunities to meet and collaborate with them.

Well, it's difficult to find other creatives to collaborate with. the skills are there but it is the networking and culture of collaboration I struggle to find.

Member of the Kent creative sector

We hoped to take a kickstart trainee but couldn't find anyone suitable.

Member of the Kent creative sector

A further problem raised is the cost of good quality skillsets:

I do not have funds for good quality skills.

Member of the Kent creative sector

1.20.2. Size of creative business or practice

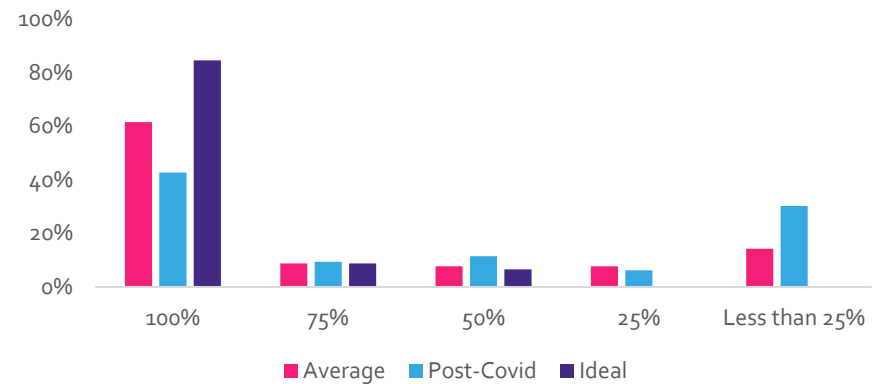


Figure 23 Percentage of turnover/income from creative practice/businesses for an average year, post-Covid, and their ideal ratio. Base = 91, 91 and 96 respectively

Figure 23 shows the average, post-Covid and ideal percentages for creative practitioners and businesses. These findings show that people are taking far less than before the pandemic, and far less than is their ideal, mirroring findings in the ASELA survey.

As noted, a majority of creatives work for themselves or in small teams. Indeed, research has found that 95.8% of creative enterprises in Kent are micro enterprises employing 10 people or less²⁰. There is a feeling amongst creatives that the bigger 'fish' end up with the funding and resources, and the smaller ones are forgotten about.

A great deal of funding across the region goes to larger cultural organisations that have a large admin base, which

²⁰ https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/87429/Creative-Industries-statistics.pdf

uses up cultural money, which should support arts across the region. It would be helpful if funding was more evenly distributed, and a similar percentage went to smaller organisations, which is often where the real training and skills development is nurtured.

Member of the Kent creative sector

1.20.3. Impact of Covid19

Members of the creative sector were asked to estimate the percentage of their turnover or income that comes from their creative practice or business. They were asked to do this for an average year, such as 2019 due to it being before the pandemic, for the financial year 2021-2022, and what their ideal ratio would be. As noted the chart in Figure 23 shows that income from creative practice has reduced for a sizable proportion of creatives during the pandemic, with almost 20% now having to supplement their creative income with other sources compared to pre-pandemic rates. In fact, 70% of the creatives felt that their creative income had been negatively affected by the pandemic. Relating to this,

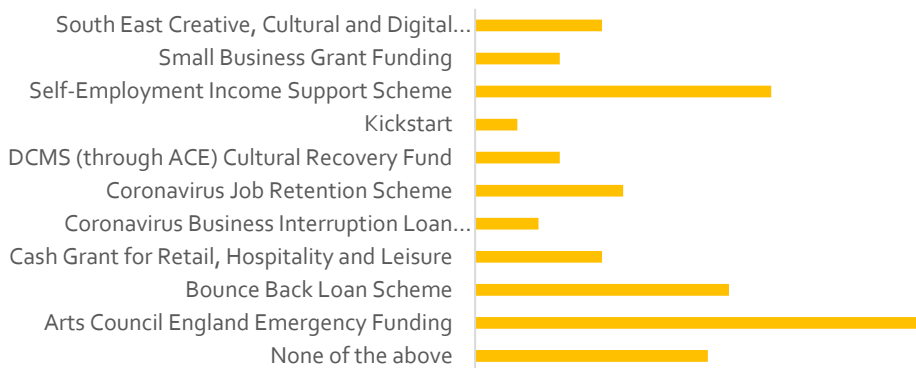


Figure 24 Financial support schemes accessed during the pandemic by the Kent creatives. Base = 90

people have shared the lack of available staff and collaborators with sufficient skills in the post-pandemic world:

Due to Covid many AV technicians changed careers so the ones that are left are now in huge demand. We can't run our business without them!

Member of the Kent creative sector

The data also highlights that none of the creatives want to earn less than 50% of their income through creative practice, and many more, almost half of the creatives we polled who were not already doing so, would like to move to solely supporting themselves with their creative income.

52% received financial support, with the most popular schemes being Arts Council England's Emergency Funding, and the government-funded Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs). 14% weren't aware that support was available to them, which is a similar proportion of people who were not aware of Kent County Council's Build Back Better grant, highlighting that around one in seven members of the creative sector are not receiving enough information to make informed decisions about their financial position.

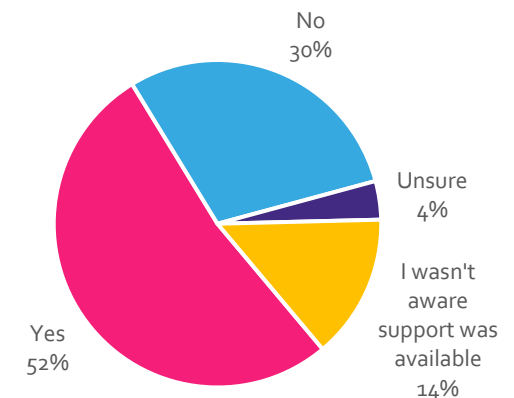


Figure 25 Who received financial support during the pandemic. Base = 105

I run a youth arts charity & we are closing at the end of Sept. The struggle to raise core costs in the post pandemic world has finally sunk us.

Member of the Kent creative sector

I was about to begin an internship programme before the pandemic.

Member of the Kent creative sector

1.20.4. Fundraising capacity

Small organisations don't always have the resources to go see and to network, as they are constantly either raising funds for project, or delivering their programmes. Project funded organisations cannot compete with core funded organisations, who have time to network and know where their next funding is coming from, so are able to plan longer term.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Some challenges that arose from the Build Back Better grant survey included capacity and ability to write grants. Several felt ill-equipped to write funding bids, either because of a lack of time within their team, or a lack of experience.

You assume that CIC have "bidding departments" who have time to bid and nothing else to do but for some of us, there are just one person who is running sessions and workshops and trying to bid for funding.

Unsuccessful Build Back Better applicant

Likewise, members of the focus group felt that funding tends to be project-based, and that this is not a sustainable model for career and talent development.

1.20.5. Cost of living

Creatives are suffering the double blow of the Covid19 pandemic followed all too quickly by the current cost of living crisis, not having had chance to recover in between.

Our costs are all going up, our workflow and cashflow haven't yet bounced back to pre-pandemic levels, and the 'cost of living crisis' isn't helping.

Member of the Kent creative sector

Many discussed ways they are trying to mitigate this, with several outsourcing to London, which could be a troubling financial and creative problem for Kent in the long run.

I have company registered in London due to cheap registered address services.

Member of the Kent creative sector

It is cheaper to rehearse in London - due to fare costs and venue costs.

Member of the Kent creative sector

Creatives also felt it was important that the effect of inflation on programming budgets was highlighted and recognised.

1.21. Support requests

Support requests are as varied as the creatives and their businesses themselves, but a core theme running through them is the need to connect and grow.

We need "officers" within the district council (and possibly county council) who are more creatively minded.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

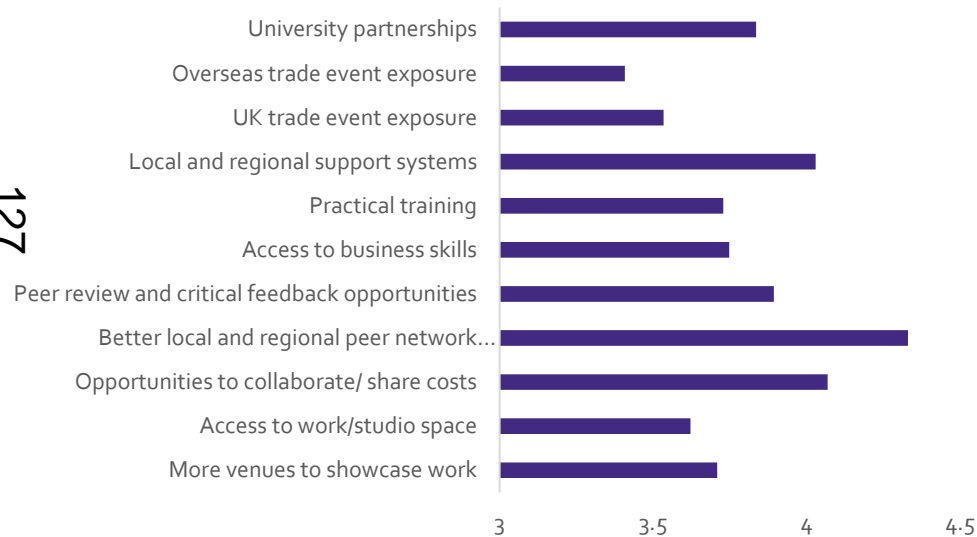


Figure 26 Average scores of support options. Scores range from 1 'Not useful at all' to 'Very useful'. Base = 103

Although all support options appealed to the group, the most popular ones revolve around being able to connect more and in more meaningful ways with other members of the creative industry, such as through local and regional support systems, and better local and regional peer networks.

I think peer review, 'coopetition' (ie cooperation and competition) is important for growth and developing the area as a creative hub or clusters etc. More links and co-operation between the various Kent areas. Artist quarters would be great.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

1.21.1. Venues and spaces

We need a venue as KCC are trying to close the current venue at The Roundhouse Theatre.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

21% of creatives did not feel that they needed additional physical production spaces, but of the 79% that did, the most popular were permanent or occasional project spaces, as well as some more industry-specific spaces like rehearsal space and filming studios.

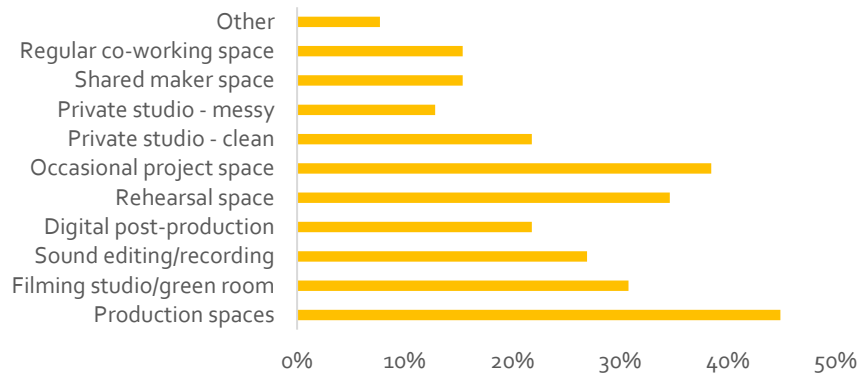
Although Tunbridge Wells is renowned to be a creative area for freelancers, there is little or no work for me here. The film industry is not promoted, there are no nearby studios for producers to work in.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

As a body of amateurs, we always suffer from a lack of venues in which to practice and musical training which do not incur unacceptable expense.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Likewise, 23% did not feel that they needed additional venues to support their creative practice. Of the 77% that did, almost half wanted further theatre and art exhibition spaces, and a third felt they would benefit from more live music, dance and independent cinema venues.



128 Figure 28 Physical space requests. Respondents were able to give more than one selection. Base = 78, with 211 responses

A major problem for me is finding space to present work or host events, particularly empty/meanwhile spaces with good footfall on e.g. high streets. Many liminal spaces have gone now...

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Interestingly, the request for additional theatre venues is not related directly to the creative industries of the respondents – theatre was not one of the most common industries amongst the creatives we polled.

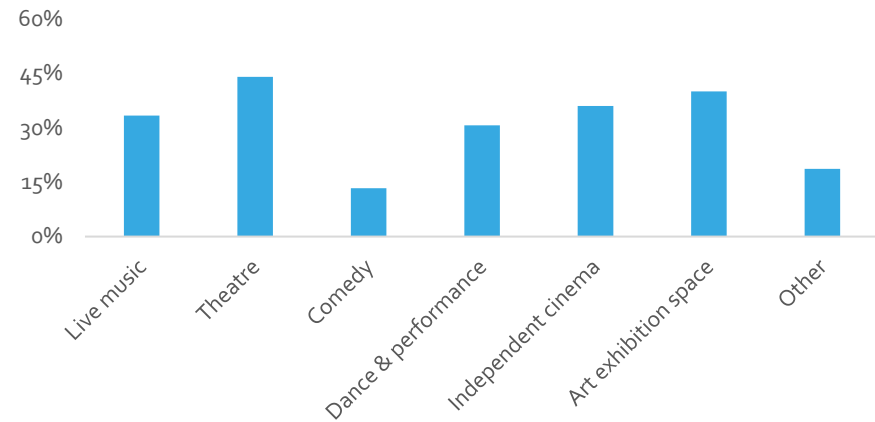


Figure 27 Venue requests. Base = 75, 162 responses

1.21.2. Financial support

Having the opportunity to apply for funds that reflected a more 'strategic partnership and supported some core costs would support sustainability, particularly at the more fragile end of the sector. As a delivery partner, it would also embed KCC's strategy in our work - and it would be important leverage for other funding applications, drawing more investment into Kent.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Whilst this was understandably one type of support that almost no one said they didn't want, financial support requests did vary widely across the sector, reflecting the varying nature of the challenges the creatives of Kent are facing in this post-pandemic, cost of living crisis landscape.

I've had to downsize my work through lack of financial support.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

People want:

- Core funding grants, as opposed to more project or delivery-focused grants
- Help to be less grant-reliant
- Asset acquisition grants – such as obtaining a building as a community asset
- Grants for up-to-date equipment to support business growth
- Staffing/ freelancer cost grants
- Grants for training to upskill creatives, or subsidised places on Local Authority training courses
- Funded prizes for competitions to promote engagement
- Sponsorship-in-kind – such as accountants
- Funding to bring projects to Kent, or incentives to use local Kent resources rather than London-based
- Long-term and multi-year funding streams
- Zero- or low-cost lending opportunities

A recognition of the need for investment in organisational infrastructure - project-funding alone does not create successful, stable, effective and well-governed organisations.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

1.21.3. Practical support

Practical support needs to come from those within the sector.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Given that the focus of many creative businesses or practices is their more artistic pursuits, many of them reported feeling like they lacked the skills or capacity to perform the more day-to-day tasks needed to thrive in the creative sector in Kent. Here we outline the practical support requests received from the creatives of Kent.

People want:

- Affordable and accessible workspaces
- Long-term admin support (project management, accountancy, design, marketing, cyber security)
- Outreach programmes, such as for local writers at theatres
- Access to shared tools and equipment
- CV, careers and job application support
- Childcare
- More help recruiting volunteers and board members
- Shared data and research repository
- More access to training and coaching

I need help/confidence on how to present myself and my skills to others, and how to value this work financially.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

1.21.4. Business skills support

Business skills training has to be really specific to the needs and abilities of small scale creative industries, it's often too difficult to engage with as not 100% relevant.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Where practical support covers areas that people would like others to support them in, this section outlines where people would like to improve their own skills to support and grow their creative business or practice.

People want support with or to upskill in:

- Fundraising and lead generation
- Pensions, insurance, legal contracts, governance
- PR & advertising
- Time management
- Accountancy
- Social media, general IT skills, data analysis

1.21.5. Peer and networking support

It would be great to have a county wide support network.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

Arguably the most popular offer of support after financial, most people felt some form of peer or networking support would be beneficial to either their creative business or practice, or to them personally.

People want:

- Peer brokerage and hub-based support
- Directory of other artists, freelancers or organisations for partnerships
- Networking events, both professional and informal
- Collaboration networks

- University and large arts organisation-supported events
- Hybrid workshop and networking events
- A networking platform
- More out of hours opportunities

Personally, I find it difficult to attend networking events because few fall outside of normal working hours (a lot of opportunities seem to be during the day, when I'm on the clock for my clients).

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

1.21.6. Mental wellbeing support

Personally I find relentlessly plugging my own work extremely tiresome given the limited interest by local bookshops, etc. which are all big chains and show no interest in helping local people sell their wares.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

A lot of the creatives who discussed their mental wellbeing needs with us felt that this area could be addressed by putting support in place in other areas, such as practical, financial and peer and networking support. Issues raised here are more of a symptom of lack of support in other areas, leading to feelings of burnout and anxiety, rather than the route of the problem. Further, some felt this issue could only truly be tackled on a national scale with a substantive shift in mental health provision in this country.

The landscape is currently the main stressor and without immediate support to stabilise organisations will become intolerable.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

People want:

- More financial security and fair pay
- Regular informal meet ups or coffee mornings to promote support and discussion with other creatives
- Support for counselling
- More signposting to available resources
- Clinical supervision
- Training in emotional intelligence
- A better work/life balance

I think we do OK on this front - possibly because we're a supporting partnership and we're not working in isolation? There's probably people who need this much more than us.

Member of the Kent Creative Sector

1.22. Support recommendations

Given the challenges in the sector and the country as a whole, the difference between support requests and what is possible is inevitably huge, however we feel there are some key changes which could be made to enhance efficiency and thus increase support without huge cost. As such our recommendations focus around these...

Our recommendation around communications (see 4.3 below) are the foundation on which to build better sector support. Making KCC more 'human' and approachable, explaining where you can (and can't) help, being clear in communications and recognising the

heterogeneity of the sector, will provide a basis for addressing the support concerns.

Fundamentally there is one overarching principle which would help in providing support - becoming a better connector – a broker of information relevant to the creative sector in Kent.

This could take a number of forms, for example:

- **Link up national, regional and local initiatives with businesses:** For example, with the issue of venues, ensure creative businesses are aware of regional initiatives like SECEN's Creative Open Workspace Masterplan and Prospectus project and local development opportunities.

Take individual issues you know business care about and build high quality information hubs that create these connections. You may have to limit the areas you can cover, but these should be driven by a combination of local business need and KCCs strategic vision for the sector.

- **Signpost to existing and future support:** Concerns about practical, business and mental health support are not confined to the creative sector. KCC should signpost to the local and national (general) business support available.

Improved communications (as outlined below) with the sector would help with this, offering more opportunities to make businesses aware of the support available. Also there is the potential to more deeply explore partnership possibilities knowing that KCC may not be able to deliver but others can.

- **Identify need and offer targeted support:** Simply signposting out to others may not meet specific needs. Explore the support issues further to see if there are specific

creative sector needs that are not currently addressed. In be clear about where you can help, you both better define your offer and also manage expectations.

Look for opportunities to offer something targeted at the creative sector on which KCC can lead (or work with partners on), for example consider running (online, real world) surgeries for creative businesses with colleagues and partners who provide wider business support. This would meet the concerns expressed above, allow for more signposting but also give KCC visibility in the creative sector. This could include supporting grant applications or signposting to others who could. There may also be a benefit in building a toolkit for those advising and supporting creative businesses.

Warning
 Some scaling issues were noted on the original master drawing of Granada House which was provided, although these have now been corrected. Before proceeding with this proposed layout, all internal dimensions must be double checked onsite, as should the viability of the rear MOE route.



Proposed Ground Floor 1:100 Scale

Notes:
 Do not scale from this drawing unless printed at A3 size. Printer setting use "Actual Size" or "Custom Scale 100%". Do not use "Fit To Page"

Date	Description	Rev
Drawing 01		
Project Arts Complex 7 & 8 Granada House		
Client A/M/L		
Title Proposed Ground Floor 1:100 Scale		Revision
Date 24.02.24	Scale 1:100	Drawn CN
Job No. PGF/D01	Dwg No. PGF/D01	Checked by CN

Business Plan: The Granada Gallery & Studios

Executive Summary:

The Granada Gallery & Studios is a community-focused arts hub and maker space in Maidstone, aimed at providing local artists and creatives with exhibition and studio spaces, fostering collaboration and networking, and supporting the wider community's engagement with the arts. The project aligns with the Arts and Culture Strategy and Economic Development Strategy which set out a desire to capitalise on the potential of the town centre through supporting our existing businesses and arts/cultural groups, while continuing to attract and retain new talent. This will contribute to Priority 5: Destination Maidstone Town Centre of the EDS and the specific action to support a thriving creative and cultural business base and visitor economy offer in Maidstone Town.

Mission Statement:

A vibrant Community Arts Hub and Maker Space to support the needs of the local creative economy, providing accessible opportunities for the community of Maidstone to engage with the arts. Contributing to our priority for a Thriving Place: A Borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and is an enjoyable and prosperous place to live.

Objectives

- Establish an arts hub and maker space for the local community
- Secure high occupancy rates for the studios
- Secure regular bookings for the exhibition space and other hireable spaces to ensure there are regular events in the town centre
- Increase engagement in the arts through programmes, workshops and events
- Encourage entrepreneurship with events to connect creators with buyers, collaborators and other residents
- Work with local artists/creatives to run the venue and help them establish a charity / CIC with a view to taking over the venue as an independent organisation in the future
- Job creation – supporting creatives in the town centre

Products and Services:

Gallery/exhibition space: short hire periods, low cost, flexible

Studios for rent: variety of sizes, low rent, short term, opportunities for networking/collaboration

Flexible meeting/workshop space for hire

Regular programme of events and activities: affordable, accessible and varied

Business support (via the team at the Business Terrace) – see below

Incubator / start-ups (Studios 1 – 4):

Our policy will be these spaces are for 'start-up businesses' trading for less than 24 months prior to starting their tenancy.

Businesses can occupy an incubator unit for up to a maximum of two years, which will be split into 2x6 month licences, followed by a 12 month licence agreement.

Studios 5-7 will be at market rates for established businesses.

Business Support:

1. Arts, Culture and Events Officer to contact ED with prospective tenant details to arrange a business advisory session.
2. Start-up meets Economic Development's External Business advisor to run through their business idea and business plan.
3. Business advisor to advise MBC that the business start-up is as financially viable as can be checked as a start-up, the business idea is viable and is able to take on the liability of a licence agreement.
4. MBC agrees licence.
5. As the business grows, they can go back to the Business Advisor for additional support and guidance.
6. The business would automatically be invited to join Economic Development's business database for invites to future business networking events, available grants and business support workshops.

It is anticipated that between 30 – 40 jobs could be supported each year through the Studios. This is based on:

Studios 1 – 5 – max 10 people at any time (can accommodate up to 2 per unit)

Studio 6 – max 4 people

Studio 7 – max 6 people

Assuming each business takes a 6 month tenancy this would give a maximum of 20 people per 6 months/40 per year. However it's likely that some of the studios will be single-occupancy as artists/makers often work alone.

Start-ups will be supported for up to 2 years within the Incubator Studios, then they will either move into one of the market rate Studios (5 – 7) or be supported to move to more mainstream premises.

Target Market:

Market segment	Characteristics	Potential interest
Local artists/creatives	Living within the Borough of Maidstone Newly qualified or established artists looking for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a space to start-up or expand their practice • exhibition space • space to collaborate with and learn from others 	Studio space Exhibition space Opportunities to collaborate, network with other creatives Learn/develop business skills
Community arts groups and organisations	Based in the borough Looking for rehearsal space / venue to carry out activities	Meeting/workshop space Opportunities to collaborate, network
Residents	Living in borough/adjoining areas Looking for cultural experiences and activities	Visiting the gallery Taking part in workshops, events and activities
Visitors	People visiting the area Looking for cultural experiences	Visiting the gallery Taking part in a workshop/activity

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique offer – nothing else like it in town • Lots of interest/support from the local creative community • Flexible exhibition space to allow for large or small shows; short term hire • Variety of studio sizes; short term lease • Town Centre location with good footfall to attract passers-by • Provides a focal point for arts events and activities in the town – dedicated space • Artist-in-residence to deliver a public engagement programme • Space for artists and creatives to network and collaborate • Support for local creative businesses; training; upskilling • Backed by the local authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New proposition so will take time to build a 'community' • Size of venue limits what can be offered and how the space can be used • Funding - reliant on ACE funding to deliver the project • Loss of University for Creative Arts campus in Rochester means fewer arts/creative students in local area • No on-site café • No on-site parking
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to engage a wider, more diverse audience in arts and creativity • Large creative sector in the borough • Growing population looking for cultural experiences • Mid Kent College plans for performing arts centre with commercial arm. Potential to link with/co-locate arts hub • Hub could become a catalyst to drive regeneration; improve wellbeing and promote pride in place • Potential to link with local café(s) to offer discounts to hirers/users of the Hub • Social prescribing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maidstone already has a network of link workers in place ○ Involve are actively engaging arts providers to deliver activities • Town Centre Strategy – shifting focus from retail only to more leisure/arts and hospitality uses • Potential to expand offering if more units become available (e.g. retail outlet, music venue, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of uptake of studio spaces • Lack of hirers for exhibition space • Commercial interest in the unit over-riding the community project • Competitors - Nucleus Arts now has several centres in Medway, could attract people away from Maidstone • Cost of living – impact on take up of studios, hireable spaces and workshops

Competitive Analysis:

There are no direct competitors in Maidstone

Nucleus Arts is the nearest competitor, with centres in Rochester, Chatham and Rainham. They are a well-established business (charity) with a loyal audience/clientele. They currently have a waiting list for studio space. Nucleus previously ran a similar facility (without studios) in Units 4-5 Granada House but moved out when business rates relief was stopped after they started running a café from the premises.

Maidstone Museum has an exhibition space but this is booked years in advance and is relatively expensive (especially for individual, emerging artists).

Art-K is a franchise business based in the Royal Star Arcade that offers art classes to adults and children. These are charged at commercial rates.

Unique Selling Proposition:

Professional exhibition space for short-term hire, low cost, and flexible.

Variety of studios for emerging artists, low rent, short term, with on-site exhibition space and opportunities for collaboration and networking, business support.

Varied programme of events and activities appealing to the wider community

Business Support for the creative sector utilising our already successful inhouse business terrace support

Legal Structure:

To be determined.

Organisational Structure:

Manager: Responsible for day-to-day operations, bookings, and studio contracts.

Artist-in-Residence: Responsible for developing and delivering a diverse programme of arts-based events for community engagement and assisting with day-to-day running

Marketing & Sales Strategy:

Channel	Action	Market Segment
Local press	Announce forthcoming launch of venue and what it offers	ALL
Direct mail	Email details of available studio spaces – sizes, costs, etc.	Local artists/creatives
Business Terrace e-newsletters	Include articles with details of studio spaces and contacts	Local artists/creatives
Kent County Council	Work with KCC to promote studio spaces to their networks	Local artists/creatives
Web listing on artiststudiofinder.org	List available studios – sizes, costs, etc	Local artists/creatives

Direct mail	Email details of hireable spaces including for exhibitions/workshops	Local artists/creatives Community arts groups
Facebook	Targeted posts to reach artists/creatives based in Maidstone and Kent	Local artists/creatives
Google Ads	Campaign to promote studios/exhibition space starting 2 months prior to opening	Local artists/creatives Community arts groups
Local press	Announce official opening of venue	Residents
Visit Maidstone website	List any events/activities planned on the 'What's On' pages	Residents/visitors
Visit Maidstone e-newsletters	Promote the Arts Hub and any events/activities planned	Residents/visitors
Facebook	Series of posts to promote venue	Residents / Visitors
Posters in venue windows	To promote the venue and what's happening there (exhibitions/events)	Residents / Visitors

Funding:

£45k from UKSPF

Up to £150k(?) available from s106

These funds will be used to cover the refurbishment and fit-out of the unit.

We will need to apply to Arts Council England (ACE) for a grant to support the Hub for a trial period (ACE will usually fund projects that last up to 3 years). This will help to cover running costs, including salaries, as well as materials and equipment to deliver a programme of public engagement events/activities.

ACE funding options

1. Project grant of up to £100,000. If we want to include any 'build' costs as part of this, we will need to contact ACE before submitting a full application.
2. Project grant of more than £100,001 – if the project doesn't relate to one of ACE's Strategic Strands then we must contact them first. The guidance states: "We want to make sure that a project of this size has the potential impact that we would expect before you invest time in developing a full application. We will also think about where we have budget available. We will confirm in writing whether you can apply."
3. Major Projects Strategic Strand - to be eligible for this, our application needs to:
 - Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
 - Meet the ACE definition of a Major Project. A Major Project is defined as an ambitious, high-quality project that is likely to leave a legacy beyond its funded life.
 - Major Projects applications must be grounded in at least one Element of the Creative and Cultural Country Outcome of the ACE strategy. There are two Elements that might be relevant for our proposal:
 - Element Q: Giving more opportunities to people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) to start a professional career in the creative industries
 - Element R: Ensuring people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) have opportunities to sustain their careers and fulfil their potential in the creative industries.
4. Place Partnerships Strategic Strand – to be eligible for this, our application needs to:

- Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
- Be for a strategic place-based intervention that is intended to make a long-term difference to the cultural or creative life of the local community;
- Make a clear step change in provision in that place where a relevant partnership exists to deliver the project
- Be informed by robust needs analysis and respond to relevant local strategies and
- Be led by a consortium of partners who are relevant to delivering the project

To apply for either the Major Projects or Place Partnerships Strands, we would need to submit an Expression of Interest in the first instance. If approved, we could then proceed to a full application.

Financial Projections:

Pending detailed financial information, projections will include income from space rentals, events, and potential grants, balanced against operating costs, salaries, and maintenance expenses.

Appendix:

Feasibility study – Creative Arts Hub Report by Retail Inspired

Agenda Item 15

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted