

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 10 December 2024
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cleator (Chairman), Dawes, Fort, Khadka (Vice-Chairman),
Milham, Oliver, Parfitt, Rodwell and Wilby

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

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Issued on 2 December 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

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| 15. Exempt Appendices to Item 10: Future Sustainability of Community Larders | 3 – Financial/Business Affairs | 110 - 124 |
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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 6 December 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

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors Cleator (Chairman), Dawes, Khadka, Milham, Oliver, Parfitt, Rodwell, Russell and Wilby
Cabinet Members:	Councillors D Naghi (Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety) and Wales (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness)

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fort.

38. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Russell was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Fort.

39. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

40. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

42. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

43. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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

In response to queries from the Chairman, the Head of Housing & Regulatory Services apologised that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action

Plan item had been delayed until the December meeting due to operational reasons.

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

46. HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME - REVIEW

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness introduced the report and outlined the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme. Some of the proposed amendments included:

- To amend banding to encourage households to remain in current accommodation, avoid use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) where possible and offer more opportunity for housing to applicants who offer a community contribution. A fifth band would be added specifically for households in TA, which would not be eligible to bid on the housing register, but would be allocated suitable social housing directly;
- Due to the significant increase in Housing Register applications, it was proposed to amend qualifying criteria to favour applicants more likely to be successful in, so as not to build unrealistic expectations. Resident criteria would be changed from two to three years and family connection and returning resident criteria would be removed. Employment criteria would remain the same; and
- To allow larger households to bid on properties that do not meet their bedroom requirement to improve their current living situation. Additional wording will be included stating we will work Housing Association partners to assist with this.

In response to queries, the Housing Solutions Manager stated that the amendments would put the Housing Allocation Scheme more in line with other local authorities in Kent. The Head of Housing & Regulatory Services advised that the amendments would help manage the increasing number of incoming applications and offer housing where it was most needed.

Several Members raised concerns that people who were homeless, fleeing domestic abuse and carers for vulnerable people may be negatively impacted if the family connection criteria were removed. It was raised that an Equality Impact Assessment may be useful to assess this. The Head of Housing & Regulatory Services reassured the Committee that there were specialist officers in the Housing team who worked with victims of domestic abuse with procedures in place if they had not been referred through the police or social services.

The Committee were uneasy with the idea of removing the family connection criteria completely, instead opting to suggest it be changed from 5 to 6 years. It was proposed that paragraph 3.14 of Option A be amended to remove the family connection criteria and would read:

"The current 'Returning Resident' criteria will be removed and applicants will no longer be able to join the housing register through this connection."

It was also proposed to change paragraph 9.3 of Appendix 1 to the report to read:

"Family - the applicant must have immediate family that has been residing within Maidstone Borough for a continuous period of 6 years immediately prior to the application. The Council may confirm these details with other data held internally."

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER: That the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, as set out at Option A, be adopted subject to the requested amendments.

47. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.19 p.m.







MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN FOR THE FOUR MONTH PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 2024 TO 28 FEBRUARY 2025

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:

4	 Councillor Stuart Jeffery Leader of the Council Email stuartjeffery@maidstone.gov.uk	 Councillor Clive English Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Enforcement Email cliveenglish@maidstone.gov.uk	 Councillor Kathy Cox Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Email KathyCox@Maidstone.gov.uk
 Councillor Tony Harwood Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Management Email tonyharwood@maidstone.gov.uk	 Councillor Stephen Thompson Cabinet Member for Healthier Stronger Communities Email: StephenThompson@Maidstone.gov.uk	 Councillor Mike Summersgill Cabinet Member for Climate Transition and Nature Recovery Email MichaelSummersgill@Maidstone.gov.uk	



Councillor David Naghi

Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion
and Safety

Email Davidnaghi@maidstone.gov.uk



Councillor Simon Wales

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Email SimonWales@Maidstone.gov.uk

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.

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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.

Councillor Stuart Jeffery
Leader of the Council

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant Cabinet Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was endorsed in March 2024. The Action Plan will sit alongside the strategy, and support our strategic ambitions.</p>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	Not before 10th Dec 2024	Yes	No	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 10 Dec 2024	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan	<p>Hannah Gaston</p> <p>hannahgaston@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
Housing Allocation Scheme – Review	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	18 Dec 2024	No	No	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 12 Nov 2024	Housing Allocation Scheme - Review	<p>John Littlemore, Tony Stewart</p> <p>johnlittlemore@maidstone.gov.uk, tonystewart@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
Community Ladders	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety	18 Dec 2024	No	No	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 10 Dec 2024	Community Ladders	<p>Anna Collier, Orla Sweeney</p> <p>annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk, orlasweeney@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
2nd Quarter Financial Update Report 7	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources	18 Dec 2024	No	No Open	Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee 3 Dec 2024 Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2024 Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 10 Dec 2024	2nd Quarter Financial Update Report	Paul Holland paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk
Fees and Charges 2025/26 Review of the Fees and Charges for 2025/26. Forms part of the budget setting process.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources	18 Dec 2024	Yes	No Open	Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee 3 Dec 2024 Planning and Healthier Stronger	Fees and Charges 2025/26 CTCES PAC	Adrian Lovegrove adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk

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						Communities Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2024 Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 10 Dec 2024		
Half-yearly Performance Update ∞ A half-yearly update on key performance indicators.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources	18 Dec 2024	No	No Open	Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee 3 Dec 2024 Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee 5 Dec 2024 Housing and Community Cohesion PAC 10 Dec 2024	Half-yearly Performance Update	Carly Benville carlybenville@maidstone.gov.uk

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
Maidstone East, Sandling Road Procurement Process formerly the Demolition & Contamination Update Update on the demolition contract and grounds contamination surveys.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	22 Jan 2025	Yes	No Open	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 14 Jan 2025	Demolition & Contamination Update	Philip Morris PhilipMorris@Maidstone.gov.uk
Residential Rent Setting Policies Rent and Service Charge Setting Policies, changes to charges for TA in MBC Owned properties.	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	22 Jan 2025	Yes	No Open	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 14 Jan 2025	Residential Rent Setting Policies	Julie Shuter JulieShuter@Maidstone.gov.uk
Corporate Strategy Decision on the new Corporate Strategy 2025-30	Cabinet	Leader of the Council	5 Feb 2025	Yes	No Open	Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee 7 Jan 2025 Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory	Corporate Strategy	Anna Collier Head of Insight, Communities & Governance Policies, Communities and Engagement annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk

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						<p>Committee 14 Jan 2025</p> <p>Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee 8 Jan 2025</p> <p>The Strategic Plan has been widely consulted on</p>		
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety	5 Feb 2025	No	No Open	Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 4 Feb 2025	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Annual Update	<p>Orla Sweeney, Anna Collier</p> <p>orlasweeney@maidstone.gov.uk, annacollier@maidstone.gov.uk</p>
<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025 to 2030, Savings Proposals and Capital Programme -</p> <p>This report represents the final stage in the consideration of the budget for 2025/26. It</p>	Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources	5 Feb 2025	Yes	No Open	<p>Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee 7 Jan 2025</p> <p>Housing and</p>	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025 to 2030, Savings Proposals and Capital Programme - CTCES PAC</p>	<p>Adrian Lovegrove</p> <p>adrianlovegrove@maidstone.gov.uk</p>

Details of the Decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Lead Member	Expected Date of Decision	Key	Exempt	Proposed Consultees / Method(s) of Consultation	Documents to be considered by Decision taker	Representations may be made to the following officer by the date stated
<p>brings together revenue and capital budget proposals for 2025/26, including a proposed level of Council Tax, so that a balanced budget may be recommended to Council on 5th February 2025.</p> <p>11</p>						<p>Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee 14 Jan 2025</p> <p>Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee 8 Jan 2025</p>		

Agenda Item 10

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

10 December 2024

Future sustainability of Community Larders

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee	10 December 2024
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11 December 2024
Cabinet	18 December 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
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 Policy, Partnerships and Inclusion Manager
Classification	<p>Public Report with Exempt Private Appendices</p> <p>The information contained within the identified appendices has been considered exempt under the following paragraph of part I of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:-</p> <p>3 = Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)</p> <p><u>Public Interest Test</u></p> <p>It is in the public interest that this report be taken in private because it contains commercially sensitive information that would jeopardise the Council's investment position if it were to be publicly available.</p>
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone Borough Council began work in 2021 to address health inequalities in its most deprived communities. The Council received support from the West Kent Health and Care Partnership (WKHCP) to explore the underlying contributory health conditions impacting the wide disparity in healthy life expectancy in the borough, working with local stakeholders to prioritise and focus including addressing diabetes and healthy weight. Using an evidence led approach the Council subsequently commissioned an organisation called Activmob to work with residents in Shepway to understand their experiences around food to understand what interventions may bring about health improvement.

Through this work, it was identified that food insecurity was one of the biggest concerns for residents. Grant funding was secured from the West Kent Health and Care Partnership health inequalities programme to establish a community larder in the area.

With learning from the Shepway Larder, a second Community Larder was established in Park Wood in July 2023. This was also funded by the West Kent Health and Care Partnership who also extended funding to include services provided by the West Kent GP Federation relating to diabetes including nutrition.

In September 2023 a third Community Larder was opened at Trinity utilising Government funding from the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The larders were designed to provide a long-term, sustainable approach to enabling food insecurity and to contribute positively to reducing health inequalities through advice and support for healthy eating and provide access to other support and advice. The wider benefits of the larders have been to reduce food waste and to provide opportunities for volunteering.

The larders have been delivered to date via funding from the WKHCP and the HSF. WKHCP funding has been reviewed and will not continue and HSF funding is limited and its future is uncertain. The Council therefore has to consider how if and how Community Larders can be made sustainable. The options are set out at paragraphs 3.1 -3.3.

Purpose of Report

To consider the options and recommend the best option for the future sustainability of the Community Larders for Cabinet decision.

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

1. The options for the future sustainability of the community larders be considered;
2. A one-off investment in The Bread and Butter Thing, to ensure a sustainable larder provision (as outlined in Exempt Appendix 3), be agreed.

Future sustainability of Community Larders

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The continued, sustainable delivery of the Community Larders will support delivery of the Council’s current strategic plan priorities: Homes and Communities and A Thriving Place as well as supporting the emerging priorities of the revised Strategic Plan: Resilient Communities, Fairer Economy for People and Planet	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations help deliver the cutting objectives: Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced and Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved alongside the emerging cross-cutting objective: Putting People and the Environment first.	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 financial implications of the options set out in the report have been fully costed. One off funding was allocated with as part of the previous budget as part of the Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy and Action Plan to support the sustainability of the larders. This funding would facilitate delivery of the preferred option set out in the report without the need for further investment. Continued delivery of the Larders in-house, without grant funding, would require and an ongoing, annual investment.	Head of Finance
Staffing	The implications for staff have been considered with each option. Staff have been briefed as options have emerged.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance

Legal	A grant agreement will be required to take forward the preferred option and safeguard the longer-term sustainability of a larder offer.	Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes. However, dependent on the decision taken, it could result in review of the collection and processing of personal data or a need to explore the sharing 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 protection impact assessment or put in place a suitable data sharing agreement.	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Equalities	<p>Food insecurity was the biggest concern for residents in the Council's most deprived Communities. We recognise that the continuation of a larder offer will have a positive impact on disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>A revised EqIA would be completed to support the option taken forward to help ensure that Council considers any disadvantage that could be created with a revised model or offer and responds appropriately.</p>	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified	Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
Procurement	The procurement approach that has been taken is outlined in paragraph 2.25 to 2.35 of the report.	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. Community Larders are a type of social supermarket and form part of the food aid supply chain that has grown in England in response to austerity and a growing social knowledge of food waste. They are generally located in areas of deprivation that lack access to services and food. Their aims are aligned with local community needs but tend to address social issues such as loneliness, health and welfare as well as food provision.
- 2.2. In January 2023, 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.
- 2.3. This was already recognised in its Financial Inclusion Strategy in 2021 which was revised in April 2024. This strategy included a commitment to make the Community Larders sustainable.
- 2.4. Food insecurity is wide ranging and is impacting over 7.2 million people in the UK. Food insecurity disproportionately impacts low-income households with children and disabled members. Those that experience food insecurity are at higher risk of chronic health conditions. Community Larders have become more prolific with the increase of 'working poor' and food insecurity. They differ from food banks in that food banks are emergency food provision and access is restricted to those that are in chronic food poverty. Community larders bridge the gap between emergency and mainstream food provision.
- 2.5. Community larders have economic, social and environmental goals and aim to give consumers more choice and dignity than may be offered at food banks. Although there are different operating models such as a subscription fee, pay at the point of service, or voluntary contribution, the ethos is that users are not passive receivers of charity. Successful models take a business approach to solve multiple issues of food surplus, food insecurity and social welfare.
- 2.6. Maidstone Borough Council has sought to take a proactive role in working with local partners and communities to address health inequalities in its most deprived communities.
- 2.7. In 2021, Maidstone formed a multi-disciplinary working group to look at inequalities in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. For places with the poorest outcomes the group used a logic model process and working with stakeholders narrowed down the underlying conditions that it wanted to focus on, these included diabetes and healthy weight.
- 2.8. Taking an insight led approach, the Council commissioned Activmob, a social enterprise organisation that specialises in bringing together communities to capture "real life" insights, to work with local residents to understand their beliefs, behaviours and feelings around food. Through

this work, it was identified that food insecurity was one of the biggest concerns for residents in these wards and choice was extremely limited (a common factor associated with diabetes and weight management). As a result of this work, the Council secured grant funding from the West Kent Health Care Partnership (NHS) and established a food larder for residents in Shepway, opening in December 2022.

- 2.9. The Community larder was designed to support independence and offer a long-term, sustainable approach to food security as opposed to responding to crisis which would be the role of a food bank. The objectives were to:
- Improve food security and reduce food waste.
 - Contribute to reducing health inequalities through access to advice and support.
 - Provide access to other support including finance and debt management and support financial inclusion.
- 2.10. They were also intended to offer wider benefits to health and being through volunteering and building connectivity in the community.
- 2.11. Ongoing work was undertaken with Activmob who evaluated the project at Shepway. The learning from the Shepway Larder was taken forward and a second Community Larder was established in Park Wood in July 2023. This was also established with grant funding from the West Kent Health Care Partnership (NHS).
- 2.12. In September 2023 a third Community Larder was opened at Trinity utilising Government funding from the Household Support Fund. The development of this larder in High Street was data led, responding to a shift of known areas of deprivation, with High Street now known to be one of the most deprived wards in the borough.
- 2.13. In order to ensure that the Community Larders deliver the desired project outcomes, in April 2024, the Council included in its Preventing Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, a commitment to make the Larders sustainable.
- 2.14. As part of this commitment the Council agreed as part of its 2024/25 Budget that funding would be allocated to the Community Larders for this purpose. The first £139,000 is unringfenced government grant, comprising New Homes Bonus and the Funding Guarantee, be used for one-off support to financial inclusion and food larder services, The remaining amount would come from either Recovery and Renewal or Business Rates Pool Reserve.

Current Model

- 2.15. The operating times and locations of the three Community Larders are shown below.
- 2.16. Within the current model customers pay a small contribution of £3 per session and can choose up to 10 items of food, distributing store cupboard

food, refrigerated and frozen items alongside fruit, vegetables, and bakery items.

	Operating Hours	Location	Funding
Shepway Community Larder	Tuesday and Thursday 10am – 1pm	Golding Homes Community Hub, Northumberland Road	West Kent Health and Care Partnership (NHS)
Park Wood Community Larder	Wednesday and Friday 10am – 1pm	Rosemary Graham Centre, Somner Walk	West Kent Health and Care Partnership (NHS)
Trinity Community Larder	Tuesday and Thursday 1.30pm – 4pm	Trinity, Church Street	Household Support Fund (Central Government)

2.17 Specific data has been collected as part of the conditions of grant funding for Shepway and Park Wood which illustrates the current usage. The data in the table below is for the most recent reporting period, Q3 2024/25:

Q2 2024/25 (July-September)	Park Wood	Shepway
Membership	303	501
Number of Visits	771	984
Weight of fresh food	3431 kgs	4830 kgs
Weight of store cupboard items	3139 kgs	3370 kgs
Number of shopping bags (5kg)	1314	1640
Signposting to support services	24	16
Household Support Fund applications	14	5
Data on intervention/outcomes	N/A	N/A

2.18 Trinity Larder has been funded from the Household Support Grant. The community it serves tends to be more transient and the user needs can be different to the other two larders. Collecting data in the same manner as at the other larders has not been possible to date. The table below provides a high-level overview of the current offer and demand.

Trinity			
(August to October)	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
Membership *	N/A	N/A	584
Number of Visits	255	211 (3 weeks only)	370
Total Number of shopping bags	510	422	740

2.19 If the service was to remain in house, a review would be undertaken, including a review of data collection and reporting to manage performance and ongoing need.

Staffing and Operations

- 2.20 A structure chart can be seen at appendix 1. A Senior Project Co-ordinator oversees all three larders as well as running the Shepway Larder. Park Wood has one full time Co-ordinator and a team of volunteers to support the day to day running. Trinity previously had a fixed term project co-ordinator, but it is currently overseen by existing staff. There is one administrative support post employed one day a week. These posts are fixed term and are funded from the NHS and Government grants. In addition, there two zero-hour posts to cover staff holidays. Additionally, the larders are heavily supported by volunteers from the local community. The volunteer pool is approximately 43 across the three larders.
- 2.21 Trinity Community Larder is hosted at Trinity House, a Council owned building. Park Wood had Shepway are hosted by Golding Homes who provide two rent-free venues. Golding Homes have expressed their desire to continue to support a larder provision with venues in Park Wood and Shepway but the certainty of a longer-term venue is not guaranteed.
- 2.22 The larders have been stocked using grant funding, which has paid for food deliveries from FareShare family foodbank. Staff purchase food from supermarkets and wholesalers. Surplus food that would have otherwise gone to waste is collected every day from supermarkets and restaurants. Collections are made in the mornings and evenings.
- 2.23 The Project Co-ordinators have built up positive relationships with a range of organisations in each of the areas and are in receipt of donations of both money and food. For example, schools have donated food as part of their Harvest Festival donations and surplus stock has been redistributed to food banks, local churches and community groups.

Wraparound services

- 2.24 Maidstone Community Larders have partnered with other charities and organisations who provide in-house services and support during operating hours, including (but not limited to) on site Dietary and Diabetes support, Involve Social Prescribers, Fusion Healthy Living Centre, We Are With You (Bereavement Charity), Digital Inclusion and Dogs Trust.
- 2.25 It should be noted that the Dietary and Diabetes support has now been withdrawn in line with the cessation of grant funding.

Cost of Service

- 2.26 The annual cost of the larders is outlined at Appendix 2. It has been confirmed that the West Kent Health Care Partnership (NHS) will not be renewed. The Household Support Fund will continue for an additional 6 months.
- 2.27 It is estimated that the existing larder model can remain operational until the end of the current financial year. The annual running costs thereafter would be approximately £155,166.40.

Future Sustainability

Outsourcing

- 2.28 A supplier engagement exercise was undertaken in January 2024 to seek expressions of interests from charities and community interest companies to partner with the Council to continue delivery of the Maidstone Community Larder. There were two interested parties at stage one in this process.
- 2.29 A second stage of the supplier engagement exercise was conducted and closed on 19 February 2024. This stage was to clarify responses and request some additional information. No responses were received in the final stage.
- 2.30 Having completed a two stage supplier engagement exercises with no outcome, the Council looked at alternative solutions. It identified an organisation called The Bread and Butter Thing (TBBT) providing affordable food to support people on low income in over 90 community locations across the UK.
- 2.31 The TBBT model and proposal can be seen at exempt appendix 3.
- 2.32 In March 2024, the Council sought authorisation to single source The Bread and Butter Thing to run the Maidstone Community Larders. This authorisation was granted on 27 March 2024 by the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
- 2.33 The Council had delayed moving forward with this offer because a local community organisation indicated that they would like the opportunity to explore putting in an offer. This offer has since been withdrawn due to viability and risk.
- 2.34 An investment to ensure the future sustainability of the larders was included as part of the 2024/25 Budget.

In House

- 2.35 The minimum cost of delivering the service in house would be £155k per annum. As illustrated at Appendix 2, with the grant finding and financial donations the larders to date have 'broken even'. The investment that was made as part of the 2024/25 Budget to ensure the future sustainability of the larders was one-off funding only and there is not permanent budget to keep the budgets running indefinitely.
- 2.36 In terms of the food provided by the larders, this currently comes from food donations and surplus food collected daily from supermarkets and restaurants. This is supplemented with food purchased from Fareshare (family food bank) and shop bought food from supermarkets and wholesalers. This buying of food is a significant expense after staffing costs and does not represent a good balance of produce to ensure a healthy lifestyle. As outlined at paragraph 2.9, the Community larders were designed to support independence and offer a long-term, sustainable

approach to food security as opposed to responding to crisis need which is the role of a food bank.

- 2.37 A review of the current larder model would be required to ensure that a sustainable long-term offer was deliverable. To achieve this, the objective of improving food security and reducing food waste would need to be addressed. Food would need to primarily come working directly with supermarkets, factories, farms and growers to help reduce food waste and provide a more sustainable offer to residents.
- 2.38 A review would also need to address the longer-term risks associated with the venues at Park Wood and Shepway currently being provided free of charge. These venues are not guaranteed in the longer term. Data collection is another area that requires review. As referenced at paragraphs 2.17-2.19, data collection and robust reporting is needed to manage performance ongoing need. A review of the larders may require an additional investment or a shift in priorities to ensure that an in-house offer meets objectives.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 To continue to deliver the Community Larders in-house.

Continuing to deliver the larders in house would require an annual on-going investment of £155k which has not been budgeted for. As outlined in paragraphs 2.35-2.40, the current model would also require a significant review in order to provide a sustainable offer that improves food security and reduces food waste. Work would need to be undertaken to establish links with local suppliers and growers. A review would likely require an additional investment or a rebalancing of priorities.

- 3.2 Provision of a community larder through the Bread and Butter Thing.

The TBBT have an established offer, supporting low-income households and making use of surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. The funding for this purpose was agreed as part of the 2024-25 Budget. Making a one-off investment in TBBT supported by a grant agreement would increase the current larder offer and provide a sustainable larder provision for Maidstone residents.

- 3.3 Close the larders.

Once the grant funding has been spent the three larders would close. However, the grant funding and allocated investment that has been made so far was to help ensure a sustainable offer in the longer term. Food insecurity continues to impact Maidstone communities and disproportionately impact low-income households.

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The proposal for TBBT offers the best opportunity to meet the original objectives of the community larders and ensuring its future sustainability. The proposal will maintain the existing larder provision as well as expand the current reach by adding two additional wards. In the longer term TBBT will look to establish a regional base in Kent, working with other districts and the local food supply chain.
 - 4.2 TBBT has established close links with supermarkets, factories, and farms to redistribute surplus food, food that often ends up going to waste because it is wrongly labelled or there is too much of it. Their ethos is to create routes out of poverty and create resilient communities.
 - 4.3 The Council has already allocated a sum of money to support this action and this commitment has been outlined in its Preventing Financial Exclusion Strategy. The investment would be supported by a grant agreement. The Council would want to ensure the sustainability of the Community Larders for 5 years with its investment with an external provider. As part of an agreement there would be a viability review in year 3. TBBT would require a one-off investment as detailed at exempt Appendix 3 would enable the Community Larders to become sustainable within a 12-month period.
 - 4.4 Closing the community larders has not been recommended as food insecurity has not diminished and the community larders are to be well used. Continuing to deliver the larders in-house has not been recommended because the cost of delivery has not been budgeted for and is not viable and would be reduced offer than TBBT can offer. To bring it up to the same level would also require additional investment beyond the current cost.
-

5 RISK

- 5.1 Food insecurity impacts over 7.2 million people in the UK and disproportionately impacts low-income households with children and disabled members. National and local data insight identifies that financial exclusion is prevalent and needs to be addressed. 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. 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.
- 5.2 Access to healthy food options improves health outcomes. Supporting a sustainable larder offer demonstrates the council continued commitment to improving health inequalities. It also supports is emerging Food Strategy. TBBT has established close links with supermarkets, factories, and farms to redistribute surplus food, food that often ends up going to waste.

- 5.3 TBBT could decide that its model is not viable in Maidstone. The risk to the Council's investment would be managed with the provision of a Grant agreement.
- 5.4 There is also a risk with regards to the longer-term use of the larder venues. The Council would be proactive itself and in supporting a new provider in establishing links with alternative organisations and groups in the Community.
-

6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None
-

7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If the preferred option is taken forward, once approved by Cabinet discussions will begin with TBBT.
- 7.2 Community Larder staff are on fixed term contracts and would be supported by Human Resources in the final month of their contracts to find other employment within the organisation if feasible and appropriate.
- 7.3 If the Council was to proceed with The Bread and Butter Thing, a Grant Agreement would be put in place. The Council would want to ensure the sustainability of the Community Larders for 5 years with its investment with an external provider. As part of an agreement there would be a viability review in year 3.
-

8 REPORT APPENDICES

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

Appendix 1 – Current staffing model

Appendix 2 - Maidstone Borough Council Community Larders – summary of cost and expenditure

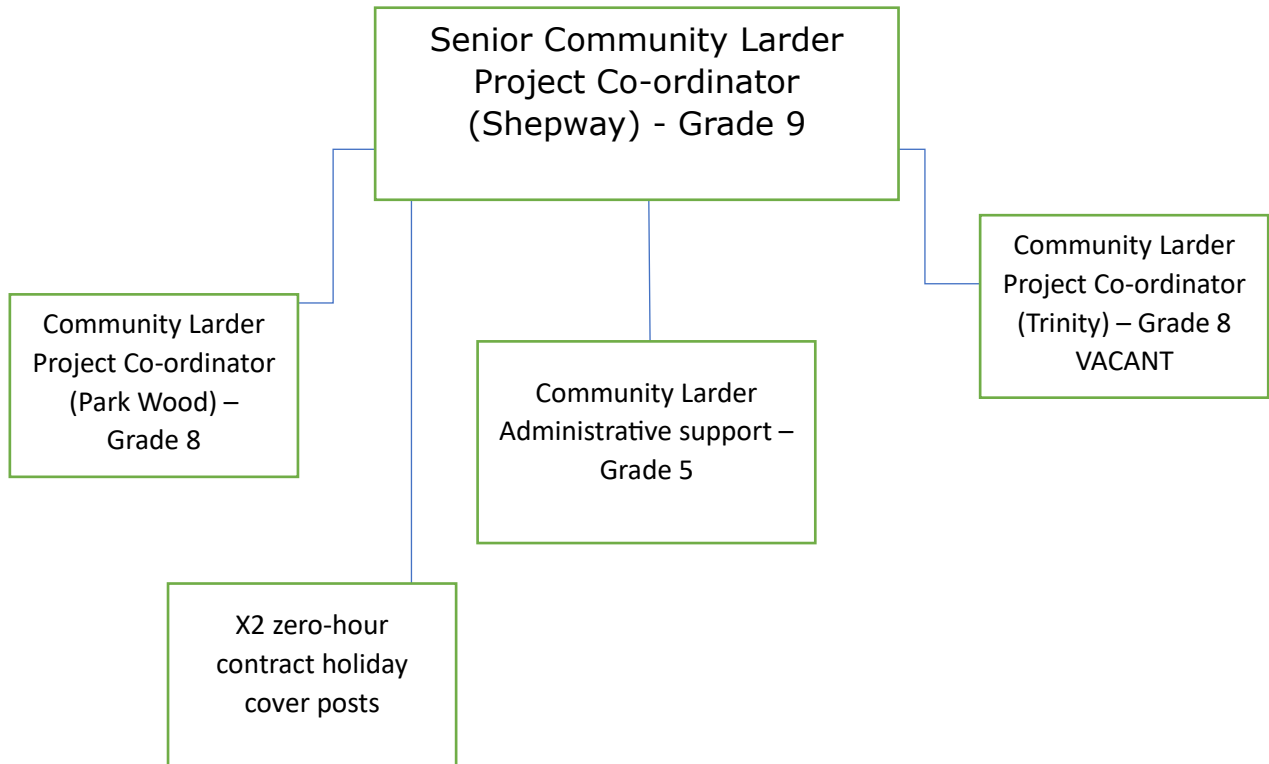
Appendix 3 - The Bread and Butter Thing Proposal (Part 1 and 2) (Exempt)

Appendix 4 – Comparison of Maidstone Community Larder model and TBBT (Exempt)

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Community Larders Staff Structure



Cost and expenditure summary

Breakdown of cost and expenditure by Larder:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Forecast
Shepway			
Income	2,792	11,920	9,455
Donation	665	971	2,850
Grant income used	<u>28,471</u>	<u>100,240</u>	<u>81,250</u>
	31,928	113,131	93,555
Staff Cost	15,974	38,736	41,635
Printing	169	288	-
General Expenses	7,685	61,471	42,048
Bank Charges		46	20
Professional Services	<u>8,100</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>31,928</u>	<u>100,541</u>	<u>83,703</u>
	-	-	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>12,590</u>	<u>9,852</u>
ParkWood	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Forecast
Income		6,422	9,119
Donation		300	370
Grant income used		<u>57,717</u>	<u>60,700</u>
		64,439	70,189
Staff Cost		40,005	48,193
Equipment Maintenance		243	-
Printing		96	-
General Expenses		17,356	21,676
Bank Charges		35	36
Professional Services Land Registry		<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>57,739</u>	<u>69,905</u>
		-	-
		<u>6,700</u>	<u>284</u>

Appendix 2 - Community Larders

Cost and expenditure summary

Trinity	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Income Donation		3,297	6,894
Grant income used		-	-
		<u>28,502</u>	<u>24,260</u>
		31,799	31,154
Staff Cost		28,502	5,834
Printing		45	0
General Expenses		854	24,343
Bank Charges		18	20
		<u>29,419</u>	<u>30,197</u>
		-	-
		2,380	957

Total overall costs and expenditure (all larders):

Total	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Forecast
Income	2,792	21,639	25,468
Donation	665	1,271	3,220
Grant income used	<u>28,471</u>	<u>186,459</u>	<u>166,210</u>
	31,928	209,369	194,898
Staff Cost	15,974	107,243	95,662
Equipment Maintenance	-	243	-
Printing	169	428	-
General Expenses	7,685	79,682	88,067
Bank Charges	-	99	76
Professional Services Land Registry	<u>8,100</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>31,928</u>	<u>187,699</u>	<u>183,805</u>
	-	-	-
		21,670	11,093

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
COHESION POLICY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

10 December 2024

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2024-2029

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee	10 December 2024
Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	By 31 January 2025

Will this be a Key Decision?	Yes
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore
Lead Officer and Report Author	Hannah Gaston
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Requesting that the Executive Member for Housing and Health formally adopts The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 Action Plan (Appendix 1). The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was adopted by the Executive in March 2024 and was used to inform the development of the attached Action Plan.

The action plan sets out in greater detail how we will achieve our four priorities 1) Prevention 2) Accommodation 3) Vulnerable People and 4) Rough Sleepers.

The issue is to be considered by the Housing and Communities Policy Advisory Committee before being passed to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness.

Purpose of Report

That the Housing and Community Cohesion PAC recommends the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan is adopted by Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness.

This report asks the Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee to recommend: That

1. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2024-2029 be adopted by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2024-2029

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the strategic priority Homes and Communities. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 2.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations supports the achievements of the Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved and Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced cross cutting objectives.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Risk Management	Contained within the body of this report.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Legal	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out at under Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.	Legal Team
Information Governance	<p>The recommendations may impact personal information on the Council processes, but personal information is already collected and stored in line with GDPR requirements.</p> <p>The Information Governance Team have reviewed the housing teams processing of personal data affected and the associated documentation has been created accordingly, including a data protection impact assessment.</p>	Information Governance Team

Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Procurement	Not applicable.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Head of Housing & Regulatory Services

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Homelessness and Housing Strategy is a document that sets out the Council's vision and intention to ensure that the Council is tackling the major homelessness and rough sleeping challenges facing the district. It supports the strategic ambition of the Council to be a "Vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential".

2.2 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy contains four priorities;

- **Priority 1:** - Homeless Prevention
- **Priority 2** – Providing good quality Accommodation.
- **Priority 3** – Supporting vulnerable people.
- **Priority 4** – Eradicating Rough Sleeping

- 2.3 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 was formerly adopted by the Executive on 12 March 2024. The Strategy document was used to inform the development of the Action Plan. The Action Plan brings together feedback from Officers, Members and Stakeholders including members of the public. A number of consultations were conducted to achieve a full and robust vision for Maidstone Borough Council's strategy.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could decide not to recommend adoption of the Action Plan. This is not recommended as this would not assist the Council to determine whether its Homelessness and Rough Strategy is having the positive impact that is contained within its vision to tackle the major Homelessness and Rough Sleeping challenges across the district.
- 3.2 The Committee may recommend that the Cabinet Member adopts the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan – with a view to implementing the actions and tackling the major challenges that face the local community across the district. This option is in the spirit of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy developed by the Council to achieve its key objective in the Strategic Plan.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is that the Committee recommends the Cabinet Member adopts the Action Plan. This will support the Council's aspiration in the Strategic Plan to:
- Prevent Homelessness
 - Support vulnerable people
 - Reducing rough sleeping in a sustainable way
 - Reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless families
 - Improving housing options through use of our statutory powers to promote good health and wellbeing
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
- 5.2 A failure to adopt a robust action plan for the Housing Strategy would increase the risk of the Council not meeting its strategic and statutory duties in relation to its housing and homeless functions.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Consultation on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy commenced in Summer 2023 with feedback from the public and our stakeholders actively sought through an on-line digital survey conducted by our Consultation and Engagement Officer. Consultation was also undertaken with Council Officers to ensure the golden threads contained within the Strategy were transferred to the Action Plan.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Once the Action Plan has been formally adopted this will be on the website and regular monitoring will take place through reporting to the Cabinet Member for Housing & Health.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2024-2029
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy](#)

Priority 1- Prevention				
	Action	Outcomes	Lead/Service Area/Partners	Timescale
1.1	Review the use of Placement Incentive Pilot funding to support families asking adult children/households to leave home due to financial pressures. Expand if outcomes are measurable and positive with consideration of extension of the scheme to other cohorts of people (e.g. friends)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer households made homeless as a result of familial evictions - Better ongoing relationships between families who may otherwise lose contact - Reduction in rough sleeping - Cost avoidance of Temporary Accommodation - Reduction in TA requirements - Use of direct lets for households who are "homeless at home" at prevention stage - 	Housing and Inclusion Manager MBC Housing Advice Team MBC Accommodation Resource Team	February 2025
1.2	Housing Advice Team structure changes to ensure prevention opportunities are not missed due to conflicting priorities in relieving homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in those moving from prevention to relief - Increase in positive prevention outcomes - Better service for customers 	Housing Advice Manager MBC Housing Advice Team	June-December 2024
1.3	Work in partnership with Citizens Advice Maidstone to offer appointments at Trinity for key issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of financial inequality and offer of welfare advice, - Better budgeting understanding leading to a reduction in debt - Fewer evictions as a result of financial issues 	MBC Housing Advice Team Citizens Advice Maidstone	April 2024-March 2025

	experienced by customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear outcomes evidenced. - Funding streams identified for 2025-2026 - Greater reach by extending the offer to other teams e.g. Welfare and Community Protection 		
1.4	Continue to improve relationships between the newly created Prevention Team and KCC Care Leavers Teams via the use of the Care Leavers Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer care leavers become homeless from care - Opportunities for prevention are identified - Reduction in over-reliance on Housing Register - Upskill KCC staff to deliver and attend PRS sessions/specific care leaver offer sessions 	Housing Advice Manager KCC Housing Pathways Team	Ongoing
1.5	Development of robust support for those facing familial evictions, including home visits, support packs, education on options, support in the home etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer households made homeless as a result of familial evictions - Better ongoing relationships between families who may otherwise loose contact - Reduction in rough sleeping - More households accessing the Placement Incentive Pilot - Investment in mediation training for staff 	MBC Housing Advice Team Homelessness Support Service	Ongoing
1.6	Expansion of the One View predictive analytics system to the wider Prevention Team and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in number of households engaged with - Clear outcomes demonstrated - Improved prevention opportunities across different cohorts 	Housing Advice Manager	December 2024

	Housing Triage and Support Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional stakeholders onboarded 		
1.7	Take a “no wrong door” approach to prevention to ensure no opportunities are missed – including brief interventions to prevent homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate use of emergency appointments to speak to a Housing Advice Officer (Prevention) - Increase in those who initially approach as homeless being able to return home in the first instance with support - Reduction in rough sleeping - Brief intervention outcomes captured across the service and for those attending Trinity 	Housing and Inclusion Manager Housing Solutions Manager	Ongoing
1.8	Offer training and education to key partners regarding identification of threat of homelessness, as well as referral pathways into the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved understanding of basic legislative framework around homelessness - Increase in appropriate referrals into the service - Reduction in approaches at the point of homelessness 	Housing Advice Manager	Ongoing
1.9	Review how incentives could be offered in other forms – such as increasing bedroom numbers in overcrowded homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the Housing Register and temporary accommodation numbers to determine the overcrowded households. - Enter into discussions with Registered Providers - Seek grant funding to support capacity building within properties 	Housing and Inclusion Manager Head of Service	

1.10	Fully prepare and embrace the enactment of the Renters Rights Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce homelessness within the private rented sector - Mechanisms to deliver robust enforcement - Enhanced engagement between the Housing Advice Team and Housing Standards Team - MBC to inform local Landlords of upcoming changes to the legislation - Robust training for staff to prepare for changes - - Exposure to Court proceedings for staff before enactment of the Bill in order to build understanding of process and defence to prevent homelessness where possible. 	Housing and Inclusion Manager Housing Standards Manager Housing Standards Team	Ongoing
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Priority 2- Provide Accommodation

	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
2.1	Evaluate the case for extending financial support for the provision of supported accommodation such as Lily Smith House and ensure that there are clear exits towards permanent accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in rough sleeping - Reduction in use of temporary accommodation - Improved support provisions with measurable outcomes - Funding streams secured to continue provision beyond March 2025 - Expansion of placements to prevention households in need of support 	Housing & Inclusion Manager Accommodation Resource Team Homelessness Support Service	December 2024
2.2	Acquire and develop property assets in partnership with Registered Providers for use as refuge accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific support provided to keep households safe in Maidstone - Support worker employed to provide specialist assistance to those who have experienced domestic abuse 	Housing & Inclusion Manager Accommodation Resource Team	September 2024 onwards
2.3	Explore way to make best use of interim and temporary accommodation considered in all circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in per night overall cost of accommodation provision - Excellent standards in accommodation provided by MBC - Reduction in void loss and the repairs budget 	Housing Portfolio Team Accommodation Resource Team	Ongoing

2.4	Review the Allocation Scheme to assist with relieving homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in per night overall cost of accommodation provision - Increased levels of homelessness relieved - Consideration of use of the Housing Register and/or direct lets for TA avoidance 	Housing Strategy Manager Homechoice Team Housing Pathways Team Registered Providers	Ongoing
2.5	Procurement of Private Rented Sector accommodation for duty discharge cases keeping our financial incentives under review and the Rent in Advance Pilot scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access to PR accommodation through a range of interventions - Reduction in reliance on the Housing Register - Measurable outcomes used to decide if the RIA pilot should continue - Expansion of HHSRS training to the wider team 	Accommodation Resource Team Housing Advice Team Housing Standards Team	August 2025
2.7	Expand our Private Sector Leasing (PSL) programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the numbers in the PSL portfolio to 50 in two years. - Reduce the numbers accessing nightly paid accommodation. 	Development Project Manager	Up to January 2026
2.8	Procure further MBC owned units of Temporary Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two new units per month - Robust financial controls ensuring that our own TA management is managed within budget 	Development Project Manager	On-going
2.9	Procure/build affordable homes – as set out in the aspiration of 1000 by 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the 1000 new affordable homes to prevent homelessness. 	Development Project Manager	Up to 2028

Priority 3- Work alongside vulnerable people

	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
3.1	We will use existing IT systems more effectively to establish what support is required by customers engaging with the Homelessness Support Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better understanding of need in the Borough - One view will be targeted at new cohorts incl. family exclusions. - Huume nuanced to obtain greater outcome reports. - Measurable outcomes of support provided used to identify existing gaps 	Homelessness Support Service Housing Advice Manager Housing & Inclusion Manager	Ongoing
3.2	Housing Advice and Support Services will be available face to face at Trinity for those who need them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Options for face to face and phone delivery can be used based on an individual's needs and wishes - Brief intervention model used for community support - Consideration of digital inclusion programmes 	Homelessness Support Service Housing Advice Team Housing & Inclusion Manager	Ongoing
3.3	Recruitment of a Housing Advice Domestic Abuse Specialist (HADAS), with ongoing unique, flexible and trauma informed pathways into service, with enhanced ongoing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced likelihood of individuals being located by the perpetrator of abuse after they have left their homes - Additional options to remain at home via orders and interventions - Reduction in additional trauma - Unique, quick and robust pathway into homelessness services 	Housing Advice Manager Housing Advice Team	Ongoing

3.4	Improved awareness and implementation of engagement techniques for those who are or may be neurodiverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved ability to adapt communication styles to suit the needs of those who may be neurodiverse - Engagement with best practice regarding missed diagnosis - Better engagement from this cohort 	Equality and diversity steering group Housing Advice Team Housing & Inclusion Manager	On-going
3.5	Continued provision of a trauma informed space for those who have already experienced or otherwise would have experienced trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in ACE's experienced by children becoming homeless - Better engagement from vulnerable individuals - Understanding from the community of the support which can be provided at Trinity 	Housing & Inclusion Manager	December 2025
3.6	Successful DAHA accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accreditation is achieved. - Create an operation steering group - Ensure organisation is DAHA compliant 	Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Coordinator Housing and Inclusion Manager	
3.7	Improved response to acute homelessness due to dedicated assessment officers being embedded in the Triage and Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less confusing initial engagement process for customers - Additional time made available to the wider team to respond to customers and their needs - Trauma informed approach tailored to each customer's needs - Better experience on approach in a face-to-face environment 	Housing Advice Team	June-December 2024

3.8	Continued engagement with the RSI mental health team for those who need support with their mental health, but who might otherwise be excluded from accessing care due to their complex needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved wellbeing for those with complex needs - More likely to sustain or attain accommodation due to well managed medical needs - Improved trust in services and care pathways 	Homelessness Support Service	Ongoing
3.9	Creation of our specific Domestic Abuse support pathway and accommodation sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with registered providers to offer good quality temporary units. - Onboard a specific domestic abuse support officer - Have clear pathway for entering and leaving DA units. - Creation of good casework management for DA survivors including the Warwick Edinburgh wellbeing questionnaire - Improved knowledge across the teams regarding available support for those who have experienced DA 	Homeless Pathway Manager Housing and Inclusion Manager Domestic Abuse Support Officer	Mobilised by September 2024
3.10	Continue working within an Elastic Tolerance framework within the RSI funded project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team to understand the term and operationally how it works. - Targeted approach of individuals 	Housing and Inclusion Manager	On-going

3.11	KCC funded assertive outreach – substance misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to develop a pathway with CGL - Support those furthest from treatment into CGL and housing options - Seek extension to this workstream 	Housing and Inclusion Manager Complex Case worker	March 2025
3.12	Improved relationship between MBC/Trinity and DWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-location at Trinity to foster better working relationships - Programmes to be delivered by DWP at Trinity - Training offer to DWP made to improve referrals and identification of early prevention work 	Housing and Inclusion Manager	Ongoing

Priority 4- Support rough sleepers

	Action	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
4.1	Continue use of RSI funding to provide accommodation in order to manage our humanitarian response to rough sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in rough sleeping - Reduction in impacts associated with rough sleeping 	Homelessness Support Service	Ongoing
4.2	Seek funding for the Homelessness Support Service and their functions post March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuation of service post March 2025 - Close working with our DLUHC colleagues to evidence the benefits of RSI funding. 	Housing and Inclusion Manager	March 2025
4.3	Work with partners to ensure move on options are available for complex individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less time spent in discretionary accommodation - Improved accommodation sustainment - Reduction in future rough sleeping 	Housing and Inclusion Manager	Ongoing
4.4	Identification of triggers which can lead to future rough sleeping, with the intention to implement system change using predictive analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long term reduction in rough sleeping - Long term reduction in impacts associated with rough sleeping - Improved access to support for current or future complex individuals 	Housing Advice Manager	Ongoing

4.5	Provision of suitable, short-term accommodation which can meet the needs of complex individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduction in evictions and return to the streets- Improved permanent accommodation prospects	Accommodation Resource Team Homelessness Support Service	
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**HOUSING & COMMUNITY
COHESION POLICY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

10 December 2024

2nd Quarter Finance Update Report 2024/25

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee	10 December 2024
Cabinet	18 December 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
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the 2024/25 financial position for the services reporting into the Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee (HCC PAC) as at 30 September 2024 (Quarter 2).

The financial review enables the Committee to consider and comment on the issues raised and actions being taken to address both budget pressures.

Revenue

The overall position for the HCC PAC is that the projected year-end outturn position at this stage is an overspend of £0.450m.

Capital

The overall position for the HCC PAC is that the projected year-end expenditure at this stage is £32.436m.

Further details on the revenue and capital position are shown at Appendix 1.

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 30 September 2024.

This report makes the following recommendations to the Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee:

1. That the Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 2 for 2024/25, 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 2 for 2024/25 be noted.

2nd Quarter Finance Update Report 2024/25

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

2. Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	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.	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	<p>The financial risks are managed via the actions identified to deal with budget variances in the Appendix to this report.</p> <p>Corporate risk management is reported as part of the quarterly monitoring process in a separate item on the agenda of the Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services PAC.</p>	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>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.</p>	Head of Finance

Staffing	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.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Legal	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, and to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.	Senior Legal Adviser – Corporate Governance
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 policy or service change, should one be identified.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	There are no specific issues arising.	Head of Finance
Crime and Disorder	There are no specific issues arising.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Procurement	There is no direct procurement activity linked to this report.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement (Section 151 Officer)
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Sufficient budget has been allocated for the Council's short to medium term financial commitment to addressing the biodiversity and climate issues stipulated in the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan.	Head of Finance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 - including the budget for 2024/25 - was approved by full Council on 21 February 2024. 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 Further details and an explanation of the significant variances are shown in Appendix 1. The current projection forecasts that there will be a significant overspend at the end of the year, if no action is taken, so in order to reduce the overspend we are implementing the following actions.
- a) Review by Corporate Leadership Team of any recruitment requests as and when they arise.
 - b) Instructions to Heads of Service to minimise any discretionary expenditure and focus on critical areas only.
-

3. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

- 3.1 Maidstone Borough Council's key performance indicators (KPIs) are now presented on the Council's website via the KPI dashboard. This new way of reporting is increasing the transparency of the Council's performance (as agreed by the PACs and Cabinet in March 2024). The dashboard will be refreshed monthly, where data allows for a monthly collection. 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. Additionally, a half-yearly performance update is also being presented to PACs and Cabinet this quarter, and an annual statement of performance will follow at the end of the financial year.
-

4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note the report but may choose to comment.
-

5. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 In considering the current position on the Revenue budget and the Capital Programme, the Committee can choose to note this information or could choose to comment.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Performance outturn is reported separately to the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) quarterly.
-

7. RISK

7.1 The Council produced a balanced budget for both revenue and capital income and expenditure for 2024/25. 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.

8. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

8.1 The Quarter 2 Budget & Performance Monitoring reports are being considered by the relevant Policy Advisory Committees during December 2024.

9. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Second Quarter Budget Monitoring 2024/25
-

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Maidstone Borough Council

Appendix 1 – Second Quarter Budget Report

Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee



Contents

Part A: Second Quarter Revenue Budget 2024/25

- A1) Revenue Budget: Council
- A2) Revenue Budget: Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee (HCC PAC)
- A3) HCC PAC Revenue Budget: Significant Variances

Part B: Second Quarter Capital Budget 2024/25

- B1) Capital Budget: Council
- B2) Capital Budget: Housing & Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee (PHSC PAC)
- B3) Capital Budget Variances

A2) Revenue Budget: HCC PAC

A2.1 The table below provides a detailed summary of the budgeted net expenditure position for the services reporting directly into HCC PAC at the end of Quarter 2. The financial figures are presented on an accruals basis (i.e. expenditure for goods and services received, but not yet paid for, is included).

Budget Book Heading (Sub-totalled by Cabinet Member)	Approved Budget for Year	Approved Budget to 30 September 2024	Actual as at 30 September 2024	Variance as at 30 September 2024			Forecast March 2025	
	Net £000	Net £000	Net £000	Expenditure £000	Income £000	Net £000	Forecast Net £000	Forecast Variance £000
Central Services to the Public	317	160	148	13	-148	13	317	0
Community Development	0	0	-0	8	-388	0	0	0
Community Safety	110	-2	-5	3	-87	4	110	0
Corporate Management	122	120	115	5	-115	5	122	0
Management & Support	2,142	1,040	958	79	-1,114	82	2,142	0
Emergency Planning	25	15	10	5	-10	5	25	0
Regulatory Services	37	18	45	-24	-49	-27	97	-60
Community Cohesion and Safety	2,752	1,351	1,269	87	-1,910	82	2,812	-60
Management & Support	1,433	-363	-439	30	-4,289	76	1,433	0
Homelessness	1,531	538	915	-280	-3,687	-377	1,921	-390
Housing Advice	16	13	10	3	-10	3	16	0
Housing Strategy	13	7	4	4	-4	4	13	0
Other Council Properties	-12	-10	-7	-54	-118	-3	-12	0
Private Sector Housing Renewal	-51	-51	-69	16	-67	18	-51	0
Housing and Homelessness	2,930	135	414	-281	-8,175	-279	3,320	-390
Totals	5,682	1,485	1,683	-194	-10,085	-197	6,132	-450

A3) HCC Revenue Budget: Significant Variances

A3.1 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 2024/25.

Housing & Community Cohesion	Year End Forecast Variance £000
<i>Regulatory Services</i>	
Dog Control – There has been a high demand so far this year, and there is a reliance on one supplier to provide the service. A service plan is being drawn up by the budget manager to see whether this service can be carried out in house or partnered with other authorities.	-60
<i>Homelessness</i>	
Homeless Temporary Accommodation - This continues to be a significant issue as the demand for the service continues to be high. 60% of the variance is driven by emergency bed spaces for rough sleepers, with the remainder being driven by nightly paid accommodation, combined with the rental income target not being achieved. The programme to acquire more of our own houses to deal with the demand is continuing with a number of new properties being purchased this year, with others likely to follow.	-360

B1) Capital Budget 2024/25 (@ 2nd Quarter 2024/25)

Capital Programme Heading (Sub-totalled by Cabinet Member)	Approved Budget	Carry Forward of unused budget from 23/24	Adjusted Estimate 2024/25	Actual to September 2024	Budget Remaining	Q3 Profile	Q4 Profile	Projected Total Expenditure	Projected Slippage to 2025/26
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Private Rented Sector Housing	21,065	3,956	25,021	245	24,775	250	250	745	24,275
Housing Programme	31,096	1,514	32,610	4,202	28,408	10,744	5,984	20,930	11,680
Other Property - Community and Commercial	1,809	494	2,303		2,303	325		325	1,978
Temporary Accommodation	20,000	3,251	23,251	5,302	17,948	1,850	1,850	9,002	14,248
Housing - Disabled Facilities Grants Funding	800		800	683	117	350	400	1,433	-633
(All Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness)									
Total	74,770	9,214	83,984	10,433	73,550	13,519	8,484	32,436	51,548

B2) Capital Budget Variances (@ 2nd Quarter 2024/25)

Housing and Community Cohesion	Projected Slippage to 2025/26 £000
Private Rented Sector Housing/Housing Programme - A number of schemes are at various stages of development at present. Some schemes will also contain elements of both private rented and affordable housing so the costs may change depending on the mix at the sites where this happens. Some significant schemes are taking longer to develop than had been anticipated when the programme for this year was agreed, which is the main reason for the large underspend this year. However planning permission has now been granted for the development of the Former Royal Mail Sorting Office site, which is one the largest schemes within this budget.	35,955
Other Property – Community & Commercial - These schemes are being developed, but they are taking longer than had been anticipated. Any unused budget will be rolled forward to 2025/26 to allow them to be completed.	1,978
Temporary Accommodation - There have been more acquisitions this year, and the team will continue to seek suitable properties, and any unused budget will be rolled forward to 2025/26 to allow these to be completed. Current market conditions are making it more difficult to secure properties, so there is likely to be a significant underspend this year.	14,248
Housing – Disabled Facilities Grant Funding - The approved budget of £0.8m is based on previous levels of activity. However, we are forecasting more expenditure than the budget this year, but this will be covered by an increase in the Better Care Funding that we receive. The actual grant award for 2024/25 is £1.644m.	-633

Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee

10 December 2024

Half-Yearly Performance (KPI) Update 2024/25

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee	3 December 2024
Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee	5 December 2024
Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee	10 December 2024
Cabinet (Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources)	18 December 2024

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet – For noting
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

Performance management is a key tool in ensuring the delivery of Council priorities. Performance data is available online through the year and an update is provided on the position of our key performance indicators (KPIs) at the midpoint of the year. This report presents the KPI position for first half of the financial year 2024/25 (April to September).

Purpose of Report

Noting.

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

1. To note the performance position as at the end of the first half of 2024/25, including any actions being taken or proposed to improve the positions.
2. To consider additional recommendations to further analyse or improve performance, which the Committee finds to be appropriate.

Half-Yearly Performance (KPI) Update 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 report and performance position will allow the Council to monitor its progress against its priorities as 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>	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 part of the Council’s 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.	Mark Green Director of Finance, Resources &

		Business Improvement
Staffing	There are no implications on 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.	Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Privacy and Data Protection	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance
Equalities	The report is for noting and contains no recommendations that would propose a change in service, therefore no equalities impact assessment will be required.	Policy and Information Team
Public Health	Ongoing monitoring of performance indicators will have a positive impact on the public's health or that of individuals.	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance 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 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are a number of Key Performance Indicators that relate to the environment including ones relating to litter, detritus, fly tipping, green flags and recycling. A further three performance indicators will be reported at the year end. The Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan reports at six monthly intervals on performance and outcomes.	Anna Collier Head of Insight Communities and Governance Officer

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. Managing performance can identify whether action is required to improve our services, ensures value for money and good outcomes for the residents of Maidstone.
- 2.2 In February 2024, Cabinet accepted proposals to improve the way Maidstone Borough Council reports on its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and a new KPI dashboard has been developed in conjunction with officer and member feedback. This dashboard is refreshed monthly (where monthly data exists), which allows members and the public to view our performance position more frequently. In addition, a half-yearly performance update report, and an annual performance summary, is presented to Committees and Cabinet.
- 2.3 This report is the first update report provided to Committees since the new reporting measures were put in place. The full report is attached at Appendix 1, setting out the position for the KPIs from April to September 2024.
- 2.4 Of the 9 KPIs falling under the Housing and Community Cohesion PAC with targets assigned, 7 (77.8%) met their targets in the first half of the year (April – September). Of the 2 KPIs to miss their targets, both were missed by more than a 10% margin.
- 2.5 52.6% of the KPIs are showing an improvement in performance when compared to the previous six-monthly period. 36.8% are showing an improvement when compared to the same period the year before (2023/24).

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Policy Advisory Committee can choose to recommend to Cabinet to note the performance position as set out at Appendix 1. Members can also make recommendations including further analysis or actions for improvement.
 - 3.2 Alternatively, Members could recommend to Cabinet 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 the Policy Advisory Committee recommend the performance position, as set out in Appendix 1, to Cabinet, including any additional requests for performance monitoring, where appropriate.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with the proposal if the Council does not act as recommended and chooses to not monitor performance, 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 The KPI update has previously been reported to Committees and the Cabinet each quarter. From quarter 1, 2024/25, KPIs are presented on the KPI dashboard, which is held on Maidstone Borough Council's website.
 - 6.2 Members of all Committees were invited to drop-in sessions in October to talk through the dashboards, in addition to a member briefing paper circulated in September.
 - 6.3 The dashboard is refreshed every month, showing monthly updates on KPIs (where monthly data exists) or quarterly updates at the relevant time period.
 - 6.4 The half-yearly performance update report is reported to all Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) and Cabinet half-way through the financial year. An annual performance report will be presented to all PACs and Cabinet once the financial year is concluded.
-

7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: HCC Policy Advisory Committee Half-Yearly Performance Update
-

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Mid-Year Performance Update

Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee

2024-25

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Why Performance Management is important

Performance Management is key to ensuring that Maidstone Borough Council focuses on delivering its priorities of the Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan (2019 -2045) sets the direction for the Organisation and the Borough of Maidstone, and the four priorities are shown.

Performance management is about providing assurance to the residents of Maidstone that the Council works as effectively as possible in meeting the priorities of our Strategic Plan. This is done by monitoring key performance indicators and publishing this information for the public to see.

Performance Management is a tool that allows us to measure whether we are achieving our corporate priorities and should be managed and monitored at an organisational and operational/team level. This measuring and monitoring helps us to understand what action to take and when.

Performance Management is also important because it supports change and improvement in the organisation. In order to improve, we need to know where we are now to make sure we are doing the right things for the right reasons, and therefore know where we need to get better.

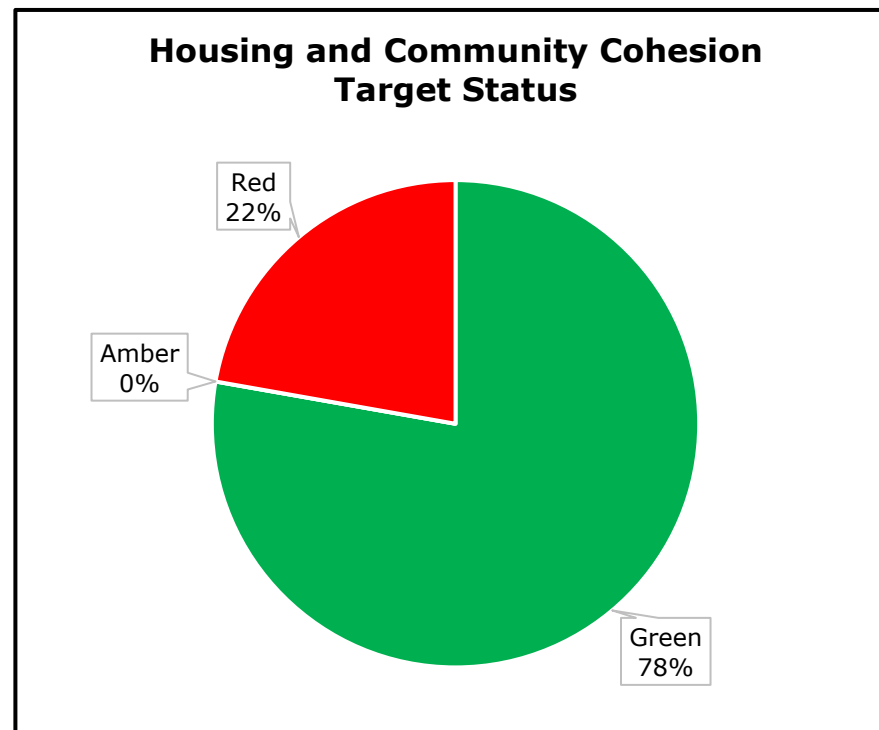


Performance Overview

Q1 & Q2





HCC Indicators




- 77.8% (7 of 9) targetable Housing and Community Cohesion Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) achieved their half-yearly (H1) target¹.
- 22.2% (2 of 9) targetable HCC KPIs missed their half-yearly target and have been rated amber or red¹; commentary for each service is provided before each service performance table.
- 52.6% (10 of 19) HCC KPIs are showing an improvement in performance when compared to the last mid-year outturn (H2 2023/24)¹.
- 36.8% (7 of 19) HCC KPIs are showing an improvement in performance when compared to the half-year outturn (H1 2023/24)¹.



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

Key to Icons

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: Direction of travel for targeted performance indicators shows if performance has improved or declined. For data only performance indicators direction of travel shows if there has been an increase or decrease in volume.

Outturn of HCC Key Performance Indicators - H1 2024/25

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PRIORITY
Safe, Clean and Green

Community Protection

Key Contacts

- **Martyn Jeynes**, Community & Strategic Partnerships Manager

Comments

“Variation in the percentage of animal licensed establishments rated 4* or above can be influenced by many factors. Businesses are assessed against a matrix provided by DEFRA, which sets out specific requirements based on standards and risk. A positive trend indicates that businesses renewing their licences in this period have maintained their performance standards or the new businesses have demonstrated the highest standards[†].”

Whilst the Community Protection team (CPT) can encourage higher standards, the scoring is based on the level of compliance. Further incentive is provided by lower licensing fees for higher standard businesses. Pre-application support has been introduced to help new or expanding businesses to understand the standards required to be licensed. It should also be noted that a 1* rating still indicates that a business meets the minimum requirements to legally trade.

The data highlights a positive trend in the effectiveness of Community Protection Notices (CPNs) as a key tool within the Community Safety toolkit. This trend, driven by seasonal demand due to warmer weather, shows the service request driven action taken by the Community Protection Team. It underscores the importance of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs). The high compliance rate with CPWs demonstrates their power in resolving community issues before escalation is necessary.





Categories where CPWs were issued in this period:









1. Noise, including loud music and construction noise.
2. Anti-Social Behaviour/Nuisance, such as unauthorised access to land, individuals causing disturbances and odour and smoke issues.
 1. Waste in gardens/vermin, ensuring the removal of waste accumulation and the tackling of vermin infestations in gardens, preventing these problems from escalating.
 2. Aggressive/Nuisance Dogs, including successfully addressing disturbances from dog barking, dog control issues, and aggressive dog behaviour.
 3. Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking (MSHT), including using CPWs to control behaviour linked to MSHT, which can be easier to detect and address than the more serious crimes, to prevent further issues.

Despite the effectiveness of CPWs, some issues required escalation to CPNs, including anti-social behaviour, noise and nuisance. Overall, the data underscores the value of CPWs in maintaining community safety and well-being, with CPNs serving as a necessary escalation tool when required." – *Martyn Jeynes, Community & Strategic Partnerships Manager.*

†[New businesses cannot be rated higher than 4].

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Performance Indicator	Portfolio	H1 24/25 Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (H2 23/24)	Long Trend (H1 23/24)
Percentage of Animal licensed establishments rated 4* or above	Community Cohesion and Safety	80%				

Number of Community Protection Notices (CPNs) in period	Community Cohesion and Safety	5				
Number of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) in period	Community Cohesion and Safety	51				

PRIORITY Homes and Communities

Biodiversity

Key Contacts

- **Stuart Maxwell**, Senior Scientific Officer
- **Duncan Haynes**, Environmental Protection Team Leader

Performance Indicator	Portfolio	H1 24/25 Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (H2 23/24)	Long Trend (H1 23/24)
Improvement in Air Quality	Community Cohesion and Safety	Annual Indicator				

Community Cohesion

Key Contacts

- **Anna Collier**, Head of Insight, Communities and Governance
- **Orla Sweeney**, Policy, Partnerships and Inclusion Manager





Comments

“The low-income financial tracker (LIFT) platform is used to risk score our Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claimants by categorising them into a financial status of; coping; struggling, at risk (of crisis) and in crisis. The general trend of the ‘at risk’ and ‘in crisis’ cohorts has declined in the last two years, which can partially be attributed to the work of the Welfare Officer. However, the ‘in crisis’ cohort has slowly started to rise in numbers since September 2023, and the Welfare Officer is actively working with the cohort to understand their financial details and maximise their income, signposting to other organisations where necessary.

The total number of LIFT households has fallen by 3.6% since October 2022, from 10,341 to 9,969. Some of this decline can be attributed to the roll out of Universal Credit to existing housing benefit claimants, meaning they are no longer claiming with the local authority. We have worked with the ‘leavers’ to ensure that if they are eligible to still claim Council Tax Support once migrated to Universal Credit, that they do claim with us.

As well as working with the ‘in crisis’ households, the Welfare Officer has been working on a Pension Credit campaign, in response to changes to the Winter Fuel Payment, which includes targeted, direct, communications and tailored 1-1 follow ups. This work is also being supported by a Communications Plan. More broadly, a project plan is in place for the LIFT dashboard data, and this includes joined working across key services areas to address the wider ‘at risk’ group. This work is planned for Winter 2024 and will impact positively on the performance targets in place. There have been 26 supported applications for Pension Credit and Council Tax Support as well as a small number of successful Discretionary Hardship Payment and Exceptional Hardship Payments. This ranges from £27.50 per annum to £9,824.36 for individual households. A total so far of £53,990.35 has been secured for households in additional annual income this year.” – *Anna Collier, Head of Insight, Communities & Governance.*

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Performance Indicator	Portfolio	H1 24/25 Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (H2 23/24)	Long Trend (H1 23/24)
Number of households at risk of (or in) financial crisis (LIFT data)	Community Cohesion and Safety	500				

Housing & Regulatory Services

Key Contacts
























- **John Littlemore**, Head of Housing & Regulatory Services
- **Hannah Gaston**, Housing & Inclusion Manager
- **Phil Jennings**, Housing Standards Manager
- **Julie Shuter**, Housing Portfolio Manager

Comments

71 “Recorded performance against this indicator during Q2 has not been at the standard expected. As a result, we have liaised with our contractor and following a review undertaken with our staff, work continues to improve the management and recording of repairs completed on time. With the appointment of the new Housing Asset Manager role, we anticipate that closer and more focused contract management will be achieved. In addition, it was identified that data entry was contributing to giving the impression of poor performance. This has been addressed as the backlog of entries onto our software meant that we have now closed some long-term orders that were distorting the figures. Looking ahead, it is expected there will be a demonstrable improvement in performance over the remaining financial year.

The delivery of new affordable homes remains subdued for the reasons provided in the previous report. This relates to the general downturn in development activity, which is reflected by colleagues in the Planning Development Service. The general downward trend is compounded by housing partners concentrating their financial and staff resources on bring their existing homes up to the standard required by the new Social Housing Consumer Standards. This is resulting in a significant reduction in the number of affordable homes that are becoming available to applicants on the Council’s Housing Register, including existing transferring tenants. The stagnation in the sector will have a direct impact on our ability to move applicants through temporary accommodation, further exacerbating the negative outcome for applicants and the Council’s budget for temporary accommodation.” – *John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Regulatory Services.*

Performance Indicator	Portfolio	H1 24/25 Value	Target	Status	Short Trend (H2 23/24)	Long Trend (H1 23/24)
Housing & Strategy						
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Housing and Homelessness	28	80			
Affordable homes as a percentage of all new homes	Housing and Homelessness	Annual Indicator				
Housing & Inclusion						
Number of households living in temporary accommodation last night of the month (NI 156 & SDL 009-00)	Housing and Homelessness	246				
Number of households living in nightly paid temporary accommodation last night of the month	Housing and Homelessness	171				
Number of Rough Sleepers accommodated by the Council on the last night of the month	Housing and Homelessness	46				
Number of households prevented or relieved from becoming homeless	Housing and Homelessness	297	245			
Number of Homeless Applications made	Housing and Homelessness	509				
Number of applicants where S195(2) Prevention Duty ended as applicant became homeless and S189B(2) Relief Duty accepted	Housing and Homelessness	52				
Number of homeless cases where the cause of homelessness is domestic abuse	Housing and Homelessness	66				

Number of private sector homes improved through PSH interventions	Housing and Homelessness	119	96			
Number of completed Disabled Facilities Grants	Housing and Homelessness	112				
Housing Portfolio						
Percentage of gas safety certificates in place on residential properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team	Housing and Homelessness	100%	100%			
Percentage of electrical safety certificates on residential properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team	Housing and Homelessness	100%	100%			
Percentage of Fire Risk Assessments in place for residential properties where this is a requirement under the Fire Safety Order (2005) (properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team)	Housing and Homelessness	100%	100%			
Percentage of repairs completed within 21 Days (on residential properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team)	Housing and Homelessness	47.31%	90%			
Percentage of rent arrears (as a percentage of total rent roll) of properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team	Housing and Homelessness	4.59%	10%		N/A	N/A
Percentage of void residential properties managed by MBC's Accommodation Team (re-lets)	Housing and Homelessness	6.1%	10%			

Agenda Item 14

Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee

10 December 2024

Fees and Charges 2025-26

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee	10 December 2024
Cabinet	18 December 2024

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

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2025/26 for the services within the remit of this committee. Fees and charges determined by the council are reviewed annually, and this forms part of the budget setting process. Changes to fees and charges agreed by this committee will come into effect on 1 April 2025 unless otherwise stated in the report.

This report forms part of the process of agreeing a budget for 2025/26 and setting next year's Council Tax. It is in line with Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30 considered by Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee at its meeting on 8th July 2024 of the approach to setting the budget.

This report also includes an update on the Budget Survey. Public consultation on the budget has been carried out. Details are set out in Appendix C and D. Members are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals being presented later this year are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

Recommendation to Housing and Community Cohesion Policy Advisory Committee:

1. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to comment on the content.
2. That the Committee recommend to the Cabinet to approve the Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix A.
3. That the Committee note the Fees and Charges Policy as detailed in Appendix B.
4. That the Committee note the Budget survey results in Appendix C and D.

Fees and Charges 2024-25

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.</p> <p>The Council's policy on charging has been developed to support corporate priorities as set out in the strategic plan and the proposals within the report have been made with reference to this.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Cross Cutting Objectives	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Risk Management	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Financial	The budget strategy and the MTFS impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The recommendations do not have any staffing implications.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Legal	<p>Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 permits best value authorities to charge for discretionary services provided the authority has the power to provide that service and the recipient agrees to take it up on those terms.</p> <p>The authority has a duty to ensure that taking one financial year with another, income does not exceed the costs of providing the service.</p> <p>A number of fees and charges for Council services are set on a cost recovery basis only, with trading accounts used to ensure that the</p>	Deputy Head of Legal

	<p>cost of service is clearly related to the charge made. In other cases, the fee is set by statute and the Council must charge the statutory fee. In both cases the proposals in this report meet the Council's legal obligations.</p> <p>Where a customer defaults on the fee or charge for a service, the fee or charge must be defensible, in order to recover it through legal action. Adherence to the MBC Charging Policy on setting fees and charges provides some assurance that appropriate factors have been considered in setting such fees and charges</p>	
Privacy and Data Protection	Privacy and Data Protection is considered as part of the development of new budget proposals. There are no specific implications arising from this report.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council's future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed, an evidence-based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations will be identified.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Head of Finance
Crime and Disorder	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Procurement	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The resources to achieve the Council's objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Head of Finance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out in financial terms how the Council's Strategic Plan will be delivered over the next five years, given the resources available. In so doing, it establishes the framework for the annual budget setting process.
- 2.2 The approach to drawing up the MTFS and budget for 2025/26 was presented to the Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee on 8th July 2024. It is assumed that the council will need to generate additional income to offset increased costs. The increase can be delivered by increases to fees and charges, in line with the principles set out below, or by increased volumes. Note that, as many fees and charges are fixed by statute, or can only be increased at intervals of say 5 years, increases for individual services may be well in excess of the average in any one year. Any failure to increase fees and charges would require further options to be considered in order to balance the budget.

Fees and Charges

- 2.4 The council is able to recover the costs of providing certain services through making a charge to service users. For some services, this is a requirement and charges are set out in statute, and in other areas the council has discretion to determine whether charging is appropriate, and the level at which charges are set.
- 2.5 In recent years, the use of charging has become an increasingly important feature of the council's medium term financial strategy, as pressures on the revenue budget limit the extent to which subsidisation of discretionary services is feasible. Recovering the costs of these services from users where possible helps to ensure sustainability of the council's offer to residents and businesses, beyond the statutory minimum.
- 2.6 A charging policy (attached at Appendix B for reference) is in place for charges which are set at the council's discretion and this seeks to ensure that:
 - Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
 - Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
 - Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

- 2.7 The policy covers fees and charges that are set at the discretion of the council and does not apply to services where the council is prohibited from charging, e.g. the collection of household waste. Charges currently determined by central government, e.g. planning application fees, are also outside the scope of the policy. However, consideration of any known changes to such fees and charges and any consequence to the medium term financial strategy are included in this report for information.
- 2.8 Managers are asked to consider the following factors when reviewing fees and charges:
- The council's strategic plan and values, and how charge supports these;
 - The use of subsidies and concessions targeted at certain user groups or to facilitate access to a service;
 - The actual or potential impact of competition in terms of price or quality;
 - Trends in user demand including an estimate of the effect of price changes on customers;
 - Customer survey results;
 - Impact on users, both directly and on delivering the council's objectives;
 - Financial constraints including inflationary pressure and service budgets;
 - The implications of developments such as investment made in a service;
 - The corporate impact on other service areas of council wide pressures to increase fees and charges;
 - Alternative charging structures that could be more effective;
 - Proposals for targeting promotions during the year and the evaluation of any that took place in previous periods.

Fees and Charges for 2025-26

- 2.9 It is important that charges are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate and keep pace with the costs associated with service delivery as they increase over time.
- 2.10 Charges for services which fall within the remit of this committee have been reviewed by budget managers in line with the policy, as part of the development of the MTFS for 2025/26 onwards. The detailed results of the review carried out this year are set out in Appendix A and the approval of the committee is sought to the amended fees and charges for 2025/26 as set out in that Appendix.
- 2.11 Table 1 below summarises the 2023/24 outturn, 2024/25 estimate and the proposed income for 25/26 from fees and charges which fall within the remit of this committee. Please note that the table only reflects changes relating to fees and charges and does not include other budget proposals, which may include volumetric changes being considered as part of the budget. These changes would be due to changes in demand.

- 2.12 The increase in income if these changes are agreed and implemented as planned is expected to be £600 which amounts to a 15.4% increase in the budgeted income figure for this committee for the current financial year.

Fees and Charges

Service Area	2023-24 Outturn £	2024-25 Estimate £	Proposed change in income £	2025-26 Estimate £
Community Protection	1,050	3,900	600	4,500
Total income	1,050	3,900	600	4,500

Table 1: Discretionary Fees & Charges Summary - HCC

- 2.13 Detailed proposals are set out within Appendix A to this report, and considerations relating to these proposals have been summarised below.
- 2.14 Community Protection – Increase in Stray dog charges reflecting the costs of service. Pest control charges are being removed as the services are no longer provided by MBC. Fixed penalty notices have no increase, these are set by order.

Budget Survey

- 2.15 Public consultation on the budget has been carried out. Details are set out in Appendix C and D. Members are encouraged to review the findings and assess whether the budget proposals they have reviewed are consistent with public expectations and aspirations.

Services Spending Approaches

- 2.16 Respondents were provided with the list of mandatory services detailing the current spend for each per council tax band D household. They were asked to indicate what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering the mandatory services. Three options were provided for respondents to select from:
- Reduce the service provided
 - Maintain the current service
 - Increase the service provided.
 - Don't know.
- 2.17 The key points from the responses are (Appendix C):
- The top three mandatory services that respondents said should be maintained were Waste Collection (75.2%), Environmental Services (56.8%), and Building Control (55.7%).
 - The top three mandatory services which respondents said should be reduced were Democratic & Electoral services (40.8%), Council Tax & Benefits (27.3%).and Planning (26.7%)
 - The top three discretionary services which respondents said should be maintained were Bereavement Services (65.6%), Museums (64.5%) and Commercial Waste Services (62.0%).

- The top three discretionary services which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (27.5%), Markets (26.6%) and Hazlitt Theatre and Arts Centre (17.6%).
- Investment priorities – infrastructure including flood prevention and street scene remain the highest priority.

2.18 We have also compared the changes between the 2023 and 2024 surveys (Appendix D). There are small swings in the figures on reducing services. Those with a decrease in the percentage for 'reducing the service provided' are Environmental Services and Planning.

2.19 Those with a larger increase in the percentage for 'reducing the service provided' are Democratic and Electoral Services, Bereavement Services, Environmental Enforcement and Licensing.

2.20 The most important services were also compared across the 2 surveys. There were no changes in the priority order.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1

The committee could recommend approval to adopt the fees and charges as proposed in Appendix A. As these proposals have been developed in line with the council's policy on fees and charges, they will create a manageable impact on service delivery whilst maximising income levels.

3.2 Option 2

The committee could recommend alternative charges to those set out within Appendix A. Any alternative increases may not be fully compliant with the policy, would require further consideration before implementation and may not deliver the necessary levels of income to ensure a balanced budget for 2025-26. The impact on demand for a service should also be taken into account when considering increases to charges beyond the proposed level.

3.3 Option 3

The committee could recommend to do nothing and retain charges at their current levels. However, this might limit the Council's ability to recover the cost of delivering discretionary services and could result in the Council being unable to set a balanced budget for 2025-26.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Cabinet must recommend to Council at its meeting on 19 February 2025 a balanced budget and a proposed level of Council Tax for the coming year. The budget proposals and Fees and Charges included in this report will allow the Cabinet to do this. Accordingly, the preferred option is that this Committee agrees the Fees and Charges at Appendix A.

5. RISK

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

- 6.1 Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee (8th July 2024) received details of MTFS which sets principles for delivery of a balanced budget for 2025/26.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The timetable for developing the budget for 2025/26 is set out below.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Action</i>
5 February 2025	Cabinet	Agree 25/26 final budget proposals for recommendation to Council
19 February 2025	Council	Approve 25/26 budget

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Fees and Charges Proposals 2025/26
 - Appendix B: Fees and Charges - Charging policy
 - Appendix C: Budget Survey 2024
 - Appendix D: Comparison of 2023 and 2024 Service Spending Survey Responses
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.

**Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26
Fees and Charges
Housing and Community Cohesion PAC.**

Fees and Charges April 2025- March 2026		* Includes VAT	Statutory Fee	Discretionary Fee	Actuals 2023-2024	Current Estimate 2024-25	Current Charges 2024-2025	Proposed Charges 2025-2026	Change	+ / - Income 2024-25	Estimate 2025-2026	Comments
					£	£	£	£	%	£	£	
Community Protection												
Stray dog charges		×			0	3,900				600	4,500	In order to improve income against costs we introduced the use of Fixed Penalty Notices. However the payment rates have not proven sufficient to improve income. A new payment mechanism, where fees are paid in advance, is being explored.
Collection charge (Mon-Fri 8am to 4pm)		×					85.00	125.00	47.06%			This is to cover the cost of the service and includes a £25 statutory fee. Reduced to £100 for early payment
Collection charge (4pm-8am + weekends)		×					85.00	165.00	94.12%			This is to cover the cost of the service and includes a £25 statutory fee. Reduced to £140 for early payment
Collection charge (out of office hours (after midnight))		×					85.00	0.00	-100.00%			Covered in the above fees which have been adjusted to meet the service cost from the out of office hours collection service.
Pest Control charges												
Hourly charge for treatments carried out on industrial and commercial properties		×					"Call for quote"					Contract with Pest Control Services was not renewed. The prospective income and market competition from independent providers and self treatments did not make it viable to continue the service.
For treatments outside of normal office hours		×					"Call for quote"					
Charge per visit for the treatment of wasps nests carried out on domestic properties		×					73.75	0.00	-100.00%			
Additional nests treatment		×					13.33	0.00	-100.00%			
Charge per visit for the treatment of rat and mouse nests carried out on domestic premises for initial two visits.		×					72.24	0.00	-100.00%			
Additional rat and mouse treatment visits		×					36.12	0.00	-100.00%			
Minimum charge for treatment of ants on domestic premises		×					37.41	0.00	-100.00%			
Squirrels: for a 2 x Fenn Trapping Programme		×					"Call for quote"	0.00				
Culls		×					78.15	0.00	-100.00%			
For the treatment of fleas and other household pests (Flies, Lice, Silverfish etc.) carried out on a domestic premises up to 6 x rooms. Additional rooms over the original 6 are £10 each		×					85.57	0.00	-100.00%			
For each additional room (up to four rooms additional)		×					13.33	0.00	-100.00%			
Minimum charge (including up to four rooms) for the treatment of bedbugs carried out on a domestic premises		×					345.08	0.00	-100.00%			
For each additional room (up to four rooms additional)		×					"Call for quote"	0.00				
Documentation charge added to charges above where it is necessary to send an invoice for payment.		×										
Community Safety Charges					1,050						0	
Road closure application		×					125.00	100.00	-20.00%			Standard fee to cover the recharged cost of trained operatives displaying signage (MBS) and an administration fee based on current average costs.
CCTV Footage request (insurance companies etc.)		×					0.00	0.00				These are considered to be Subject Access Requests and we cannot charge for them.
Fixed Penalty Fines					0	0					0	
Public Space Protection Order (Dog Control) Fixed Penalty Notice		×					100.00	100.00	0.00%			Set by Order
Public Space Protection Order (Town Centre) Fixed Penalty Notice		×					100.00	100.00	0.00%			Set by Order
Community Protection Total					1,050	3,900				600	4,500	
GRAND TOTAL					1,050	3,900				600	4,500	

Maidstone Borough Council Charging Policy September 2023

1 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 At Maidstone Borough Council, fees and charges represent an important source of income which is used to support the delivery of the Council's objectives. Currently income from fees and charges constitutes just under a third of the council's funding.
- 1.2 The Council needs to ensure that its charges are reviewed regularly, and that they contribute towards the achievement of its priorities. It is also important to ensure that fees and charges do not discriminate against individuals or groups by excluding them from accessing council services.
- 1.3 Pressure on the Council's budgets has increased the incentive to make best use of charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using this as a means of recovering the costs of delivering services.
- 1.4 Under the Council's constitution, responsibility for setting discretionary fees and charges is the Cabinet. Policy Advisory Committee will review the fees and charges for the services within its remit at least annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate and make recommendations to Cabinet.
- 1.5 Where the Council has the discretion to set the charge for a service, it is important that the implications of this decision are fully understood, and that decision makers are equipped with sufficient information to enable rational decisions to be made.

2 Policy Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to establish a framework within which fees and charges levied by the Council are agreed and reviewed.
- 2.2 The Council must ensure that charges are set at an appropriate level which maximises cost recovery. Unless it would conflict with the Council's strategic priorities, other policies, contracts or the law then the Council should aim to maximise net income from fees and charges.
- 2.3 The policy aims to ensure that:-
 - a) Fees and charges are reviewed regularly, and that this review covers existing charges as well as services for which there is potential to charge in the future.
 - b) Budget managers are equipped with guidance on the factors which should be considered when reviewing charges.
 - c) Charges are fair, transparent and understandable, and a consistent and sensible approach is taken to setting the criteria for applying concessions or discounted charges.
 - d) Decisions regarding fees and charges are based on relevant and accurate information regarding the service and the impact of any proposed changes to the charge is fully understood.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to fees and charges currently being levied by the Council and those which are permissible under the wider general powers to provide and charge for “Discretionary Services” included within the Local Government Act 2003 and Localism Act 2011. It does not cover services for which the council is prohibited from charging.
- 3.2 Fees for statutory services delivered by the council, but for which charges are set by central government, rents, leases, council tax, and business rates are outside the scope of this policy.
- 3.3 In general, charges should ensure that service users make a direct contribution to the cost of providing a service. However, there may be certain circumstances where this would not be appropriate. For example:
- Where the council is prohibited from charging for the service (e.g. collection of household waste)
 - Where the introduction of a charge would impede delivery of corporate priorities;
 - Where administrative costs of charging outweigh the potential income;
 - Where the service is seen to be funded from Council Tax (i.e. services which are provided and delivered equally to all residents)
 - Where the government sets the fee structure (e.g. pollution permits and private water fees)

4 Principles

- 4.1 The following overarching principles apply for the consideration and review of all current and future fees and charges levied by the council:
- Fees and charges should maximise cost recovery and where appropriate, income generation, to the extent that the Council’s legal powers permit, providing that this would not present any conflict with the Council’s strategic objectives;
 - Fees and charges should support the improvement of services, and the delivery of the Council’s corporate priorities, as set out in the strategic plan;
 - Where a subsidy or concession is provided for a service, this must be targeted towards the delivery of strategic priorities, for example, by facilitating access to services;
 - The process for setting and updating fees and charges should be administratively simple, transparent and fair, and for budgeting purposes, income projections must be robust and rational.

5 Process and Frequency for Reviewing Charges

- 5.1 The following arrangements for reviewing charges will be applied throughout the Council, for existing charges as well as those which in principle could be introduced.

5.2 In accordance with the Council's constitution, *'Discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed each year by the Policy Advisory Committee responsible for the function having considered will recommend approval to Cabinet, as part of the estimate cycle.'*

5.3 This annual review will ensure consistency with the Council's priorities, policy framework, service aims, market sensitivity, customer preferences, income generation needs and that any subsidy made by the Council is justifiable.

5.4 Heads of Service and budget managers will be asked to complete a schedule setting out all proposed fees and charges for the services in their area (including those which are not set by the council). This will usually take place in autumn for the following financial year and review the current year. By this means, any growth or savings resulting from fees and charges can be built into the budget strategy. The schedule will indicate:

- The service or supply to which the charge relates;
- Who determines the charges;
- The basis for the charge (e.g. units or hourly rates);
- The existing charge;
- The total income budget for the current year;
- The proposed charge;
- Percentage increase/decrease;
- Effective date for increase/decrease; and
- Estimated income for the next financial year after introducing the change.

An example schedule is provided at Appendix B.

5.5 Following this, the proposals will be collated by the Finance section into a report for each Policy Advisory Committee to consider the appropriateness of proposed fees and charges for the services within their remit. The report will clearly identify the charges for which the committee can apply discretion, and distinguish these from the charges which are set externally and included for information only. Cabinet will then receive a final report which brings together the proposals from each of the three service committees, in order to assess the overall impact of the proposed changes and consider the potential impact on customers and service users.

5.6 The timing of the annual review will ensure that changes can be incorporated into the council's budget for the forthcoming financial year, although changes to fees and charges may be made outside of this process if required through a report to the relevant director or service committee.

5.7 It is possible that the review may lead to a conclusion that charges should remain at the existing level. If this is the case, then the outcomes of the review, including the justification for not increasing the charge need to be documented and reported to the relevant service committee.

5.8 For the avoidance of doubt, periodic reviews of the rents and leases are not covered by the above. Individual reviews will be implemented by the relevant officer as long as market levels at least are achieved.

6 Guidance

- 6.1 A checklist of issues for budget managers and Heads of Service to consider when determining the level at which to set fees and charges is provided at Appendix A to this policy.
- 6.2 Below is a list of guiding principles intended to assist decision makers in determining the appropriate level at which to set fees and charges:
- a) Any subsidy from the Council tax payer to service users should be transparent and justifiable.
 - b) Fees and charges may be used to manage demand for a service, and price elasticity of demand should be considered when determining the level at which charges should be set.
 - c) Fees and charges should not be used to provide subsidies to commercial operators.
 - d) Concessions for services should follow a logical pattern and a fair and consistent approach should be taken to ensuring the ensure recovery of all fees and charges.
 - e) Fees and charges should reflect key commitments and corporate priorities.
 - f) Prices could be based on added and perceived value, which takes account of wider economic and social considerations, as well as cost.
 - g) There should be some rational scale in the charge for different levels of the same service and there should be consistency between charges for similar services.
 - h) Policies for fees and charges should fit with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, should be used to generate income to help develop capacity, to deliver efficiency and sustain continuous improvement.
 - i) In certain areas, charging may be used to generate surpluses which can be used to finance other services.
- 6.3 Wherever possible, charges should be recovered in advance or at the point of service delivery. If this is not possible, then invoices should be issued promptly and appropriate recovery procedures will be followed as required. Use of direct debit should be encouraged for periodic payments where this would improve cost effectiveness and enable efficient and timely collection of income.

7 Cost Recovery Limitation

- 7.1 Generally speaking, charges should be set at a level which enables all the costs of delivering a service to be recovered, although there are some exceptions to this identified earlier in this document. This includes direct costs such as the purchase of goods for resale, as well as indirect costs such as management and accommodation costs.

- 7.2 For certain services, legislation prohibits the Council from generating surpluses through charging. The general principle is that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges must not exceed the costs of provision. Examples where this applies include building control and local land charges.
- 7.3 Any over or under recovery that resulted in a surplus or deficit of income in relation to costs in one period should be addressed when setting its charges for future periods so that, over time, income equates to costs.
- 7.4 Councils are free to decide what methodology to adopt to assess costs. Maidstone Borough Council follows the Service Reporting Code of Practice definition of total cost, including an allocation of all related support costs, plus an appropriate share of corporate and democratic core and non-distributed costs. Further guidance and support on calculating the full cost of service provision can be obtained from the Finance section.

8 Concessions & Subsidies

- 8.1 The normal level of fees and charges may be amended to allow for concessions targeted at certain user groups to encourage or facilitate access to the service.
- 8.2 Where concessions are proposed or already in place they must be justified in terms of overall business reasons, or implementation of key strategic considerations e.g. community safety, healthy living.
- 8.3 Examples of concessions and the reasons why they are awarded are:-
- Reductions for older people or children to encourage different age groups to participate in the sport which is linked to the promotion of public health;
 - Free spaces for disabled drivers in Council car parks to support social inclusion;
 - Concessions for new casual traders at the market to stimulate new usage;
- 8.4 In some cases, it may also be justifiable to subsidise a service for all users, where it would support delivery of strategic priorities.
- 8.5 In some circumstances, it may also be suitable to implement a system of means testing for managing access to concessions and subsidies, in order to ensure that subsidy can be targeted appropriately.
- 8.6 A fair and consistent approach should be taken to the application of concessionary schemes, and decisions should recognise the Council's broader agenda on promoting equality, as set out in the Equality Policy. When considering new charges, or significant changes to an existing charge, the budget manager should complete an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).
- 8.7 All decisions regarding concessions and subsidies should include consideration of the impact the Council's ability to generate income and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9 Introducing a new charge

- 9.1 Proposals to introduce new charges should be considered as part of the service planning process and income projections should be factored into the Council's medium term financial plan.
- 9.2 Reasonable notice should be given to customers and service users prior to the introduction of a new charge, along with advice on concessions and discounts available.
- 9.3 Proposals should be based on robust evidence, and will incorporate the anticipated financial impact of introducing the charge, as well as the potential impact on demand for the service.
- 9.4 Performance should be monitored closely following implementation to enable amendments to the charge to be made if required, and the charge will subsequently be picked up as part of the annual review process.

10 Monitoring

- 10.1 Income levels will be monitored throughout the year and reported to committees through the quarterly reporting process. Significant variances may be addressed through an amended to charges, which will require approval from the appropriate Director or Service Committee.
- 10.2 The impact of changes in demand for services will be monitored through quarterly performance monitoring reports, where this is identified as a key performance indicator.

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

The below checklist may be used as a guide for managers when reviewing existing charges or implementing a new fee structure.

Have you considered the following?	Y/N/NA	Comments
1. How does the charge link to the Council's corporate priorities?		
2. Does the charge enable the council to recover all costs of providing the service?		
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'No', have you considered increasing the charge to enable full cost recovery?		
4. Has the impact of inflation on the cost of service delivery been reflected in the proposed charge?		
5. Do the administrative costs of charging or increasing the charge outweigh the potential income to be generated?		
6. Is the charge being used to deter or incentivise certain behaviours?		
7. Has there been any investment in the service to effect an increase in charges?		
8. If there is a market for the service or supply, has the impact of market conditions and competition be considered in setting the charge?		
9. How sensitive is the price to demand for the service? Is there a risk that an increase in charge could deter potential customers?		
10. If applicable, have consultation results been taken into account?		

Appendix A - Discretionary Fees & Charges Review Checklist

11. Could the charges or income budget be increased to support the delivery of a savings target?		
12. What would the impact of the change be on customers, and how does this affect the delivery of corporate priorities?		
13. Have any alternative charging structures been considered?		
14. How will the service be promoted? How successful have previous promotions been in generating demand?		
15. New charges only - are there any legal factors which impact on the scope for charging (e.g. an obligation to limit charges to cost recovery only)?		
16. New charges only - has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? N		
17. If applicable, have concessionary charges been considered on a fair and consistent basis?		

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Chargeable Service/Supply: _____

Job Title: _____

Department: _____

Appendix B – Example Schedule of Fees & Charges

Fees and Charges April 2017 - March 2018		Includes VAT	Discretionary Fee	Statutory Fee	2016-2017 Actuals	2017 -2018 Current Estimate	Current Charges 2017-2018	Proposed Charges 2018-2019	% Change	2017-2018 + / - Income	2018 -2019 Estimate	Comments
EA31	Street Naming & Numbering				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	
	Name change						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Addition of Name to numbered Property						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Amendment to Postal Address						25.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Build - Individual Property						75.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Official Registration of Postal Address previously not Registered						50.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	New Development - Fee per unit/flat						40.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Creation of New Street						100.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Renumbering of Development or Block of Flats - Fee per unit/flat						20.00	0.00	-100.00%			
	Street Naming & Numbering Total				66,995	49,000				0	49,000	



BUDGET FEEDBACK

October 2024

ABSTRACT

Summary results from the budget questions that were asked as part of the 2024 Resident Survey.

Consultation@maidstone.gov.uk

[Course title]

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METHODOLOGY

The Budget Survey questions, this year, were included as part of the wider Resident Survey 2024. This is a bi-annual borough wide survey. This helps to prevent consultation fatigue with residents being asked to complete more than one consultation survey during the same time period which in turn helps maintain a good response rate.

The survey was open between 6 September and 20 October 2024.

The survey was open to all Maidstone Borough residents aged 18 years and over.

A total of 4262 responses were received. 2884 provided age and gender which allowed these responses to be weighted in line with the population of Maidstone.

The data in this report has been weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias. The weighting profile is based on the 203 mid-year ONS population estimates. However, the under-representation of 18- to 34-year-olds means that higher weights have been applied to responses in this group, for this reason, the results for this group should be treated with caution.

The economically active group includes respondents in employment (full, part-time or self-employed) or who are looking for work.

Statistical notes on the report

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology, with residents free to choose whether to participate or not, it was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. This report discusses the weighted results to overall responses by demographic questions to ensure that it more accurately matches the known profile of Maidstone Boroughs population by these characteristics.

There were a total of 2884 weighted responses to the survey based on Maidstone's population aged 18 years and over this means overall results are accurate to ± 1.81 at the 95% confidence level. This means that if we repeated the same survey 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be between ± 1.81 of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 1.81% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 48.19% to 51.81%).

It should be noted that not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

A percentage point is the difference between percentages. A value of 10% falling by 1 percent point becomes 9% (10% has 10 percentage points). A fall of 1% would result in a value of 9.9%.

Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.

Responses have been separated into different, mutually exclusive subgroups and the data has been compared to see whether there are any significant differences between subgroups. When looking at subgroups within a sample, the sampling error increases.

Open questions were analysed through the use of code frames and assigning each issue or opportunity raised by respondents in their response a code. The use of coding allows the same issue or opportunity raised by multiple respondents to be logged and categorised together within the coding frame, thereby, making it possible to quantify how many times the same or very similar issue or opportunity was made by respondents.

ENGAGEMENT REACH

The table below shows to level of engagement across the project on the Council's Let's Talk Consultation portal.

Aware <i>(Visited project Page)</i>	Informed <i>(Clicked on additional information)</i>	Engaged <i>(Participated in activity e.g. pin, survey response)</i>
3680	701	3763

In addition:

- A total of 5,539 postal surveys were mailed out, and 499 returned were received.
- Officers held 14 roadshows around the borough including in Marden, Lenham, Headcorn, Barming and Maidstone Town Centre. Paper copies of the survey were also handed out at engagement events held at various locations around the borough to support delivery of the consultation.
- Emails and reminders were sent to the consultation mailing list (13,583).
- In addition, the project was promoted on the Council's website, social media and in the local press.

MANDATORY SERVICES

MOST IMPORTANT MANDATORY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select, from the list of mandatory services, which three services were most important to them.

There were 2869 responses to this question.

The top three ‘most important’ services that MBC is required, by law, to provide were:

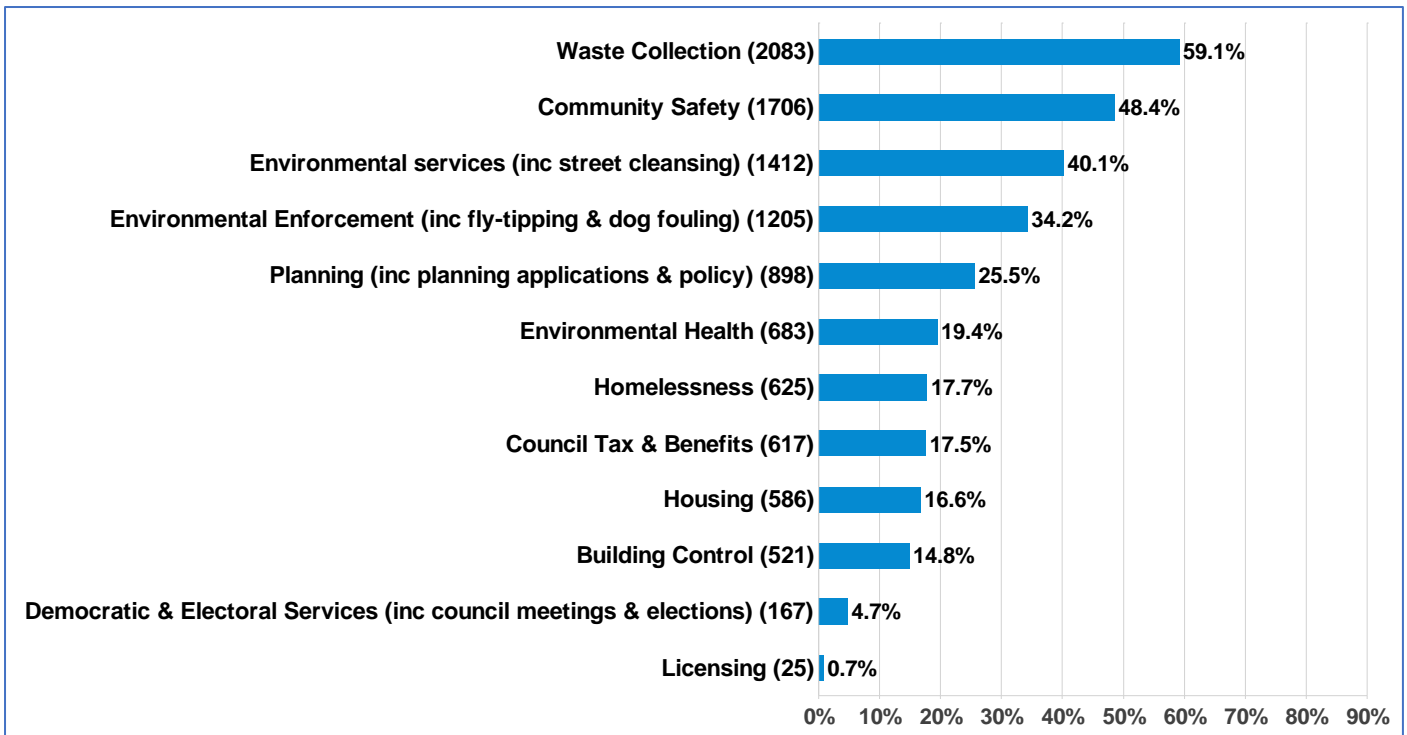
- Waste Collection 58.4%
- Community Safety 52.8%
- Environmental services (inc street cleaning) 43.1%


In the 2023 Budget survey 91.3% of respondents selected Environmental Services including waste collection and street cleansing as one of their top three services.

The bottom three ‘most important’ services that MBC is required to provide by law were:



- Licensing 0.9%
- Democratic Services (inc Elections) 4.2%
- Building Control 11.6%

Similarly, In the 2023 Budget survey Licensing had the lowest proportion of respondents that selected it as one of their top three mandatory services.





58.7% of female respondents selected Community Safety as one of their top three most important mandatory services compared to 47.0% of male respondents. Community Safety was the top mandatory service for female respondent while the top three for male respondents matched the overall response.

	<p>The most important service for respondents in the age groups 18 to 24 years and 35 to 44 years was community safety at 59.1% and 62.8% respectively, followed by Waste Collection and Environmental Services.</p> <p>The response from the remaining age groups was in line with the overall result.</p>
	<p>Community Safety was the top response for respondents from minority groups at 74.1%, followed by Environmental Services at 48.5% and then Waste Collection at 40.7%.</p>

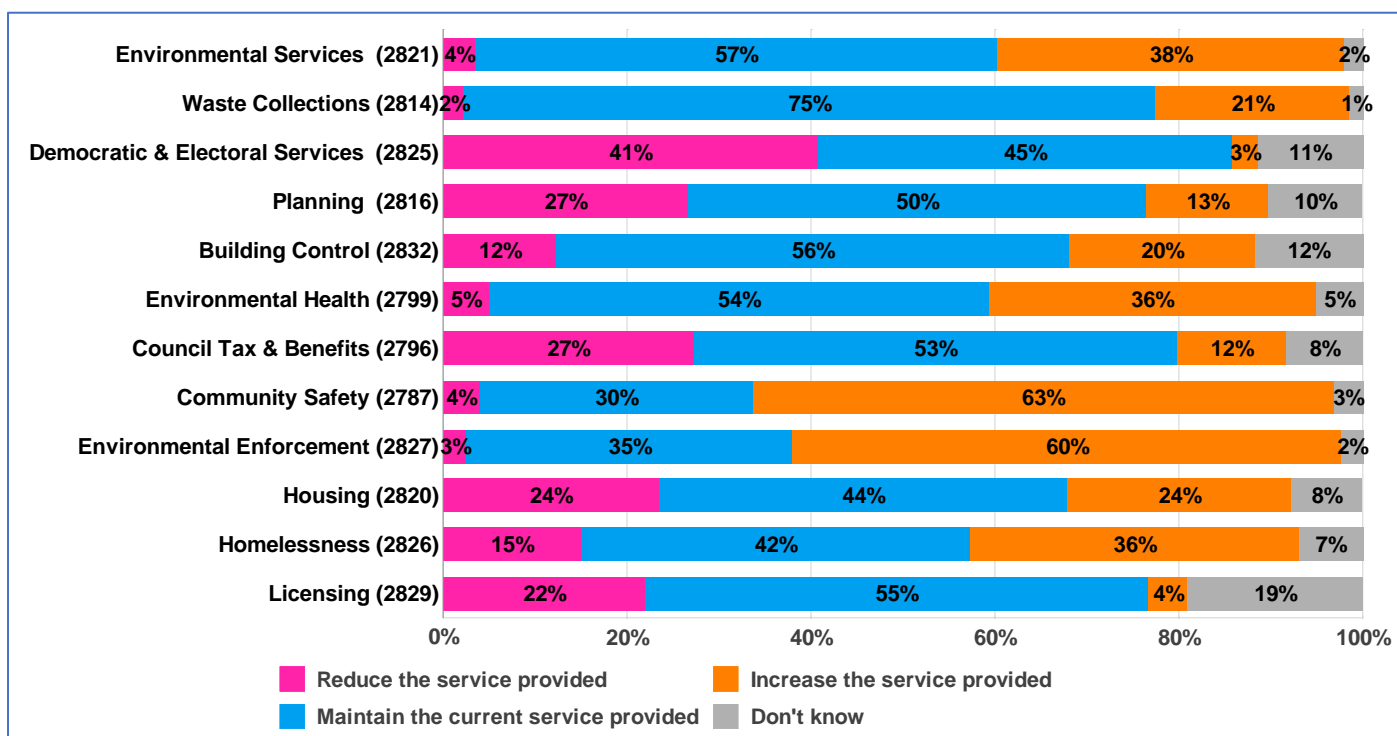
SPENDING APPROACHES MANDATORY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select the approach they felt the Council should take in terms of the delivery of each of its Mandatory Services in the next year.

They were provided with four options to choose from:

- Reduce the service provided
- Maintain the service provided
- Increase the service provided
- Don't know

To provide context the current spend on each service per Council Tax band D was shown.






REDUCE

The top three mandatory services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Democratic & Electoral Services at 40.8%
- Council Tax & Benefits at 27.3%
- Planning (inc applications & Local Plan) at 26.7%.

In the 2023 Budget Survey the top three mandatory services which respondents said should be reduced were Democratic & Electoral Services (47.0%), Licensing (38.5%) and Council Tax & Benefits (34.8%).

	42.9% of economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said Democratic Service should be reduced with 42.9% answering this way compared to 36.8% of economically inactive respondents.
	Across the age groups the 75 years and over group had the lowest proportion that said Democratic Services should be reduced at 34.2% and the 45 to 54 years group had the greatest proportion that said democratic services should be reduced at 47.1%.
	Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Democratic Services should be reduced at 32.7% compared to 41.1% of respondents from white groups answering the same.




MAINTAIN

The top three services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Waste Collections at 75.2%
- Environmental Services at 56.8%
- Building Control at 55.7%

In the 2023 Budget Survey the top three mandatory services that respondents said should be maintained were Environmental Services (96.7%), Environmental Health (84.1%) and Community Safety (82.0%).



NOTE: In previous Budget Surveys, Waste Collection has been included as part of Environmental Services.



	The data shows that the proportion that responded to maintain Waste Collections increases as age increases.
	Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 77.5% compared to 66.9% of disabled respondents answering the same.
	Minority group respondents had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 64.1% compared to 75.9% of respondents from white groups answering the same.

INCREASE

The top three services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

- Community Safety at 63.2%
- Environmental Enforcement at 59.7%
- Environmental Services at 37.7%

	Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that Community Safety spending should be increased with 68.2% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 52.9% answered this way.
	Respondents in the age groups 64 years and over had significantly lower proportion that said that Community safety spending should be increased at 49.1% and 42.2% respectively, compared to the other age groups. Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the greatest proportion that said spending should be increased in this area at 72.8%.

	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety be increased at 64.6% compared to 57.8% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety should be increased at 71.8% compared to 62.6% of respondents from white groups answering the same.</p>

DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

MOST IMPORTANT DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services Maidstone Council provide and were asked to select up to three which they felt were the most important.

- 3288 responses were received.

The top three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

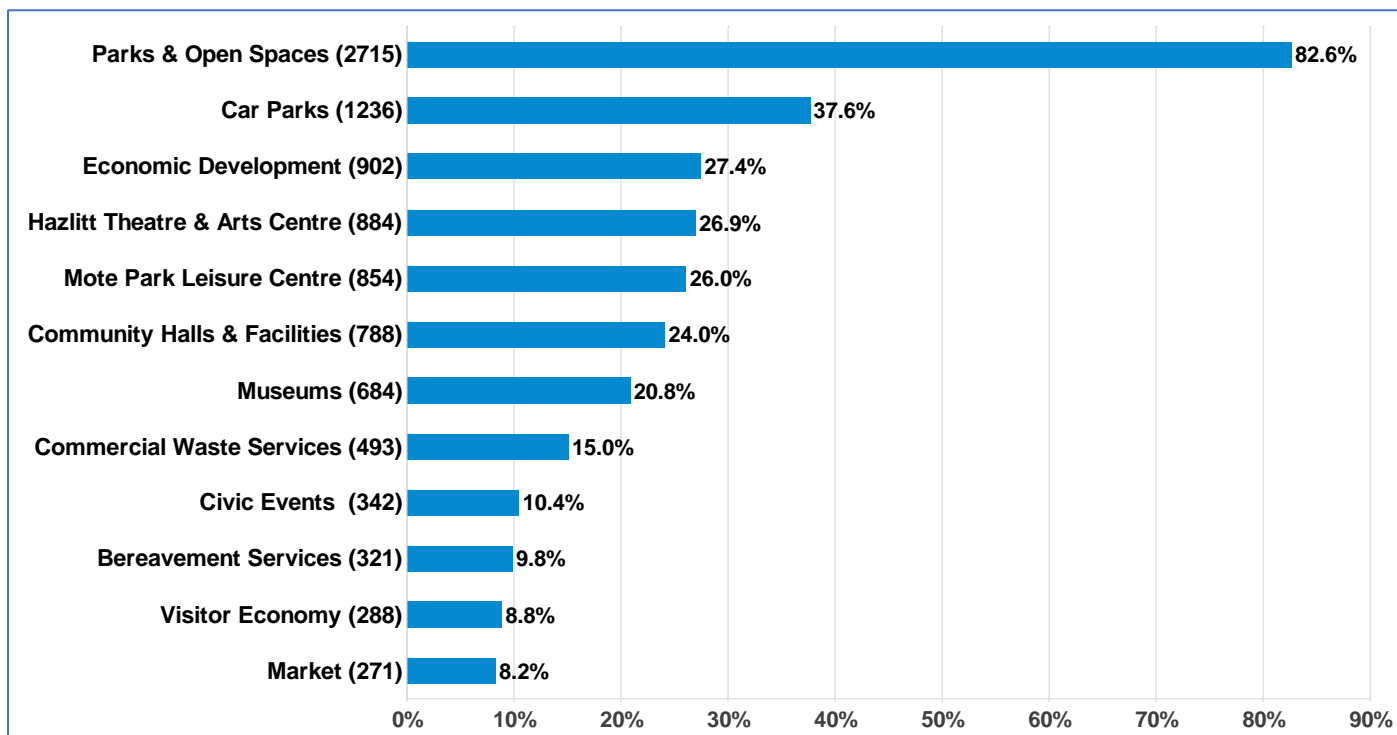
- Parks & Open Spaces 81.8%
- Car Parks 35.4%
- Mote Park Leisure Centre 32.0%

The top three responses are unchanged from when this question was last asked in the 2023 Budget Survey.

The bottom three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

- Visitor Economy 8.7%
- Bereavement Services 9.3%
- Civic Events 10.4%

In the 2023 Budget Survey, Civic Events had the lowest proportion that said it was important at 4.0%, followed by the Market at 6.2%. In 2023, Bereavement Services was on the mandatory services list.



Park & Open Spaces was the top discretionary service across all demographic groups (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability & Economic Activity)

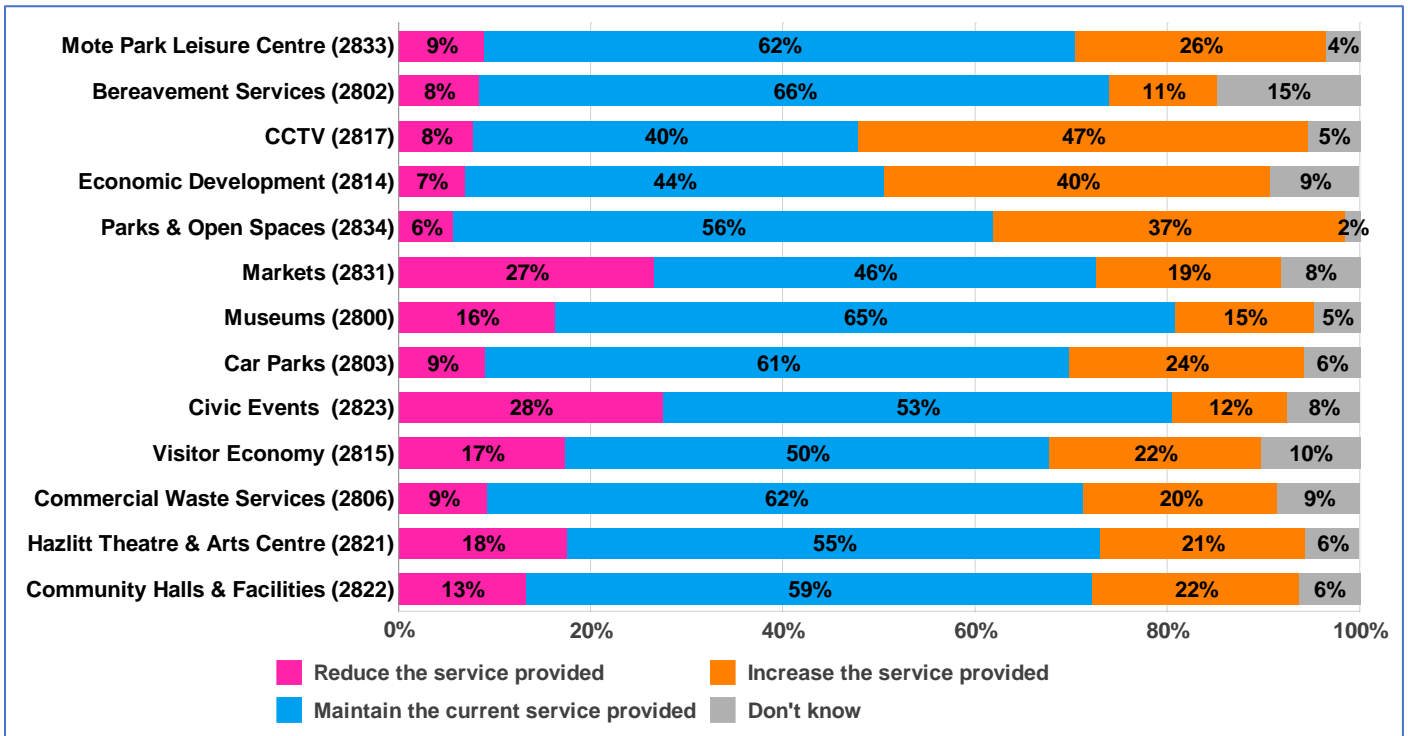
	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that selected Mote Park Leisure as one of their top three discretionary services with 36.9% selecting this service compared to 21.8% of the economically inactive group. Making it the second most important service for the economically active group (whereas the economically inactive group's top three matches the overall result).</p>
	<p>The proportion of respondents selecting Mote Park Leisure Centre as one of their top three discretionary services declines as age increases from 43.5% for the 18 to 34 years age group to 16.8% for the 75 years and over age group.</p>
	<p>Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that selected car parks as one of their top three with 41.6% selecting this service compared to 33.0% of respondents without a disability. Respondents with a disability had Parks & Open Spaces as first, Car Parks as second and Community Halls and facilities as third.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that selected Parks & Open Spaces as one of their top three discretionary services at 62.8% compared to 82.9% of white groups. While this was still the top service for minority group respondents, this group had Economic Development as second most important and Mote Park Leisure Centre as third most important.</p>

SPENDING APPROACHES DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering each of its Discretionary Services next year. They were given three options to pick from:

- Reduce the service provided,
- Maintain the service provided
- Increase the service provided
- Don't know.

To provide context the current spend on each service per council tax band D was shown.



REDUCE

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Civic Events at 27.5%
- Market at 26.6%
- Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre 17.6%

In the 2023 Budget Survey the top three discretionary services which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (50.8%), Markets (43.3%) and Tourism (34.6%).



	<p>Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Civic Events should be reduced with 31.4% answering this way compared to 23.7% of female respondents.</p>
	<p>Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the lowest proportion that said Civic Events should be reduced at 21.4% - significantly lower than the proportions answering this way for all other age groups.</p>

MAINTAIN

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Bereavement Services at 65.6%
- Museums at 64.5%
- Commercial Waste Services at 62.0%



In the 2023 Budget Survey, the top three discretionary services which respondents said should be maintained were Parks & Open Spaces (96.4%), Leisure centre (79.7%) and Car Parks (74.3%).

	<p>Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had a significantly lower proportion that said that Bereavement Services spending should be maintained at 57.1%, compared to all other age groups.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said that spending on Bereavement Services should be maintained at 68.0% compared to 57.5% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>

INCREASE

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

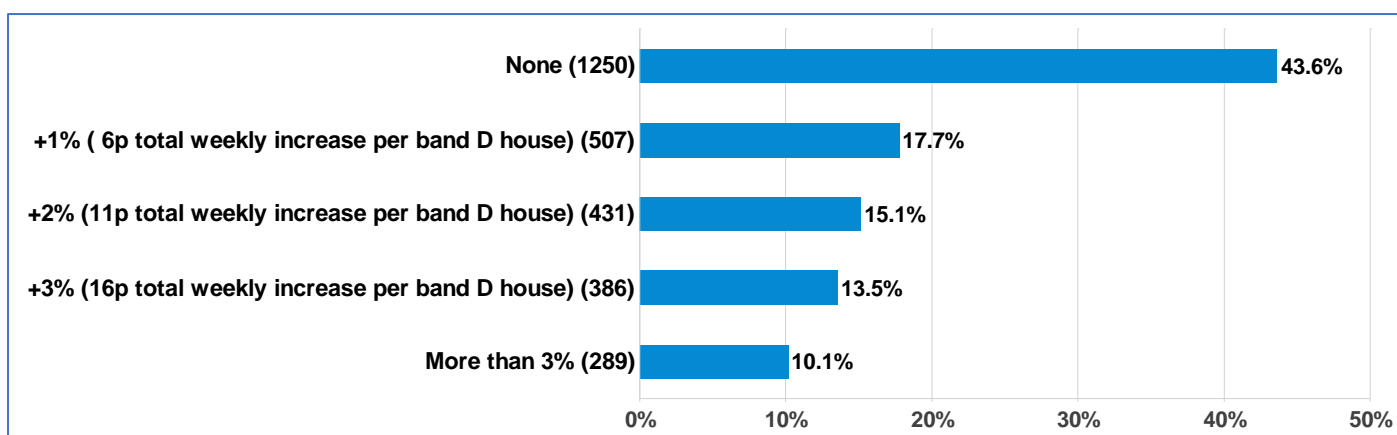
- CCTV at 46.8%
- Economic Development at 40.3%
- Parks & Open Spaces at 36.6%



	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that CCTV spending should be increased with 48.3% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 44.0% answered this way.</p>
	<p>55.3% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said that CCTV spending should be increased, significantly greater than the proportions answering this way from all other age groups.</p>


COUNCIL TAX INCREASES

There were 2865 responses to the question about how much should Council Tax increase by to protect services.

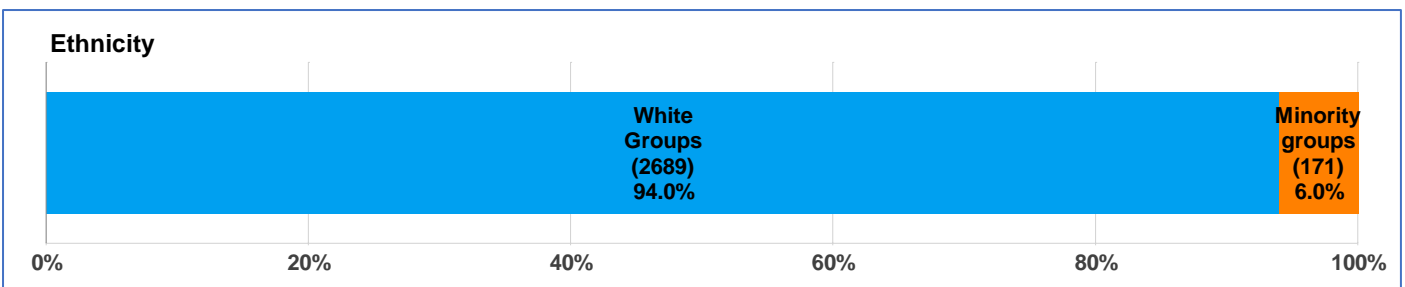
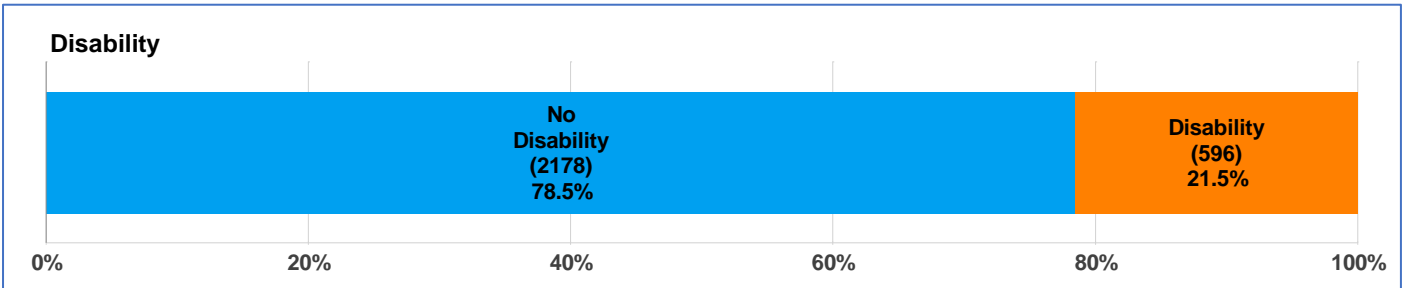
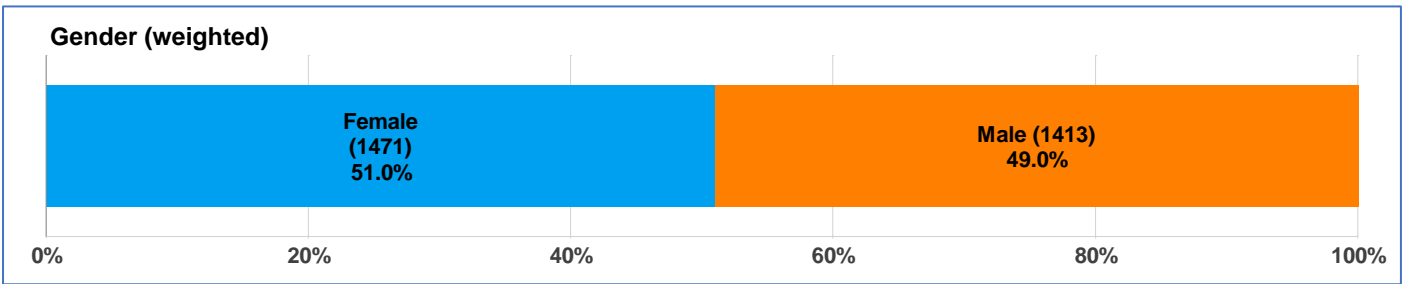
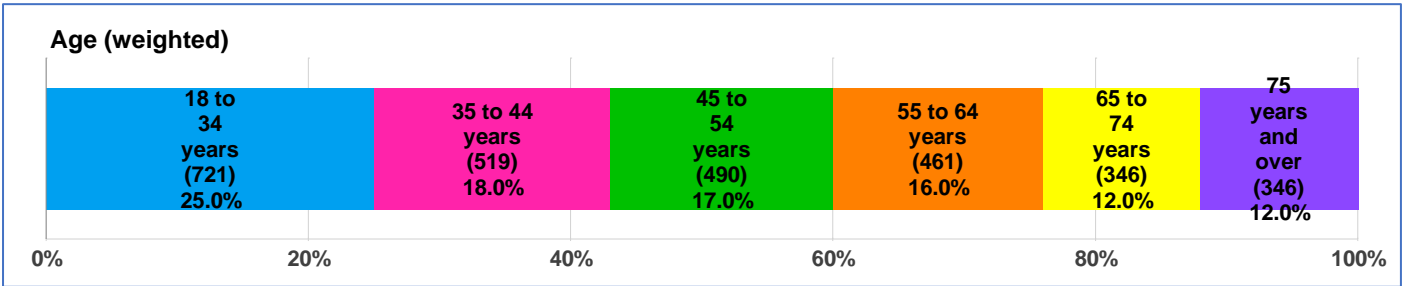
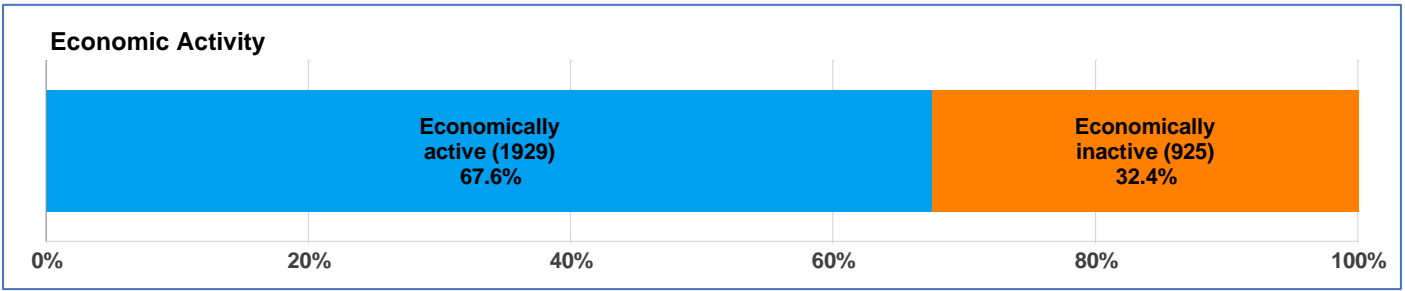
The most common response was 'none' with 1250 answering this way.

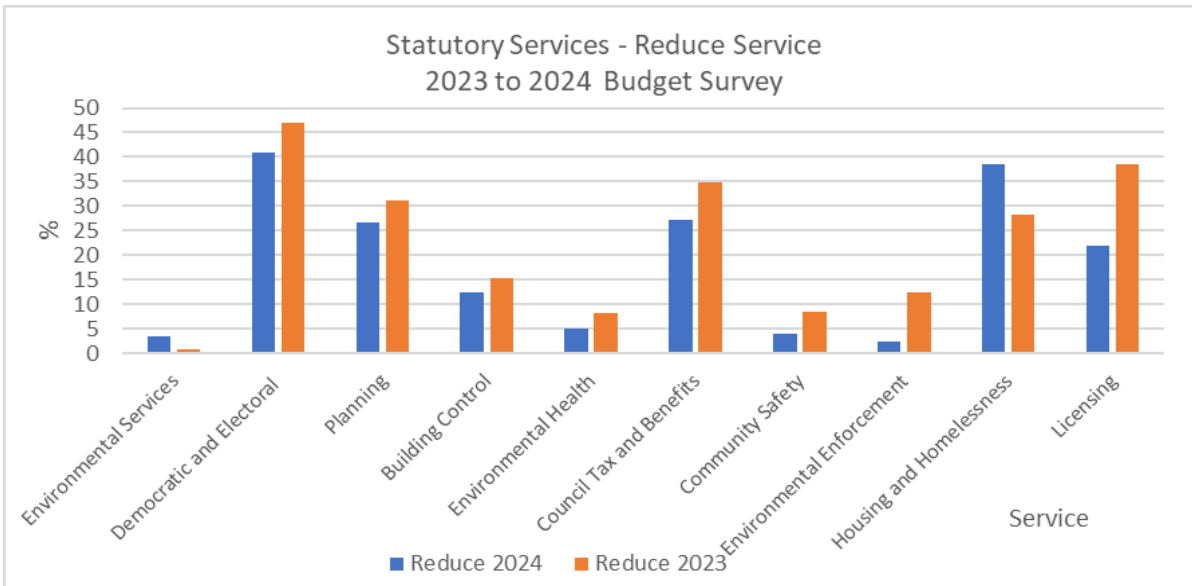


	<p>Male respondents had the greatest proportion that responded 'more than 3%' at 14.1%.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had the greatest proportion that answered 'none' at 54.3%. • Respondents aged 55 to 64 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+2%' at 17.9%. • Respondents aged 65 to 74 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+3%' at 17.1%.

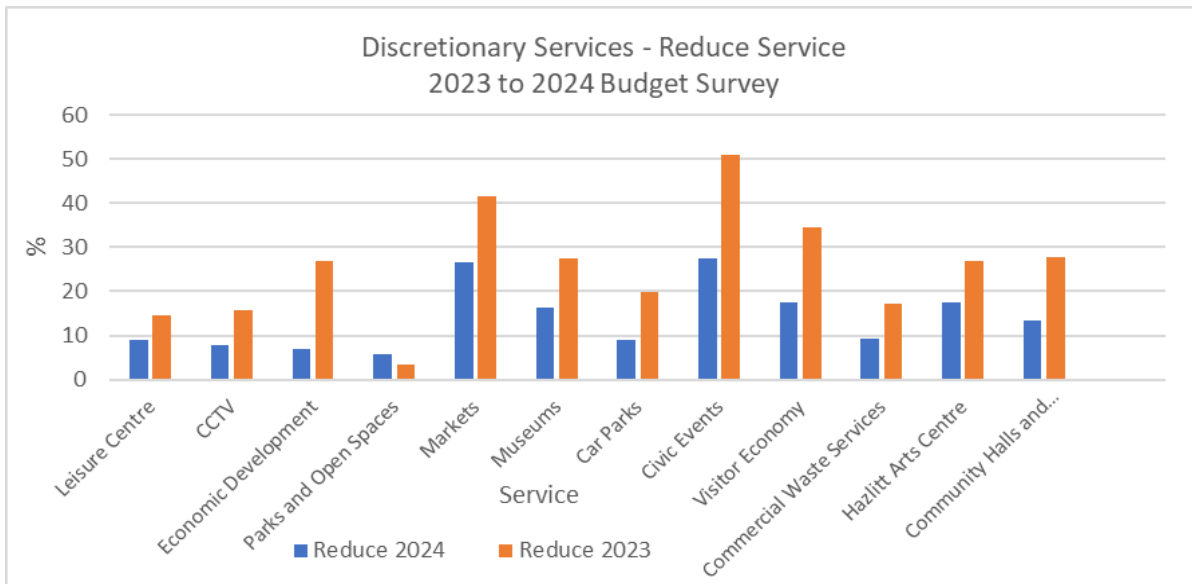
	The proportion selecting the response 'none' decreases as age increases.
	Minority groups had the greatest proportion that selected '+1%' at 29.7%.

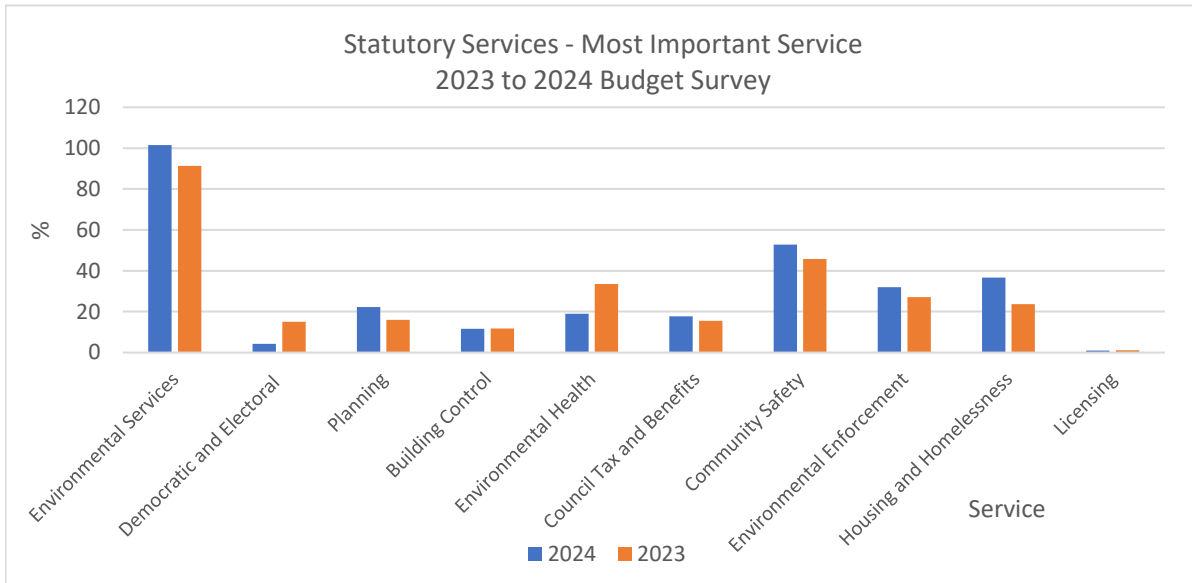
DEMOGRAPHICS



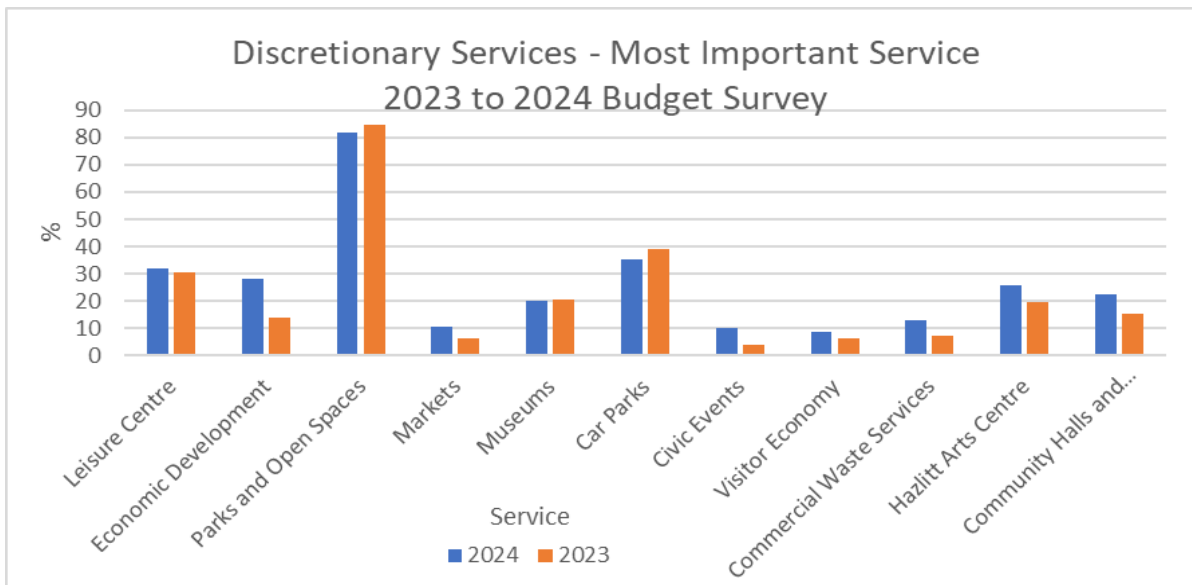


Note : Housing and Homelessness are separate items in the 2024 survey. In 2023 they were one item.





Note : Housing and Homelessness are separate items in the 2024 survey. In 2023 they were one item.



Agenda Item 15

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

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