

# AGENDA

## CABINET MEETING



Date: Wednesday 10 April 2013  
Time: 6.30 p.m.  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Garland (Chairman), Greer, Hotson,  
Paine, Mrs Ring and J.A. Wilson

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Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Urgent Items
3. Notification of Visiting Members
4. Disclosures by Members and Officers
5. Disclosures of lobbying
6. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information
7. Minutes of Previous Meeting

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**Continued Over/:**

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**Issued on 2 April 2013**

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**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

**KEY DECISION REPORTS**

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 8. | Report of the Head of Business Improvement - Customer Service Improvement Strategy 2013-16 | 8 - 41  |
| 9. | Report of the Head of Human Resources - Workforce Strategy                                 | 42 - 77 |

**NON-KEY DECISION REPORTS**

- |     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
| 10. | Report of the Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Visitor Information Centre Review | 78 - 91 |
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## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2013**

**Present:** Councillor Garland (Chairman), and  
Councillors Greer, Hotson, Paine, Mrs Ring and  
J.A. Wilson

**Also Present:** Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Burton, Daley,  
McLoughlin, Munford, Newton, Mrs Stockell  
and Mrs Wilson

141. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

142. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman indicated that he intended to take the following as urgent items:-

- a) References from Spatial Planning Strategy Advisory Group relating to Local Development Scheme 2013-2015 and Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031.
- b) SCRAIP from Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to Local Plan – Bus Lane.
- c) Head of Planning Urgent Addendum Report on Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031.

143. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillors Mrs Stockell and Mrs Wilson indicated that they wished to speak on Agenda items 8 and 9.

Councillors Blackmore, Burton, Daley, McLoughlin, Munford and Newton indicated that they wished to speak on Agenda Item 9.

144. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

145. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors Hotson and Paine stated that they had been lobbied on Agenda Items 8 and 9.

146. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

147. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 February 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

148. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2013

DECISION MADE:

1. That the amalgamation of the Core Strategy Local Plan and the Development Delivery Local Plan, to be called the Maidstone Borough Local Plan ("MBLP"), be approved;
2. That the plan period for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan be 2011 to 2031; and
3. That, subject to the following amendment, the Local Development Scheme 2013-2015 (as set out at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment) be adopted and that the Scheme comes into effect from the date of adoption:-

"That the final sentence of paragraph 3.6 of the Scheme be amended to read "The Council will undertake an additional stage of public consultation on the MBLP for ~~the new~~ **all** policies and land allocations (called "participation" or regulation 18) in 2013, as set out in the LDS, before proceeding to formal public consultation stage (called "publication" or regulation 19) in 2014 on the ~~entire~~ Local Plan."

To view full details of this decision, please click here:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=671>

149. MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

DECISION MADE:

1. That a working target of 14,800 dwellings for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan period 2011 to 2031 be approved until such time as the work identifying the borough's housing land supply and the identification of environmental constraints is completed;
2. That Council be recommended that the moratorium on the release of greenfield housing sites allocated in the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 be revoked because the reasons for the moratorium no longer apply;
3. That, subject to the following amendment, the key public consultation issues relating to the policies that are the subject of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and Environment be noted

and the recommended changes to policies set out in the schedule attached as Appendix A to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and Environment be agreed:-

"Policy CS7, paragraph 6.25 final sentence delete "from 12% to 22.5% of all trips made"."

4. That, subject to the following amendments, amended policies CS5 to CS13 and SS1, SS1a, SS1b, SS1c, SS2, SS2a, SS2b, SS2c and SS4 (attached at Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and Environment) be approved for public consultation at the preparation stage of the local plan process (regulation 18) to enable a full sustainability appraisal to be undertaken for all policies and site allocations ahead of the Publication stage of the local plan process (regulation 19):-
  - a) Policy SS1, paragraph 3.11 second sentence: after "nearby" add "open".
  - b) Policy SS1, paragraph 3.11 Add new final sentence: "In particular this will apply to the necessary provision of formal play space for children, which the council will expect to be provided in appropriate locations, the details of which will be agreed in the development briefs."
  - c) Policy SS1a, paragraph 3.12 add to end of paragraph: "The Bridge Nursery site as used historically goes beyond the borough boundary into Tonbridge and Malling, occupying all of the land bounded by the Maidstone East railway line, the A20 London Road, the edge of the existing Allington residential area (at Lamberhurst Way, Blackmanstone Way and Fordwich Close) and the wooded area immediately north of Halstead Walk."
  - d) Policy SS1a, paragraph 3.13 first sentence: after "2000" add "for housing and open space". Second sentence: after "will" add "now be developed primarily for housing and".
  - e) Policy SS1a, paragraph 3.14 first sentence: replace "allocated" with "identified".
  - f) Policy SS1a, paragraph 3.16 first sentence: after "expects the" add "land beyond the borough boundary in". Delete "~~portion of this site~~". After "maintaining" add "the". After "railway line" add "within Maidstone Borough".
  - g) Policy SS1a, paragraph 3.18 final sentence: replace "language" with "approach".
  - h) Policy SS1a(5)(i) replace "section of the site within" with "land beyond the borough boundary (as described in 3.12) in".
  - i) Policy SS1b, paragraph 3.29 add as second and third sentence: "This land is comprised of 5.8 hectares designated in the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 as public open space (policy ENV24 (xiii)) and 15.4 hectares north west of the borough boundary. The land north west of the borough boundary is comprised of three fields – the northern half of the orchard field which straddles the boundary and the two fields immediately east of Hermitage Lane and south of the Maidstone East railway line."

- j) Policy SS1b, paragraph 3.29 split paragraph before “Working with Tonbridge and Malling”.
- k) Policy SS1b, new paragraph 3.30 after “Working with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council,” add “appropriate and necessary ecological mitigation and community open space will be provided on the 21.2 hectares of land described between the footpath/ restricted byway and the Maidstone East railway line. The land within the Maidstone boundary”. Delete ~~“this land (from the footpath/byway, as far as the railway) will be used to mitigate the ecological impacts of development as well as providing open space for community purposes. Within the Maidstone boundary, the land”~~.
- l) Policy SS1b, new paragraph 3.30 before “designated as strategic gap” add “also”.
- m) Policy SS1b, old paragraph 3.30 renumber as “3.31”.
- n) Policy SS1b(12) replace “section of the site within Tonbridge and Malling” with “15.4 hectares of land north west of the borough boundary, described in 3.29”.
- o) Policy SS2, paragraph 4.7 final sentence: After “new provision” replace comma with full stop. Delete remainder of sentence. Add new final sentence: “In particular this will apply to the necessary provision of formal play space for children, which the council will expect to be provided in appropriate locations, the details of which will be agreed in the development briefs.”
- p) SS2b allocation, Land North of Sutton Road, proposed amendment to site boundary amend the site boundary for Land North of Sutton Road to align with the site boundary for the local plan allocation (2000) as shown on the site plan attached at Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment.
- q) Policy SS2c, paragraph 4.22 first sentence: Before “Bicknor Wood” add “The ancient woodland at”. Second sentence: After “to meet” add “the ancient woodland at”. After “which is” add “immediately north of” and delete “adjacent to”.
- r) Policy SS2c, paragraph 4.23 final sentence: At start of sentence, add “It is important to ensure that appropriate open space is provided on site and that”. Amend “dwellings will be” to “dwellings are”.
- s) Policy SS2c(ii) after “woodland belt” delete “of at least” and add “ranging from a minimum of 40 metres to”
- t) Policy SS2c(5) after “woodland belt” add “ranging from” and delete “of”. After “metres” add “to 80 metres”.
- u) Policy SS4, paragraph 5.16 delete ~~“300m<sup>2</sup> greater than that which is existing on site (14,300m<sup>2</sup>)”~~ and replace with “300m<sup>2</sup> greater than the total existing retail floorspace on site of 14,300m<sup>2</sup>”.
- v) Policy SS4, paragraph 5.16 move sentence “In order to assess the impact of the proposals on the town centre, a retail impact assessment will be required for both comparison and convenience goods” to new paragraph 5.16a and add: “In determining the overall impact of the retail proposals, a measured adverse impact of more than 3% on town centre turnover is unlikely to be acceptable.”
- w) Policy SS4, paragraph 5.16 replace “criterion” with “threshold”.

- x) Policy SS4(7) amend to read: “The cumulative quantum of retail floorspace will be restricted to the provision of up to 300m<sup>2</sup> above that which already exists. Any additional retail floorspace above this limit must be **of an out of town format that is** complementary to town centre uses and, by means of a sequential sites assessment, demonstrably require an out of town location”.
  - (y) Policy SS4(8) amend to read:  
 “Submission of a retail impact assessment for both comparison and convenience goods, to be approved by the Borough Council, in order to assess the impact of retail area proposals **which clearly demonstrates that the retail development has no significant adverse impact** on the town centre”.
5. That, subject to the amendments listed in decision (4) above, the strategic site allocation policies SS1, SS1a, SS1b, SS1c, SS2, SS2a, SS2b, SS2c and SS4 (attached at Appendix B to the report of the Director of Change, Planning and Environment) be adopted for development management decisions;
  6. That land at junction 8 of the M20 motorway be retained as a strategic development location for employment (policy SS3) until such time as the work identifying employment land demand and supply is completed;
  7. That, subject to the following amendments, the amended targets for affordable housing in policy CS10, seeking 15% provision on previously developed land in the urban area, 30% on greenfield sites in the urban area and at the urban periphery, and 40% at rural settlements and the rural area; together with a policy threshold of ten units and such developments of 10 dwellings and over will contribute on site; and the deletion of the reference to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation contribution within this policy be approved:-
    - a) Policy CS10, paragraph 6.42 amend to read: “Viability testing indicates that affordable housing is achievable with a one dwelling threshold. For practical purposes, the threshold will be set at 10 dwellings. Affordable housing will be provided on site. Alternative provision will not be accepted unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify it. Any proposals for off site or financial provision must be made at the time of the application.”
    - b) Delete paragraph 6.43.
    - c) Policy CS10, paragraph 6.44 before “Around the urban periphery” add “On greenfield and private residential garden sites in the urban area and”.
    - d) Policy CS10, Policy text first sentence:  
 Amend “one residential unit” to “10 residential units”.

- e) Policy CS10(1)(ii) after “Greenfield” add “and private residential gardens”.
  - f) Policy CS10(2) delete criterion.
  - g) Policy CS10(3) Delete “Where the development is 10 dwellings or more:” After “proven necessary” add “in exceptional circumstances”.
8. That the amended targets in policy CS12 for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation of 187 pitches and for Travelling Showpeople accommodation of 11 plots, to reflect the extension of the new local plan period to 2031 be approved; and
  9. That, subject to the following amendments, the infrastructure priorities for development set out in paragraph 1.12.5 of the report of the Director of Change, Planning and Environment, be agreed and the amended policy CS14 be approved for re-consultation with the public at the preparation stage of the local plan process (regulation 18):-
    - a) Policy CS14, paragraph 7.7 under “Infrastructure Priorities for Residential Development” move “Public Realm” to position 4 and move the balance of priorities further down the list.
    - b) Policy CS14(3) under “Infrastructure Priorities for Residential Development” move “Public Realm” to position (iv) and move the balance of priorities further down the list.
  10. That there should be consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition in advance of the Council’s Sustainability Appraisal about the precise arrangements for the ecological assessment of the Bridge Nursery site in terms of when, what and who conducts the work.
  11. That the policy for Bridge Nursery site should be amended to make reference to the landowners responsibility for the conduct of ecological surveys as part of the preparation for bringing forward development proposals at the planning application stage.
  12. That clear information be provided to parish councils concerning the Neighbourhood Planning process viz a viz the core strategy timetable especially with respect to the housing need total and its spatial distribution.
  13. That the importance of the cumulative impact of development envisaged in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan be noted and taken into account in both the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Infrastructure Development Plan and that the proposals for transport provision for walking and cycling be evaluated before it is completed.



14. That the following response be submitted to the Regeneration and Economic Development Committee SCRAIP relating to the points raised in respect of the bus lane

- a) The Cabinet have retained the bus lane in their current proposals
- b) Agreed to the proposed investigations
- c) Agreed.

To view full details of this decision, please click here:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=674>

150. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 10.28 p.m.

# Agenda Item 8

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**10 APRIL 2013**

### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT**

**Report prepared by Georgia Hawkes**

#### **1. CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2013-16**

##### 1.1 Consideration

1.1.1 To consider adopting the Customer Service Improvement Strategy 2013-16 (Appendix A).

##### 1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Business Improvement

1.2.1 That Cabinet adopts the Customer Service Improvement Strategy 2013-16, subject to delegation to the Chief Executive to make minor amendments in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services as required.

1.2.2 That Cabinet considers any recommendations made by Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 9 April 2013.

1.2.3 That Cabinet notes the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix B.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In 2012 the Council undertook a review of the way it delivers customer access to and engagement for services across the authority and how well our current arrangements meet current customer needs and expectations. The project had 6 workstreams:

1. Who are our customers? – Analysis of the type of people who use the council's services, how frequently and in what way.
2. How do we manage customer data and information?
3. What do our customers want? – Consultation with residents and businesses on their preferences for how they access services, how this compares with the way they currently access council

services and what is important to them when they contact the Council.

4. What is the optimum customer delivery model? – Assessment how we currently deliver customer services and development of the optimum model for customer service delivery based upon findings from work streams 1, 3 and 6.
5. How do we engage with customers? – Review of existing channels of engagement and development of new channels.
6. What is the local, regional and national context? - Consider the position of other authorities, government and what opportunities are available.

1.3.2 A range of internal and external exercises were undertaken as part of each of the above work streams. This included an extensive consultation exercise with local residents as part of work stream 3 – what do our customers want?

1.3.3 Focus groups with a cross-section of different people from across the borough and face to face interviews with business at the Town Centre Management meeting were held at the beginning of the project in July 2012 and followed up in August 2012 by a survey sent to 3000 residents (506 returned) and an online survey sent to 1000 businesses (68 returned) to more widely test findings from the focus groups and interviews.

1.3.4 Other work included best practice research and visits to other councils, analysis of customer data, collation of transactional data and information on how the council manages information and interviews with officers.

1.3.5 The main aim of the Customer Focussed Services project was to make recommendations on how the Council should be delivering customer services for the future (workstream 4). In order to ensure these recommendations were customer focussed and fitted with wider priorities, workstreams looking at the people who contact us (workstream 1), what our customers want (workstream 3) and what is happening at a local, regional and national context (workstream 6) fed into the recommendations on the optimum model of customer service delivery. Recommendations were also made on how to improve engagement with customers (workstream 5); this is being managed by the Head of Communications as part of a separate project. Key principles for designing the optimum model of customer service delivery were agreed with key officers and members, with the starting

point and overarching principle being one of the service design principles detailed in the Strategic Plan:

***Residents and businesses are the starting point for services; every service must be considered from the perspective of the citizen and delivered at the lowest possible level – a bottom-up approach.***

Any future model of customer service delivery must meet the following principles:

1. Enable as many customers as possible to be self sufficient
2. Be affordable
3. Ensure services are accessible to the most vulnerable
4. Have high quality service standards consistently applied
5. Be sustainable and adaptable for the future

1.3.6 The Customer Service Improvement (CSI) Strategy sets out the proposed new model for customer service delivery, which meets the principles above, and what actions we plan to take to deliver this. Essentially the new model is:

- Digital first with a full range of services provided via the website and/or through apps
- Reduced desire for person to person calls and increased automated telephone service
- Face to face available through appointments at our offices and partners supporting transactions
- Possibility of online and telephone points throughout the borough and hosted by partners

1.3.7 Residents have been asked their opinions through focus groups on some of the new model of service delivery, and feedback was positive. For example, they believed the format of the new website would make it easier to transact with the Council online and agreed that more services needed to be available online. They also thought that longer Contact Centre hours in the evening would be positive, although most agreed they would not use this facility even if it was available. They had mixed feelings about face to face, telephone and online contact points being offered through partners across the borough: they could understand in principle some people might use them, but had concerns about privacy and believed that a better website and the growth in people using smart phones to access the internet meant these things could be an unnecessary expense. They did not like the suggestion of moving to an appointment system in the Gateway as they thought it might be like a doctor's surgery where you can have to wait a long time even if you have an appointment.

1.3.8 The feedback has been considered and reflected in the planned CSI programme of work e.g. more work is planned with partners to see if additional face to face, telephone and online access points are required in certain areas of the borough and, if they are, where they should and can be situated. In addition, as recommended by residents at the focus groups, this year the option for residents to sign up to receive their Council Tax bills by email rather than by paper letter has been promoted on the website and on Council Tax letters.

1.3.9 The Budget Consultation carried out between January and February 2013 showed that 51% of respondents wanted to transact with the Council via the website and by email.

1.3.10 The CSI Strategy has 4 priorities and 10 objectives for achieving the new way of delivering customer services:

**1. Efficient, accessible and customer focussed services**

By 2016:

- Our website will be our main service channel and we will have shifted at least 50,000 contacts from face to face and telephone channels to online
- We will have reviewed all our customer facing services, taking into account what our customers tell us is important to them, and made efficiencies in the way we deliver services equivalent to at least 23,400 hours of officer time (or 18 full time staff)<sup>1</sup>
- Our services will be more easily accessible and we will respond to the needs and preferences of our most vulnerable customers

**2. Secure and well managed information**

- By 2016 we will have refreshed our standards and procedures for the collection, use, and secure storage of information we hold, including customer data to ensure the information management arrangements we have are appropriate and robust

By 2014, we will have identified whether it is value for money to introduce a single account for every customer. We will have implemented any solution to achieve this that we decide upon by 2016. **Enabling people to do more for themselves**

By 2016:

- We will have supported our partners, particularly Kent County Council, in ensuring that as many people in the borough as possible have access to super fast broadband so local residents and businesses are

<sup>1</sup> 18 full time staff assuming 1 full time staff member is productive for 1,300 hours

able to access the Internet, including our website, and transact online

- We will have worked with private, public and third sector partners to increase the level of digital skills in the borough and get more people transacting online

#### **4. Affordable and sustainable customer service delivery**

By 2016:

- We will have reduced the numbers of items of post we send out and receive by at least 30%, saving us approximately £50,000 in postage costs
- We will have re-designed our face to face customer service arrangements, making the optimum use of our accommodation to ensure value for money
- Staff numbers will be reduced where appropriate to make cashable savings

1.3.11A programme board consisting of all members of Corporate Leadership team, key heads of service and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services will lead, monitor and be accountable for delivery of the CSI programme of work. It is proposed that the CSI Strategy is refreshed and progress reported to Cabinet on an annual basis.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Cabinet could decide not to adopt the CSI Strategy and either continue to deliver services as the Council does currently, or follow the approach to increasing online transactions originally set out in the Channel Shift Strategy adopted in 2011, which the CSI Strategy incorporates and supersedes. This is not recommended as a lot of research has been carried out to determine the proposed strategic direction and it is believed that the customer service delivery model, the priorities, the objectives and the work of work are the Council's best option for delivering cost effective customer focussed services for the future.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Customer Service Improvement Strategy is a corporate strategy and is key to delivering the corporate priority of 'Corporate and Customer Excellence'. To a lesser extent, it will also help meet the outcomes of assisting vulnerable people and for Maidstone to have a growing economy.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 Delivery of the CSI Strategy contributes significantly to achieving the Council's priority of 'Corporate and Customer Excellence', therefore reducing the risk of not achieving this priority.

1.6.2 A comprehensive risk assessment will be undertaken as part of fully planning the programme of work to deliver the CSI Strategy. The main risks, ratings and planned responses are as follows:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Probability</b> 1 – Minimal to 6 – Very high	<b>Impact</b> 1 – Negligible to 4 - Major	<b>Response</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>
Lack of resources in ICT	3	2	Reduce	Conversations with Head of MKIP ICT by Feb 2013 to pick up issues and book in work - Completed
Insufficient capacity in the service teams being reviewed to participate	3	3	Reduce	Conversations with services in March/April 2013 to identify requirements and resources
People won't use new processes/online forms	2	3	Reduce	Use Mosaic Public Sector to establish the communication and transaction preferences of our customers – Completed  Apply this knowledge in designing services as part of service efficiency reviews  Work with other Kent authorities to compile a behavior change strategy to make sure people use online services
Lack of cooperation from suppliers of existing ICT systems or prohibitive cost of making changes	3	3	Reduce	Make ICT service aware of aims of strategy – Completed  Good client management of existing suppliers  Ensure clear understanding from all parties on timescales and clearly set out responsibilities and the specification of any work required

## 1.7 Other Implications

### 1.7.1

#### 1. Financial



2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	X
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	X
9.	Asset Management	X

**Financial**

1.7.2 Delivery of the CSI Strategy will help the Council meet its Medium Term Financial Strategy by delivering cashable savings. It will also deliver efficiency savings in officer time, which could be turned into cashable savings by reducing staff numbers where this is appropriate, or allow the Council to move staff resources from lower priority services into higher priority services. There will be a cost to delivering the Strategy because of the officer time spent on it. There will also be additional costs, for example we may need to purchase new ICT systems or pay other companies to make different ICT systems integrate with one another. However, the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership already has plans to standardise ICT systems across the partnership, so funds are already identified for replacement of ICT systems. Any additional investment would have to be justified by the benefits it would deliver: either substantial efficiencies in staff time or real revenue savings.

**Staffing**

1.7.3 The programme of work required to deliver the CSI Strategy will require substantial staff resources. The work programme will be led by the Head of Business Improvement and Business Improvement team, but staff in ICT, Customer Services, Corporate Support and in all the services to be reviewed will also be required to work on the programme. This time commitment has been discussed with all the relevant heads of services so this can be factored into service plans.

**Legal**



1.7.4 The Council has to comply with legislation around the management of information. Any legislative requirements will be considered when looking at where and how we can improve information management to ensure we comply with relevant legislation.

1.7.5 The Council also has to comply with various legislation and regulation in the delivery of services. These requirements must be fully understood and considered when we examine the services we deliver and how we deliver them through the service area efficiency reviews

### **Equality Impact Needs Assessment**

1.7.6 An Equality Impact Needs Assessment has been undertaken and is included at Appendix B. The new model for service delivery has also been forwarded to the Disability Focus Group for consideration. Comments from the Group have been mainly supportive of the new model of customer service delivery and the concept of 'digital first' (asking people to do things online in preference to other service channels). The need to ensure the website is easy to use and meets accessibility guidelines was highlighted, and the fact that older people and some disabled people are less likely to use computers. This has been recognised in the CSI Strategy. In order to ensure the Council's new website is as accessible as possible, the link to beta testing site, which is currently out for user testing, has been forwarded to the Disability Focus Group for comment.

### **Procurement**

1.7.7 A procurement exercise is currently being undertaken for the services of an external expert in information management. Other procurement of services and, for example, ICT software may be required.

### **Asset Management**

1.7.8 One of the objectives of the CSI Strategy is 'We will have decided the best way to deliver the services that we will still provide face to face, ensuring we make the optimum use of our accommodation to ensure value for money'. Therefore, the Strategy will ensure we make the best use of our assets.

## **1.8 Relevant Documents**

### **1.8.1 Appendices**

Appendix A – Customer Service Improvement Strategy  
Appendix B – Equality Needs Impact Assessment

### **1.8.2 Background Documents**

- Channel Shift Strategy 2011-2015

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

March 2013.....

This is a Key Decision because: it is a corporate strategy.....

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:All .....

.....

# Customer Service Improvement Strategy 2013-16

## 1. Introduction

The world is changing, and Maidstone Borough Council needs to change too. Our customers expect services offered by the public sector to be more customer friendly, efficient, easily accessible and provided at a lower cost. Therefore, our long term vision for the future of customer service delivery is:

**Customers can access high quality public services with confidence, at any time, wherever they are**

This document sets out how we plan to work towards this vision over the next 3 years. We have planned actions and projects for the next three years, but this is a long term plan so things will change and projects will be added. More details will be added for years 2 and 3 when the Strategy is refreshed annually.

We plan to:

- Make our website more customer focussed and offer more services online
- Review each of our customer-facing services and make them more customer focussed and efficient
- Explore how to make the best use of our publicly accessible accommodation
- Refresh the standards and procedures for the collection, use, and secure storage of information we hold, including customer data
- Help residents and businesses who do not or cannot access the Internet by increasing digital skills and high speed Internet access

We cannot do this alone: whilst this is a strategy for Maidstone Borough Council, working with partners in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors will be key to achieving our goals for improved customer service delivery for the borough's residents and businesses and to achieving one of the Council's three priorities: Corporate and Customer Excellence.

## 2. Background

### National context

Our experience and preferences for accessing information and services has significantly changed in the last few years. This in turn has consequences for how and when people choose to access information and services provided by Maidstone Council.

### Internet usage

Recently published Government statistics confirm that in 2012, 42 million people in Great Britain have used the internet, which represents 85% of the population. Over two thirds (68%) of the population use the Internet every day, or almost every day. This represents double the number using the Internet every day in 2006, when records began. The South East region has the highest percentage of internet users other than London, with 88% of the South East population having used the Internet. Most Internet users are fairly regular users: 97% of those who had used in the Internet before had used it within the past three months.

Internet usage does vary with age, sex, disability status and, to a small extent, with income:

- Almost all adults aged 16-44 (over 97%) have used the Internet. This falls to around 92% for the 45-55 age group, 84% of those aged 55-64, 65% of those aged 65-74 and only 31% of the 75+ age group
- 1 in 3 disabled people have never used the Internet. This means disabled people are three times more likely to have never used the Internet than people without disabilities
- Men are slightly more likely than women to have used the Internet. The internet usage figures are very similar for men and women aged 16-64, but 70% of men compared to 60% of women aged 65-74 have used the internet, and the difference becomes even more pronounced for those aged 75 and over: 39% of men have used the internet compared to 25% of women
- 6% of adults employed and earning under £200 per week have never used the internet. For those earning £600 per week and over, the figure is less than 1%. Figures from Oxford Internet surveys (<http://microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/oxis/>) suggest that unemployed people are less likely to use the internet than employed people.

### Increasing use of mobile technology

Not only is internet use increasing, but the way people access the Internet is changing. Ten years ago, the only way most people could access the Internet was at home and work. However, the advent of smart phone, laptop and tablet

technology has made using the Internet at any time, any where, a reality. In 2012, almost six in ten adults (58%) accessed the Internet 'on the go', making use of Wifi hotspots or a mobile phone network. The proportion of adults using a mobile phone to access the Internet more than doubled between 2010 and 2012, from 24% to 51% and in 2012 32% of adults accessed the Internet using a mobile phone every day. It is more common for younger people to access the internet using a mobile phone or other hand held technology: in 2012 over 80% of 16-34 year olds accessed the Internet in this way, compared to 8% of those aged 65 and over.

### Central government initiatives

Central Government are increasingly designing services that are 'digital by default', or are at least either easier or more advantageous for people to carry out online. The 2012 Budget states that the Government "will move to a 'digital by default' approach to its transactional services by 2015". Examples of this include the following:

- the Department of Work and Pensions have a target to achieve 80% of Universal Credit applications being made online from 2017.
- Tax returns can still be submitted to HM Revenue & Customs by paper, but the deadline is 3 months earlier than online returns.
- Car tax can be renewed online, with no need to show proof of car ownership or that the car has a current MOT as this information is checked automatically as part of the application

Therefore, the Council's customers will access central government services online much more often in the near future.

Race Online was an initiative founded by the Government appointed UK Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox. It sought to convince other organisations to take action to help millions more go online. The work to increase digital skills is continued through Go Online, a partnership of public and private sector organisations including the BBC, Age UK, E-On and the Post Office.

### Funding cuts

In 2010 the Government announced its plans to reduce public spending by 25% and reduce the national deficit. This means substantial cuts in the funding that councils receive. This Council has to save around £3.9m over the next three years, which is a substantial reduction in the budget we have to spend on providing services for local people, at the same time that the number of potentially vulnerable people requiring some of those services, like housing advice and Housing and Council Tax Benefit, is increasing.

### Economic downturn

The UK continues to experience difficult economic circumstances. For councils this means more people struggling to pay bills like Council Tax, as well as fewer

customers using paid for services, like town centre parking. Therefore, income from these services is less and money to run key services has to be found from elsewhere or services have to be cut.

### Information management

Information is a key asset of the organisation and therefore must be looked after properly, well managed information is as secure, and as accessible as it realistically can be. Information includes both electronic and physical information and good information management encompasses all of those things we do with information – capturing, manipulating, organising, communicating and retrieving it.

All public organisations are legally obliged to protect any personal information they hold, and provide public access to official information. Information management helps the authority ensure compliance with this legislation; legislation that relates to information management includes:

- Data Protection Act 1998;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 etc;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005

The Information Commissioner is an independent authority which upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. It actively monitors the performance of councils in meeting their legislative duties and will take enforcement action if the council fails to meet that duty.

The growth in technology and new ways of working means it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure good information management and the need for good security and information sharing policies and procedures, as well as the ability to search and retrieve information more easily has become more significant. The consequences of not having these in place could be prosecution, financial loss or loss of reputation. The Information Commissioner recently published a document which highlighted that with the growth in technology, organisations were taking a 'Laissez Faire' attitude to the lack of security employed in the way employees are using this technology to store organisational information.

### **Local context**

#### About Maidstone

Maidstone Borough is considered a good place to live and work with high rates of employment, relatively low levels of adults claiming incapacity benefits and a higher proportion of residents who have a degree than the South East average. Larger numbers of people commute into than out of the Borough. The Borough

has a very mixed business sector with large numbers of small and medium size businesses with particular strengths in professional services (law and accountancy) and construction. There is a growing media industry led by Maidstone Studios and the Kent Messenger Group. Maidstone has an extensive further education campus (Mid Kent College) and a growing higher education offer. Residents living in the Borough have relatively high wages (although many higher earners commute out of the Borough to achieve these).

Maidstone came out as the top destination for business in the 2010 study of locations for business in Kent.

Transport links are generally good although rail travel could still be improved. Rail journey times to London from some of the smaller market towns (Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden) are as low as 40 minutes but have recently increased to over an hour from Maidstone itself. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. The international high speed railway stations at Ebbsfleet (15 mins) and Ashford (25 mins) are also extremely accessible. The Council is pleased that an extension to the Thameslink network is being proposed to provide a direct link to London from Maidstone. With regard to travelling in and around the borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly in the town centre. The Council is looking to combat this issue through its transport strategy and work with partners. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges.

Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough with a number of parks, the largest of which is Mote Park, which is Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks, and home to thriving rugby and cricket clubs. There are numerous smaller parks and squares within the town and villages which have benefited from a major playground and sports facility investment programme in recent years.

Maidstone's Local Strategic Partnership carried out work in 2010 looking at how public money is spent locally. They identified that £602 million was been spent in Maidstone in 2010 by various bodies including Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, the Police and the local Primary Care Trust. Just over 35% of the money was spent on health and social well-being, nearly 17% spent on education and 15% on housing.

#### Our customers and what matters to them

In 2012 the Council carried out an extensive review on customer focussed services. Before we decided how services should be delivered in the future, we wanted to understand our customers better in terms of how they prefer to access services, including our services, and why this is.

We analysed the resident population of the borough using a customer segmentation tool called Mosaic Public Sector, which classifies households into groups so that the households in a group are as similar as possible to each

other, and as different as possible to any other group. The groups describe the households in each group in terms of their typical demographics, their behaviours, their lifestyle characteristics and their attitudes. We found that Maidstone had higher percentages than most other Kent boroughs of those groups who were more likely to find out information and transact online: 55% of the households in the borough are classified in these groups.

We also used Mosaic Public Sector to analyse those households who had contacted the Council in the last two and a half years. We found that households in some of the less affluent groups were much more likely to have contacted us than those in more affluent groups. Those living in the most affluent households were less likely to have contacted us by visiting the Gateway than less affluent households, but more likely to have transacted with us online. There were also significant differences when looking at contacts to specific services. For example, around 60% of those applying for Building Control services and parking permits came from groups who generally like to transact online, compared to 41% of those visiting us for homelessness advice.

We carried out focus groups and surveys with local residents and businesses. Some key findings were:

- Residents highlighted frustrations around red tape and lack of communication between departments when dealing with the Council
- Resident respondents like to use different ways of interacting with organisations for doing different things e.g.
  - 67% use the internet for finding out information and 62% for setting up and managing accounts – for speed, convenience, for a communications trail
  - 85% would use either face to face (42%) or telephone (43%) to deal with a problem – for reassurance, instant action, human interaction
  - 45% would use the telephone when making a complaint – for reassurance, instant action, to feel listened to
- Five out of six residents surveyed (85%) access the internet, with most (71%) accessing it daily. Families with children under 18 are significantly more likely to do things on line than those without children under 18
- Four out of ten respondents own a smart phone and 93% of those with a smart phone access the internet daily
- Both residents and businesses tend to use the telephone more than other channels
- More residents and businesses would prefer to interact with the Council by email in the future than the current numbers



- Fewer residents and businesses would prefer to interact with the Council by telephone in the future than currently do
- One in four residents and one in six businesses value face to face transactions with the Council and residents report receiving a good service in the Gateway
- Urban residents are significantly more likely than rural residents to interact with the Council face to face
- Residents and businesses criticised the Council's current website as hard to use and not focused enough on transactions

Echoing the national picture, we found that regular internet usage decreased with age, although 44% of respondents aged 65 or over said they used the Internet every day. The results also showed that those who have a disability are less likely to go online than those who said they were not disabled, but even so 55% of people with disabilities said they go online every day.

### 3. The corporate priorities

*The Council is committed to and shares the vision for Maidstone, identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020:*

*"We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21<sup>st</sup> century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations."*

The Council has identified the following three priorities and seven outcomes for Maidstone until 2015.

#### Priorities

##### **1. For Maidstone to have a growing economy**

In essence, Maidstone will be a good place to work and do business. The economy will continue to grow with a wide range of employment and business opportunities.

##### **Outcomes by 2015**

- A transport network that supports the local economy, with a focus on the delivery of an integrated transport strategy in conjunction with Kent County Council.
- A growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy

##### **2. For Maidstone to be a decent place to live**

Maidstone already has a clean, attractive and well designed and built environment. We wish to maintain this and ensure proper respect is paid

to its diverse and valuable assets so that Maidstone is a place where people want to live. We will continue to support our most vulnerable residents and seek to reduce the different forms of deprivation across the Borough in both urban and rural areas.

### **Outcomes by 2015**

- Decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.
- Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the Borough.
- Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced

## **3. Corporate and Customer Excellence**

The Council will have a productive workforce with people in the right place at the right time, delivering cost effective services. Services will be affordable, delivered on time and to agreed standards in an accessible way.

### **Outcomes by 2015**

- Customer focused services that residents are satisfied with
- Effective, cost efficient services are delivered across the borough

The Customer Service Improvement Strategy is a corporate strategy and is particularly clearly aligned with the organisational priority of 'Corporate and Customer Excellence', but also with the outcomes of assisting vulnerable people and for Maidstone to have a growing economy.

## **4. Where are we now?**

### Cost of service

In 2011/12, it cost us around £1.7m to manage customer contacts through the Contact Centre, Gateway, website and Post Room. It costs the Council around £7.86 for a face to face transaction in our Gateway, £2.35 if someone telephones our Contact Centre, £0.21 for a website visit, £0.67 to process an incoming letter and £0.46 to process a letter we send out. It should be noted that postage costs do not include scanning or indexing the post, the cost of the paper nor the officer time to write an outgoing letter or respond to an incoming letter.

### Shifting contacts to less expensive communication channels

Since we published our Channel Shift Strategy in 2011 we have made progress in terms of making our service more efficient by shifting transactions online, but

not the level of progress we had hoped for. Therefore, this strategy supersedes the Channel Shift Strategy and takes a more robust approach to moving contacts to cheaper channels.

More people are using our website and we have also seen a decrease in the number of calls being dealt with by an operative in our Contact Centre. This is mainly because we have increased the types of payments that can be dealt with on an automated payments line. However, we have continued to see a rise in the numbers of people transacting with us face to face through our Gateway.

	2010/11		2011/12		April – December 2012/13	
	Number	%age	Number	%age	Number	%age
Web	673213	72%	677817	73%	xxx	74%
Face to Face	69870	7%	79080	8%	xxx	8%
Telephone	193965	21%	174450	19%	xxx	17%

Use of our online forms has grown by 100% since 2011, with 4817 self service forms being completed in 2012/2013 as at December 2012. We have a large number of contacts about Waste & Recycling and Environmental Services, and most transactions can now be completed on our website. Most recently, we have launched an online form which allows people to book and pay for a bulky refuse collection. However, little progress has been made in some of the other services that have high numbers of contacts, like Revenues (Council Tax and Business Rates), Benefits, Housing, Planning and Parking.

Our new, more customer focussed website is being tested by local people at the moment and will launch in 2013/14. Feedback from residents on the new website so far has generally been very positive.

### Information management

Customers rightly have increasing expectations in terms of the speed and quality of service they receive but in the current climate resources are increasingly limited. Ensuring good information management can assist the organisation in delivering savings, efficiencies and meet the customers expectations, by changing the way services are delivered, changing the way information is received, held and delivered and introducing changes to technology. The Council needs to ensure that it is getting good value out of the information it holds so that it can be as effective as possible in service delivery to our customers.

Maidstone has information management measures in place, there is an overarching security policy for the organisation and individual retention policies within services. Information Liaison officers are available on each floor to

provide FOI and Data Protection advice to services when required and Data Quality is monitored within the Performance team.

The council recognises however that there are areas for improvement and that in order to fully identify these areas, appropriate solutions and to develop a vision and strategy for information management, specialist external support is required.

#### High speed broadband access

In 2012, 65% of the borough had access to broadband of 2mbps or more. This needs to be improved. The 'Make Kent Quicker' campaign saw thousands of people sign up and say they wanted more from their broadband, and helped to secure £9.87m of central government funding. In March 2013 Kent County Council signed a contract with BT to improve high speed broadband access across the county. Now, the combination of public funding and private investment, alongside existing roll-out plans, will make sure that at least 95% of properties in Kent will have access to higher-speed fibre broadband by the end of 2015 (with 91% having access to superfast speeds of 24mbps and above) – and every property in the project area able to access download speeds of at least 2mbps. This will aid not only our residents, but also bring benefits to businesses, making more areas of the borough more desirable to businesses looking to set up in or move into the borough.

## 5. Where do we want to be?

### **Vision, priorities and objectives**

Our long term vision is:

**Customers can access high quality public services with confidence, at any time, wherever they are**

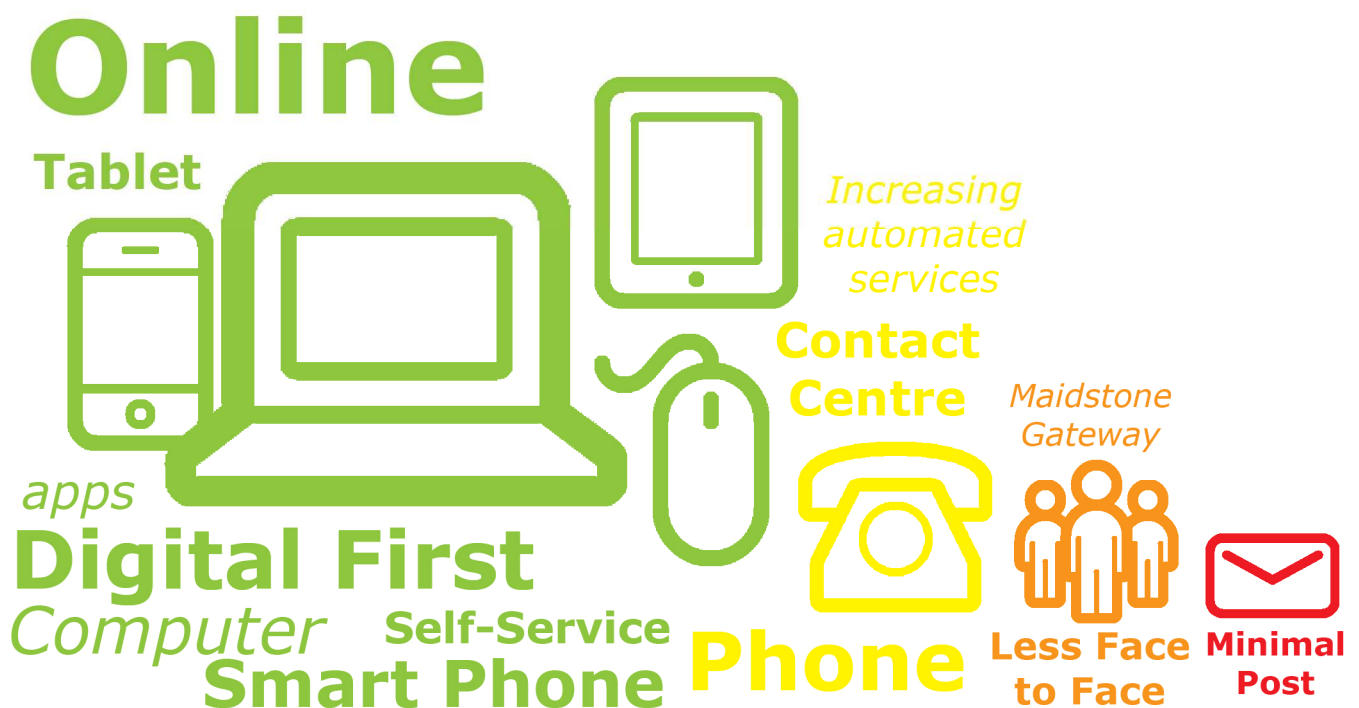
Maidstone Borough Council aims to deliver high quality, efficient, customer focussed services that are accessible to all, at the best possible cost.

By 2016 we will have introduced our new model of delivering customer services. We plan to reduce the numbers of people who need to visit us for face to face transactions in our Gateway, items of post we send and receive and the numbers of people who telephone us. Wherever possible we will seek to move transactions online, and where this is not possible because of the type of transaction or the needs of the person contacting us, to the telephone. However, we recognise that some transactions will still need to be carried out face to face, but we will seek to limit this type of contact to only our most vulnerable customers and most urgent or complex transactions.

We understand that some people currently find it more difficult to access our services than others, and we realise this will continue to be the case as we change the way in which we deliver services. Improving our website so more transactions can be carried out online at any time will help this, as will reducing the requirement for people to travel to visit our Gateway to see us. However, we realise that not only are some transactions more suited to face to face service delivery, but also that our preferred service channel of the internet is not easily accessible to everyone currently because of, for example, adverse financial circumstances and lack of skills or access to the Internet. Therefore, we will:

- Seek opportunities for partners located in local communities to carry out face to face transactions on our behalf
- Work with existing groups and partner organisations to increase the digital skills of our customers
- Work with other organisations in the private and public sectors to increase the availability of high speed broadband
- Explore with partners whether additional public internet and telephone access points are required and where these could be located
- Explore increasing the number of computers for public use in our buildings and how we can assist those who may need support in using our online services

Our new customer service delivery model will look like this:



We have 4 priorities in working towards achieving this new way of delivering customer services:

1. Efficient, accessible and customer focussed services
2. Secure and well managed information
3. Enabling people to do more for themselves
4. Affordable and sustainable customer service delivery

### **Efficient, accessible and customer focussed services**

We want to ensure that we are delivering services that our customers want, in the ways that are accessible to them and that are as efficient as possible. Our objectives for achieving this are that by 2016:

- Our website will be our main service channel and we will have shifted at least 50,000 contacts from face to face and telephone channels to online
- We will have reviewed all our customer facing services, taking into account what our customers tell us is important to them, and made efficiencies in the way we deliver services equivalent to at least 23,400 hours of officer time (or the equivalent of 18 Full Time staff)<sup>1</sup>
- Our services will be more easily accessible and we will respond to the needs and preferences of our most vulnerable customers

### **Secure and well managed information**

As a local authority we collect and hold a lot of information, including information on our customers. We need to ensure this is securely stored and used appropriately, according to legislation and regulatory guidelines. Our objectives for achieving this are:

- By 2016 we will have refreshed our standards and procedures for the collection, use, and secure storage of information we hold, including customer data, to ensure the information management arrangements we have are appropriate and robust By 2014, we will have identified whether it is value for money to introduce a single account for every customer. We will have implemented any solution to achieve this that we decide upon by 2016

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<sup>1</sup> 18 full time staff assuming 1 full time staff member is productive for 1,300 hours

## **Enabling people to do more for themselves**

The residents and businesses in the borough are increasingly doing more online. Not being able to self serve online leaves people digitally excluded, meaning they cannot access goods and services whenever they want, and opportunities like money saving deals or discounts only available online are not available to them. As we ask our customers to do more online, we need to ensure that they have the skills and confidence to be able to do this. We also need to ensure that residents and businesses can access high speed broadband to be able to do things online. Our objectives for achieving this are that by 2016:

- We will have supported our partners, particularly Kent County Council, in ensuring that as many people in the borough as possible have access to super fast broadband so local residents and businesses are able to access the Internet, including our website, and transact online
- We will have worked with private, public and third sector partners to increase the level of digital skills in the borough and get more people transacting online

## **Affordable and sustainable customer service delivery**

We want to provide excellent customer services now and into the future, but we must provide customer services differently as we need to make savings so that we can continue to provide our most important services and the priorities in the Strategic Plan. Our objectives for achieving this are that by 2016:

- We will have reduced the numbers of items of post we send out and receive by at least 30%, saving us approximately £50,000 per year in postage costs
- We will have re-designed our face to face customer service arrangements, making the optimum use of our accommodation to ensure value for money
- Staff numbers will be reduced where appropriate to make cashable savings

## **6. How are we going to get there?**

### **Projects and actions**

We have planned a large programme of work over the next three years to implement the Customer Service Improvement Strategy. This will be led by the Business Improvement team, but will involve substantial work for both Customer Services as well as those service areas making their services more efficient and customer focussed. As a programme is made up of many projects and pieces of

work, the projects included, the timescales planned for specific projects and the order of the projects will change as required. The following reflects the work by years as currently planned.

#### Year 1 (2013/14)

- Stop Gateway late night Thursday opening
- Introduce Planning appointments in the Gateway to free up the Planning Duty Officer
- Complete automated switchboard
- Change Contact Centre hours to 9-5 to help handle increasing email traffic
- Review the KCC out of hours contract (possibly including review of Contact Centre opening hours)
- Complete move to parking permits online
- Set up digital inclusion projects with partners
- Progress options with partners for our front facing operation
- Continue to improve the website including making it more usable for mobile devices
- Continue to move telephone payments to the automated line
- Refresh our email policy and procedure
- Review our policy on taking and potentially charging for credit card payments
- Review our policy on and procedures for taking cheques
- Start and complete efficiency reviews with Housing, Bereavement Services and Waste and Recycling and Environmental Services
- Start efficiency review with Planning
- Explore phased reminders for payments
- Information management project – using external expertise to help us understand the 'as is' position, set a vision and strategy for how we manage information and develop a way forward
- Decide whether to introduce a single customer account
- Reduce incoming and outgoing post

#### Year 2 (2014/15)

- Review and report predicted and delivered efficiencies/savings and agree projects to be included for the year



- Review Gateway Monday – Friday opening hours and Saturday opening
- Complete efficiency review with Planning
- Start and complete efficiency reviews with Revenues & Benefits, Museum, Environmental Health, Environmental Enforcement
- Start efficiency reviews in Finance and Parks & Leisure
- Explore introducing web chat
- Review success of pilot environmental service app and decide what our corporate approach to apps should be
- Review Contact Centre opening hours (if not completed in year1)
- Consider moving to appointments in the Gateway
- Review number and usages of Gateway self-serve kiosks
- Review need for Customer Relation Management software system

#### Year 3 (2015/16)

- Review and report predicted and delivered efficiencies/savings and agree projects to be included for the year
- Complete efficiency reviews in Finance and Parks & Leisure
- Start and complete efficiency reviews in Property, Procurement & Facilities Management, Community Development, VEBU, Democratic Services and Economic Development
- Consider the delivery options for the Contact Centre, including outsourcing.

#### **Measuring progress**

We will monitor the success of the Customer Service Improvement Strategy through the following performance measures:

1. Percentage of respondents satisfied with the way the Council runs its services (biennial Residents survey)
2. Percentage of contacts made through the internet, telephone and face to face
3. Efficiencies in time (FTE): a) identified; and b) delivered
4. Cashable savings (£): a) identified; and b) delivered
5. Customer satisfaction with telephone, face to face and internet contact

6. Percentage of contacts into the Council that are avoidable
7. Number of items of a) incoming; and b) outgoing post
8. Percentage of borough covered by broadband
9. Percentage of residents who go online at least weekly (biennial Residents Survey)

### **Reporting progress**

The programme of work will be led and monitored by a Programme Board. Performance on expected benefits and progress will be measured every six months and reported to the Programme Board, made up of the Corporate Leadership Team, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, the heads of service responsible for delivering benefits in their service areas and the Head of Business Improvement (Programme Manager).

The Customer Service Improvement Strategy will be refreshed annually and progress in planned work and in achieving benefits will be reported to Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet at that time.

### **Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment**

#### **1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?**

The aim of the Customer Service Improvement Strategy and related programme sets out the proposed new model for customer service delivery and what actions we plan to take to deliver this. The vision of the Strategy is that;

**“Customers can access high quality public services with confidence, at any time, wherever they are”**

Delivery of the strategy and programme will lead to a model which is:

- Digital first with a full range of services provided via the website and/or through apps
- Reduced desire for person to person calls and increased automated telephone service
- Face to face available through appointments at our offices and partners supporting transactions
- Possibility of online and telephone points throughout the borough and hosted by partners

Key principles for designing the optimum model of customer service delivery were agreed with key officers and members, with the starting point and overarching principle being one of the service design principles detailed in the Strategic Plan:

***Residents and businesses are the starting point for services; every service must be considered from the perspective of the citizen and delivered at the lowest possible level – a bottom-up approach.***

Any future model of customer service delivery must meet the following principles:

1. Enable as many customers as possible to be self sufficient
2. Be affordable
3. Ensure services are accessible to the most vulnerable
4. Have high quality service standards consistently applied
5. Be sustainable and adaptable for the future

The strategy aligns with the Council’s priority of Corporate and Customer

Excellence and the priority outcomes:

- Services are customer focused and residents are satisfied with them.
- Effective, cost efficient services are delivered across the borough.

## **2. How do these aims affect our duty to:**

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The strategy will not affect the above three elements, however it will advance equality of opportunity for all our customers by improving accessibility to digital channels and improving the ways customers can transact.

In addition it is recognised that not being to transact online leaves people excluded from a number of benefits, the strategy outlines how the Council will work with others to raise the level of digital skills in the borough.

## **3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?**

Delivery of the strategy and related programme will include service redesign and potential changes to policy, the key aspect of this as shown in the model below will be a move to service delivery predominately via digital channels

- Digital first with a full range of services provided via the website and/or through apps
- Reduced desire for person to person calls and increased automated telephone service
- Face to face available through appointments at our offices and partners supporting transactions
- Possibility of online and telephone points throughout the borough and hosted by partners

As some customers will be unable to or have more difficulty accessing digital channels, the council will need to ensure that all customers are able to access council services. Protected characteristics will need to be considered

as part of any reviews or changes to services.

**4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics ? What evidence do you have for this?**

Yes as explained in section two it will advance equality of opportunity for all our customers by improving accessibility to digital channels and improving the ways customers can transact. Comments from members of the Disability Focus Group have been supportive of the new strategy, with caveats that an accessible and customer friendly website is required, those who cannot transact online must not be forgotten e.g. older people and some people with disabilities and potential issues that people with sight impairments have with learning new routes if the location we deliver face to face services from changes.

As part of a recent review of customer service delivery, focus groups were held with a cross-section of different people from across the borough and followed up in August 2012 by a survey sent to 3000 residents (506 returned) to more widely test findings the council learnt that some customers both with and without protected characteristics find accessing some services difficult as the same level of service is not available via digital channels. Unexpected difficulties also emerged because of the cost of using certain channels.

The strategy and programme set out how the council will advance equality of opportunity for all our customers by improving digital channels and improving the ways customers can transact.

In addition the council recognises that not being to transact online leaves people excluded from a number of benefits, it is important to work with others to raise the level of digital skills in the borough. The Council understands that some customers both with and without protected characteristics find accessing some services difficult.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

## Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Name of Policy/Service/Function</b>
<b>Customer Service Improvement Strategy</b>
<b>Purpose</b>
<b>What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?</b>
<p>The aim of the Customer Service Improvement Strategy and related programme is to improve the way the council delivers its services to its customers. The vision of the Strategy is that;</p> <p><b>“Customers can access high quality public services with confidence, at any time, wherever they are”</b></p> <p>Delivery of the strategy and programme will lead to the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital first with a full range of services provided via the website and/or through apps</li> <li>• Reduced desire for person to person calls and increased automated telephone service</li> <li>• Face to face available through appointments at our offices and partners supporting transactions</li> <li>• Possibility of online and telephone points throughout the borough and hosted by partners</li> </ul> <p>Any future model of customer service delivery must meet the following principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enable as many customers as possible to be self sufficient</li> <li>2. Be affordable</li> <li>3. Ensure services are accessible to the most vulnerable</li> <li>4. Have high quality service standards consistently applied</li> <li>5. Be sustainable and adaptable for the future</li> </ol>
<b>Who defines and manages it?</b>
<p>The Programme is defined by the Programme Sponsor, Alison Broom</p> <p>The Programme is managed by the Programme Manager, Georgia Hawkes</p>
<b>Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?</b>
All customers will have an opportunity to benefit from the introduction of the

strategy and programme as the council will be developing the way it delivers customer services and increasing the channels through which customers can access services.

**What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?**

- Poor communication
- A lack of awareness about the changes
- People feeling alienated by the design of the model and feeling that they are not suited to their particular needs.
- Lack of consultation with customers, partners and other stakeholders

**How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?**

The strategy is based upon evidence sought from customer focus groups and surveys along with Mosaic analysis of customer contact. Members as representatives of residents have been consulted on the model as have the Disability Focus Group as representatives of the groups most vulnerable to the changes proposed.

Further customer involvement will be undertaken within each project with customers to understand their requirements and to get them involved with the changes to the service.

Customer involvement will be sought, through existing customer contacts, the services, members, partners and public notices including social media.

**Evidence**

**How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?**

The measures of benefits have been outlined below underneath their related objectives

**1. Efficient, accessible and customer focussed services**

By 2016:

- Our website will be our main service channel and we will have shifted at least 50,000 contacts from face to face and telephone channels to online
- We will have reviewed all our customer facing services, taking into account what our customers tell us is important to them, and made efficiencies in the way we deliver services equivalent to at least 23,400 hours of officer time (or 18 full time staff)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 18 full time staff assuming 1 full time staff member is productive for 1,300 hours

- Our services will be more easily accessible and we will respond to the needs and preferences of our most vulnerable customers

## **2. Secure and well managed information**

- By 2016 we will have refreshed our standards and procedures for the collection, use, and secure storage of information we hold, including customer data to ensure the information management arrangements we have are appropriate and robust
- By 2014, we will have identified whether it is value for money to introduce a single account for every customer. We will have implemented any solution to achieve this that we decide upon by 2016

## **3. Enabling people to do more for themselves**

By 2016:

- We will have supported our partners, particularly Kent County Council, in ensuring that as many people in the borough as possible have access to super fast broadband so local residents and businesses are able to access the Internet, including our website, and transact online
- We will have worked with private, public and third sector partners to increase the level of digital skills in the borough and get more people transacting online

## **4. Affordable and sustainable customer service delivery**

By 2016:

- We will have reduced the numbers of items of post we send out and receive by at least 30%, saving us approximately £50,000 in postage costs
- We will have re-designed our face to face customer service arrangements, making the optimum use of our accommodation to ensure value for money
- Staff numbers will be reduced where appropriate to make cashable savings

### **How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?**

At the last residents' survey 63% of customers were satisfied with the way council runs things.

### **What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?**

Substantial data has been collected which has shown us:



- How frequently customers contact us
- What they are contacting us about/which services have the largest customer contacts
- Which contact channels are used
- Preferences for channel usage
- The type of transactions they are completing
- Motivations for channel usage

This information has been analysed by Mosaic grouping.

**What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?**

For the population of Maidstone, the programme is trying to identify

- Access to the internet
- Access to broadband
- Access to a computer
- Range of digital skills

The programme will also try to identify by service area as much as it can about the customers that use those service.

Access to this information will be sought through partners, surveys, focus groups, interviews and reviewing information held internally.

**Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?**

To date information has been broken down by age, disability, gender and ethnicity. There has been no reason to analyse data, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity.

In addition data has been analysed by Mosaic group which gives an indication of age, disability, location, career and education. This information is important as it offers insight into different types of people in terms of: the type of services accessed, the way they are accessed, the communication methods preferred and frequency of use.

The project will continue to analyse data by age and disability as these are large factors which influence channel preference in accessing the service. If other equality groups are highlighted as influencing factors in any the projects this

data will be explored at that time.

**Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?**

Customers, businesses and councillors have been consulted prior to the development of the strategy and programme.

Members and the Disability Focus group have been consulted on the model and on the new website design.

A stakeholder analysis has been completed for the Customer Service Improvement Strategy. Partners, stakeholders and councillors will be consulted as relevant on individual projects within the wider programme.

**Impact**

**Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?**

Currently services are not accessible across all channels therefore some customers cannot access services in the way they would prefer. The changes would therefore benefit more customers than previously.

**Actions**

**If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?**

N/A

**Is it discriminatory in any way?**

No

**Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?**

No

**What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?**

Ensuring accessibility is one of the key cornerstones of the strategy; therefore an essential consideration of all projects within the strategy will be if one channel is given preference, is there an alternative way of accessing the service if needed.

To support this, consultation will be undertaken with customers to identify the

relevant issues and test potential solutions.

A key project is to work with partners to combine and target resources towards digital inclusion and ensure those in need are given the opportunity to access alternative channels.

**Do you need to consult further?**

Consultation has been undertaken as part of the research for the development of the strategy, further consultation has been undertaken on the strategy with the Disability Focus Group.

However further consultation have will be undertaken for specific projects within the programme of work which supports the strategy.

**Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?**

One of the key aims of the Customer Service Improvement Strategy is to improve the way services are delivered to all customers. Consultation with customers as part of the development of the strategy demonstrated that customers are frustrated by the way some services are delivered and believe that the Council should be accessible as private organisations.

**Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?**

A stakeholder analysis has been undertaken and the analysis will be disseminated based upon stakeholders' requirements. This will include:

- Customers
- Officers
- Members
- Partners

**Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?**

Yes, the programme is a three year programme of work. The Customer Service Improvement Strategy has a supporting Customer Service Improvement Programme which sets out the component projects and related timescales.

**When will this assessment need to be repeated?**

The assessment may need to be repeated if there is a significant change to the direction of the strategy. Individual assessments will need to be undertaken as appropriate for projects delivered as part of the programme of work which supports the strategy.

# Agenda Item 9

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**10 APRIL 2013**

### **REPORT OF HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Report prepared by Dena Smart, Head of Human Resources

#### **1. WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

##### 1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 The Workforce Strategy is one of the key enabling strategies that support the Council's Strategic plan. The strategy was last updated in 2008 and since this time both the Council's priorities and the workforce employment profile has changed; the proposed strategy builds on the developments that have taken place to date and identifies the changes that are needed for the future.

##### 1.2 Recommendation of Head of Human Resources

1.2.1 That Cabinet agree the proposed Workforce Strategy.

1.2.2 That the action plan is reviewed annually through the service planning process.

##### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Workforce Strategy has been developed through the integration of the views of senior officers, trade unions and Members and therefore represents a balanced approach to the key issues in the future.

1.3.2 The current Workforce information systems have been in place for some time which has given robust data from which the longer term trends have been identified and are reflected in the strategy.

1.3.3 The council has significantly developed its approach to people management and has more recently embarked on an engagement journey which has not been reflected to date in the over-arching strategy documents; it is important that this work is reflected in the Workforce Strategy and that progress is monitored against the associated action plan.

1.3.4 The proposed strategy reflects the national Workforce Strategy.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The council could choose not to have a Work Force Strategy but this would mean that it was not meeting its national commitment to have a strategy and it may not optimise its work force as a resource.

1.4.2 The council could choose to a construct the Work Force Strategy in a different way to that proposed as there are many options available; however the proposed document follows consultation and agreement with stakeholders and offers significant scope for development and change in the way it is structured.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Workforce Strategy underpins the work of the council in all areas of its work and therefore impacts on all corporate objectives.

1.5.2 The work on employee engagement has a direct link to the objective of Corporate and Customer Excellence and in particular the ambition to achieve iP Gold by 2015.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks inherent in the Workforce Strategy overall but there may be some specific risks associated with particular actions outlined within the strategy; one example of this is the work around the MKIP employment model. Where there are specific projects the risk assessment would form part of the approach to managing the project.

1.6.2 There would be greater risks associated with failure to recognize and plan for the workforce issues in the future.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	x
2.	Staffing	x
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	x
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	

- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management


1.7.2 Financial – the Workforce Strategy does incorporate significant costs to the council in the shape of the salary budget, however this is within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and there is nothing within the Workforce Strategy that will fall outside this agreed budget.

1.7.3 Staffing – the Workforce Strategy relates completely to the councils staff and the way this will be developed and may change during the period of the plan.

1.7.4 Equality Impact Assessment it attached at Appendix Two.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix One: Workforce Strategy

Appendix Two: Equality Impact Assessment

1.8.2 Background Documents

None

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

...28February 2013.....

This is a Key Decision because: .....It is a strategic document.

.....

Wards/Parishes affected: .....

.....



GREAT PEOPLE; GREAT PLACE; GREAT OPPORTUNITY

WORK FORCE STRATEGY

2013 – 2015



## 1. Introduction

**Workforce Planning** is a continual process through which the Council aligns the needs and priorities of the organisation with those of its workforce. We do this to ensure that we can meet our organisational objectives and specific service delivery, legislative, and regulatory requirements.

The Workforce Strategy and Workforce Plan reflect the refreshed strategic plan and corporate priorities adopted by the Council in 2011; they have a very different look and feel to the 2008 Council People Strategy. This is a reflection not only of changes to our strategic objectives and priorities, but also work force trends such as the changes to the retirement age and demands for more flexible work patterns.

The Council's vision is:

*We want Maidstone to be a vibrant, prosperous 21<sup>st</sup> century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations.*

To achieve this we have three priorities, each with an over-arching ambition:

For Maidstone to be a decent place to live (GREAT PLACE)

- To be the best place to live in Kent

For Maidstone to have a growing economy (GREAT OPPORTUNITY)

- To have the highest employment rate in Kent

Corporate and Customer Excellence (GREAT PEOPLE)

- IiP Gold by 2015

The specific details of what will be delivered to achieve the priorities are set out in the Strategic Plan (Appendix One) and these will influence aspects of the Workforce Strategy.

The aim of the Workforce Strategy is to ensure that the council has the most effective human resources in place to deliver its priorities now and in the future. This Workforce Strategy sets out the details of the council's current organisational culture and how we aim to build on this; the national and local context and how this impacts on the workforce and identifies the key themes for development. The Workforce Plan is the action plan that will deliver the objectives in the strategy (Appendix Two).

## **2. Organisational Culture**

Organisational culture is about the way we work and the values we have. We are an ambitious organisation in which performance and achievement of our priorities is our primary aim and our priorities are driven by the needs of our customers. This means that it is important to ensure our workforce is engaged and clear about their role in the organisation and that we work together as One Council.

Our values set out what is important to us in the way we work, these are:

### **STRIVE**

**S**uperb Customer Service

**T**eamwork

**R**esponsibility to deliver our promises

**I**ntegrity and high standards of Corporate Governance

**V**alue for Money and efficiency

**E**quality within a diverse organisation

Our values are reinforced using our performance management tools and individuals that demonstrate the values in exceptional ways are recognised in the annual staff awards.

The council uses several mechanisms to measure culture and attitude amongst the work force; the tools that we use are the Best Councils Survey, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Stress Survey and the Investor in People (IiP) assessment. These surveys enable the council to identify changes over time and the most recent results will provide a direction for future actions.

### **Best Councils Survey**

The last Best Councils survey was conducted in 2010 and showed an improved employee engagement score from 586.2 the 2008 survey result to 602.9 which placed us into the 'ones to watch' category which essentially means that the organisation is moving towards an accredited standard for the level of employee engagement.

The Best Councils survey measures the factors that are directly linked to employee engagement. There are eight factors, Leadership, My Manager, My Team, My Company, Personal Growth, Giving Something Back, Fair Deal and Wellbeing, The areas of improvement were in Leadership, My Company and Giving Something Back. The areas that fell from the previous survey were My Manager, Well-being and Fair Deal; the other factors remained the same.

There were interesting trends in the detail which indicated that staff were most engaged in the first two years of their service and again after fifteen years but engagement reduced in the periods between. There were also marked differences in levels of engagement within different units within the council, highlighting the importance of line managers and one of the specific questions which could underpin some of the perceptions regarding line managers was 'managers in my organisation would rather avoid conflict than deal with issues'. Finally one very consistently held view related to the high level of anxiety felt by individuals because of the economic climate.

The survey results indicate specific areas for the Workforce strategy and plan, particularly in relation to the development of line managers.

### **Investors in People**

The council was formally reassessed in March 2011 and successfully gained re-accreditation. The feedback highlighted areas of good practice including the variety and frequency of corporate communications, performance appraisals well embedded into the culture and people finding them useful and the flexibility of working practices including home working and job share were appreciated.

The assessment also highlighted areas for development including the clarity of communication during periods of change, the options for managing and motivating people with 'plateau performance', the consistency with which new objectives and target were set when changes had been implemented and the inconsistency of communications from different line managers.

In 2012 the council asked for an 'IiP Healthcheck' to gauge the development required to meet our ambition of IiP Gold by 2015; the key finding from this reinforced the view that our systems and procedures are of a high standard and the key is to ensure that they are being applied consistently by line managers. The recommendations from the assessments are included in the workforce plan.

### **Stress at Work (HSE Survey)**

This survey was conducted in 2011 and 2012; unlike the other barometers of organisation culture this showed a significant decline in 2011 since the previous survey in 2009. The previous survey indicated that overall the organisation did not have any real areas of concern, although there were some pockets where stress levels were higher. The 2011 results showed that in all of the seven factors monitored there was

a decline in the opinions expressed by staff. Of most concern in this feedback is the level of bullying reported by employees; this combined with low scores on support from managers and peers and on an understanding of the individual's own role within the organisation gives a compelling reason for culture change. One interpretation of the results of the stress survey is that the reduction in headcount and increased demand has had a significant impact on perceived stress levels. The council has developed several actions to address these concerns which are reflected in the Workforce Plan.

Since the 2011 results the council has developed an Employee Engagement plan to ensure that there is clarity and consistent messages about the priorities and the roles within the organisation. The council also embarked upon an intensive training session for all staff and members on Respecting Difference and bullying. To gauge impact the stress survey was completed again by staff in December 2012 and this showed improvements in all areas, however the number of staff reporting that they felt bullied remained high and this work will be incorporated into the action plan.

### **3. Workforce Strategy - The National Context**

#### **3.1 Political and Legal Changes**

In May 2010 there was a change to government at a national level with the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition. This change has inevitably brought with it a change of policy direction that has an impact on the Council's business. The coalition government has stated their top priority is cutting Britain's budget deficit, "with the main burden of deficit reduction borne by reduced spending rather than increased taxes".

The government has announced the intention to combine the various benefit systems into one Universal Credit which will see the combination of work from various national and local government departments. It is not yet clear precisely how these changes will take effect but will be phased in during the period 2013 - 2017 and will bring significant change to some of our services.

There is an indication that the government is intending to reduce the burden on employers through changes to employment legislation which has increased the length of service for unfair dismissals and will introduce a charge for claimants to employment tribunals in an effort to reduce vexatious claims.

Perhaps the greatest change to local government is that proposed by the Localism Act 2011 which seeks to place services as close to the citizen as

possible and to open up opportunities for the community to deliver services themselves. This may potentially lead to significant change for local government as it becomes a facilitator of services rather than a delivery organisation. One other aspect of this facilitation is to increase the transparency of public expenditure; this necessitates the publication of all expenditure over £500 and all salary details for employees earning over £58,200. The council is also required to publish its pay policy and ensure that there is clarity regarding the mechanisms used for staff reward and remuneration.

### **3.2 Economic Changes**

Probably the most obvious impact to the changes in the economy is the government's drive to reduce the cost of the public sector. In October 2010, the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) determined the spending budgets until 2014-15. For local government this meant a reduction in funding by an average of 28% over the four year life of this plan, with larger savings having to be achieved in the first year. Maidstone Borough Council has a programme of reviews, to consider how services are delivered and these have had an impact on the workforce, which is likely to continue during the life of this strategy.

One of the clear indications of the need to control workforce costs is the strong control over pay inflation at both national and local level, within local government as a whole there has been a wage freeze for three consecutive years. The council has local pay determination and has used the national position as a lever for change to its own pay scales and other terms and conditions.

One controversial aspect of change in the public sector has been the government's process of consultation on the changes to the pension schemes offered to public sector workers. Pension schemes have become very expensive with increased life expectancy and a reduced rate of return from investments. The consultation on change has had an impact on the industrial relations climate within the public sector and is seen by many employees as an erosion of their terms and conditions. This is likely to have an impact on the ability to recruit and retain when the economy becomes more buoyant.

A less obvious impact of the recession is the increased demand for many of the council's services from our residents. The council has seen a significant increase in the number of homelessness applications received and households assisted over the last two years. This increase in demand for service is likely to continue even once the economy begins to recover. Not only are first time buyers finding it increasingly difficult to access mortgages and affordable homes but existing mortgages are highly

susceptible to even the smallest changes in interest rates. For both staff and applicants an increase in mortgage interest rates may be the tipping point for unmanageable debt and with a more buoyant housing market lenders may be more willing to repossess properties in order to realise their assets. In the area of planning and building control the impact has been to reduce fees income as large scale planning applications decline but an increased level of small applications; this has led to diminished resources but a continued volume of work. The introduction by the Government of a local Council Tax discount scheme and planning processes have increased the burden of work for the council.

### **3.3 The National Work Force Strategy for Local Government**

The first national work force strategy for local government was published in 2004 and has been refreshed regularly since then; the most recent version being in 2010. The key themes have remained consistent throughout this period but the emphasis has changed to reflect the economic and political developments, these are set out in summary below:

**Organisational development** - Addressing the workforce dimensions of organisational transformation to deliver citizen-focused and value for money services, in partnership.

**Leadership development** - Building visionary, ambitious and effective leadership to make the best use of political and managerial roles, in a partnership context.

**Skills development** - With partners, developing employees' skills and knowledge, in an innovative, high performance, multi-agency context.

**Recruitment and retention** - With partners, taking action to: recruit and retain the right workforce; address key future occupational skill shortages; promote jobs and careers; identify, develop and motivate talent and address diversity issues.

**Pay and rewards** - Implementing effective approaches to reward the workforce while controlling employment costs to reflect budget and efficiency requirements as well as new ways of working and innovative working patterns. Encouraging a total reward approach to promote high performance.

The national strategy identifies actions at all levels of local government and these have been reflected within this strategy and the plan

## 4. Workforce Strategy - The Local Context

### 4.1 Work Force Changes and Challenges 2008 to 2012

In this section of the Workforce Strategy some of the most significant workforce changes are presented particularly;

- An 18% headcount reduction which is considerably higher than the 8-10% reduction experienced by other Kent Districts;
- A reduction in the pay bill from £18.6 million to £14 million; and
- 17% of turnover during this period was attributable to redundancies;

These changes have only been possible because the council has established different ways of working including:

- Cessation of some lower priority services;
- Use of new technology;
- Flexible use of existing resources and multi-skilling;
- Service delivery through partnership with other councils or agencies.

Throughout this period demands for service have continued and this places a greater pressure on the teams, the Workforce Strategy recognises this as an on-going scenario.



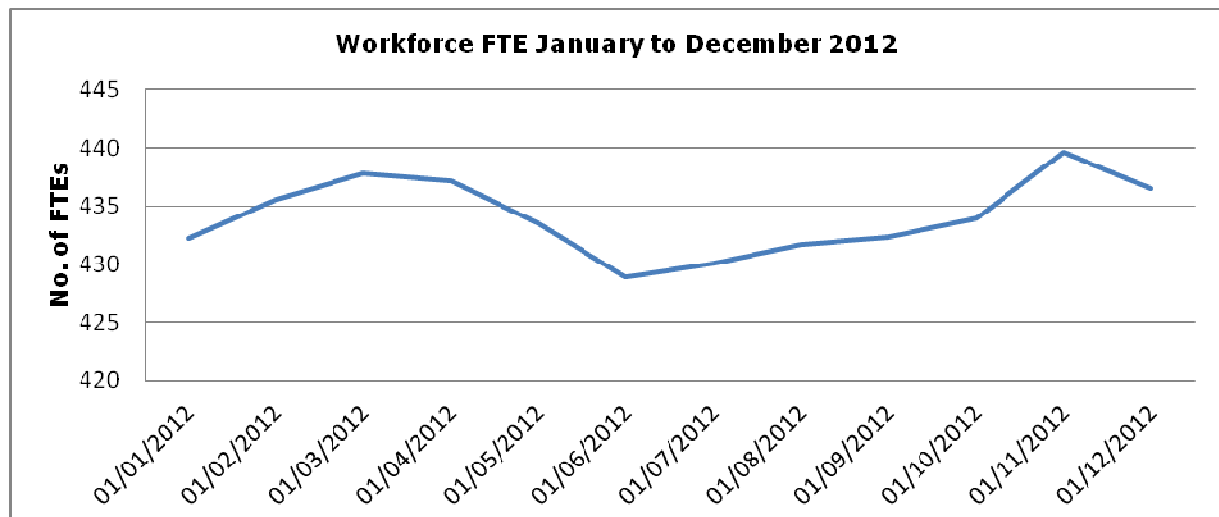
One of the consistent themes throughout this period has been the management of change. The council experienced its most significant political and managerial change for a decade in this period with the move to a majority administration and a change of Chief Executive plus a reduction from three to two Directors.

Heads of Service identify the biggest current workforce challenges as:

- Managing workloads with decreased resources;
- Managing performance and sickness absence to maximise available resources and productivity;
- Managing customer expectations;
- Managing change – particularly re-structures, redundancies and the training required for new roles;
- Managing shared services across multiple cultures.

There was a shared view that this was not the same as in the past where in many areas the issue was about recruiting and retaining staff in high skill shortage areas and the consequent training and induction where there was high turnover. The changes were seen as an inevitable consequence of the budget reductions and the recession and there was a strong sense that the performance culture was more strongly emphasised than before.

More recently turnover has reduced and in 2012 there was a more stable workforce level.





## 5. The Workforce Strategy 2013 – 2015

The aim of the Workforce Strategy is to ensure that the council has the most effective human resources in place to deliver its priorities now and in the future. The Workforce Strategy has been developed taking into consideration where we are now and the council's strategic direction set out in the strategic plan. There are several assumptions in the workforce strategy which will need to be assessed during the period of the plan to check that they are still valid, these are:

- There will be no significant growth in the UK economy during this period;
- There will be no significant policy shift at either national or local level;
- Central government funding of local government will continue to shrink;
- Current proposals for Welfare Reform will be implemented.

The consequence of these assumptions mean that the Workforce Strategy has a focus on productivity, particularly 'doing more with less' whilst continuing to have ambitious aspirations for what we can achieve.

The workforce strategy is aligned to the priority areas of the national strategy for ease of reference, although the areas of focus relate to the analysis of the issues of relevance to local circumstances.

### 5.1 Organisation Development

Within this context of change the council will need to consider its **Future Shape** so that the organisation is designed to best suit the role and function it must deliver. As these requirements evolve the organisation structure and boundaries will need to adapt.

There are multiple factors that will impact on the environment all of which will play a part in determining what will fit the organisation best in the future. One of the major influences has become the level of partnership work that the council is now involved with, some of these are set out below.

#### *Mid Kent Improvement Partnership*

The most well established partnership for the council is the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP) which is set up with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council to find ways of increasing efficiency, saving cost, resilience and delivering better services to the public. This partnership has resulted in several shared

services to date and this trend is set to continue. The shared services at the beginning of 2013 are:

- Audit (MBC;TWBC;SBC with Ashford Borough Council)
- Revenues and Benefits (MBC;TWBC with SBC on systems only)
- Legal (MBC; TWBC; SBC)
- Human Resources and Payroll (MBC; SBC)
- Parking (MBC;SBC)
- Licensing (MBC; TWBC with Sevenoaks District Council)
- ICT (MBC; TWBC; SBC)

In addition there are partnerships within some of the MKIP councils that are outside of the MKIP boundary, for example Swale Borough Council has a Building Control Partnership with Gravesham and others.

There are several other services within the MKIP that are in the process of implementation, for example Environmental Health and Planning administration. There are significant organisational and workforce issues emerging from the partnerships. As the MKIP has developed the initial shared services did not transfer staff to one employer and thus minimised some of the consequent employee relations issues, however this resulted in continuing ambiguity and some loss of management control of resources within the service. The principle for future partnerships will be to TUPE transfer to one employer giving greater control over resources but this approach will also need to be carefully thought through as there are implications for the residual support service costs in a situation where, for example all transfers go to one of the three councils leaving the other two with smaller numbers.

#### *Kent Forum and Locality Boards*

The increased emphasis on partnership working with other organisations is likely to continue.

The Locality Boards will be the forum within which agencies (for example NHS, police, and district and county councils) can focus on improving one particular area with a 'joined up' approach so that resources are maximised and duplication minimised. The council has been successful in securing funding from both the police and NHS to deliver some of these priority areas and this will have implications for recruiting and managing people with different skill sets.

#### *Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP)*

The council has a small team that work alongside of line managers to introduce change in a way that ensures services streamline and become

more efficient. The mission is to “Enable smarter services and a leaner organisation”

With this embedded into the council’s culture the ‘norm’ is to constantly look for new and better ways of delivering services which will inevitably require organisational development. A cross-cutting team of senior managers meet quarterly to monitor the corporate improvements across the organisation.

### *Approaches to Service Delivery*

With a greater emphasis on partnership work and diminished budgets the Cabinet has given some thought to the council’s approach to service delivery. There is recognition that in some cases the council can have greater impact through the commissioning of other agencies to deliver a service rather than the direct delivery by council employees. In the process of the development of the strategic plan agreement was reached on the principles for service design:

1. Residents and businesses are the starting point for services; every service must be considered from the perspective of the citizen and delivered at the lowest possible level – a bottom-up approach.
2. We will enable service delivery and seek to commission services rather than deliver them ourselves wherever appropriate.
3. We will work with partners where there are economies of scale and to identify common solutions and shared services.
4. Services must achieve our priorities.
5. We will manage our services so no-one is disadvantaged because of where they live.
6. We will concentrate on delivering our core services, whilst recognising that there are areas we need to influence and work with others on to bring about change.
7. We will work together as one Council and with our partners to deliver change and manage expectation.

### *Central Government*

One of the most significant changes within the period of this strategy will be the implementation of the governments ‘Universal Credit’ which will see the amalgamation of different employees from district councils, the Department of Work and Pensions and the HMRC into one organisation. This could affect almost 10% of the council’s workforce but as yet it is unclear how this process will be implemented or the impact it will have on individuals or the organisation. There is an added complexity to this for us

as the affected group is also part of the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

### *Localism*

The Localism Act 2011 has many facets; the areas that could have the greatest impact on the workforce are the devolution of services to communities and the transfer of assets to communities. This could result in a challenge to the current service design which would lead to a transfer to community provision resulting in TUPE transfer of employees or a reduced need for particular services.

One further area of impact of the Localism Act 2011 is the requirement for all councils to publish an annual Pay Policy Statement setting out the key terms and conditions for officers; this level of openness and transparency has an impact on the culture as staff benefits are regularly scrutinised in a public arena.

### **Organisation Development – Workforce Plan**

The aim of this priority is to ensure that *the organisation is designed to optimise its resources to enable the achievement of the vision and priorities in a manner that aligns to its values.*

To respond to the issues identified and achieve our aim there are several actions and outcomes within the workforce plan.

Drive/Need	Outcome	Action
Need to review and change organisation structures	Facilitate smooth organisational change	Review the current organisation change policy and minimise difference between MKIP partners
Need to review and change organisation structures	Facilitate smooth organisational change	Establish clear processes and support mechanisms for managers and staff
Increased partnership work in MKIP	Strategic employment models agreed	Options evaluation of different employment models, agreed model applied to current and future partnerships.
Increased partnership work.	Flexibility in workforce movement.	Secondment policy developed.
Maintain and develop the organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities	Measure levels of employee engagement	Best Councils survey and engagement plan updated.
Maintain and develop the	Monitor health and well-	HSE Stress Survey.

organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities	being	
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It is clear from the preceding narrative that the number of direct employees is likely to change during the life of the plan. In any workforce plan there will be factors that have a known quantifiable impact on employee numbers, factors identified that will have an impact but are not yet quantifiable (known unknowns) and factors that are not yet anticipated. At this point there are several known factors likely to impact on workforce numbers, the only one of these which is quantifiable is the TUPE transfer of the ICT workforce to Maidstone Borough Council which will result in an increase of 18.7 fte (full time equivalent) in April 2013.

## 5.2 Leadership development

The council has given significant investment and focus to leadership development for both political and managerial leaders. During 2011 the senior managers took part in a development programme that was designed to enhance the organisation's leadership team in order to take the organisation forward into the future. One of the aspirations that arose from this development programme was to find ways to devolve decision making to the lowest level and reduce bureaucracy. This will inevitably require the development of managers to be able to respond positively to increased freedoms and flexibilities. The council will need to engage all employees to ensure that discretionary effort is maximised and it is clear that the role of the leaders and line managers are vital to success in this endeavour. The IiP Healthcheck in 2012 reinforced the need to streamline the councils competency framework to make it clear to everyone what was expected of the leaders of the organisation.

Within any political environment there is an on-going need to develop the political leadership skills within the elected member group and following the publication of the Localism Act 2011 there is a particular requirement to support them to develop the role of 'community leader'. Elections are held in every three years of four which necessitates a rolling programme of inductions for new members as it is at this point that they start to understand their role. The Cabinet have regular away days which form part of their development and there is a thorough process in place for member development at all levels which will be increasingly necessary as the requirements of members change in the future.

Employee engagement is a key to the successful future of the organisation and the approach to leadership of the organisation through the senior leadership team and line managers is fundamental to creating an engaged workforce. It is the council's ambition to be recognised at gold standard by Investors in People by 2015 and this process will be used to facilitate cultural change and engage our workforce. The role of

line managers in this process will be fundamental to its success and this will require real support to develop them to deliver the requirements. The current employee engagement plan is at Appendix Three and this gives a clear programme of actions that are designed to strengthen the role of the line manager working with their teams to deliver the council priorities, this programme is known as 'One Council'. The plan is a dynamic plan that constantly evolves and is reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Leadership Team.

## Health and Safety

In 2011 the council agreed the Health and Safety Strategy:

**It has sensible health and safety at the heart of its business, it is integral to the culture and decision making processes of all aspects of the organisation.**

The six key themes to deliver the strategy are:

- Strong **leadership** in championing the importance of, and a common-sense approach to, health and safety in the workplace;
- A **healthy** and **productive** workforce;
- **Everyone** involved in the provision of Council services trained to the appropriate levels of competency to **accept** and **deliver** their health and safety **responsibilities**;
- A strong framework of **policies** and **Safe Operating Procedures** (SOP) that underpin the vision and meet our legislative requirements;
- **Robust** and rigorous **monitoring, recording, and investigation** of health and safety matters and **communication** of best practice and lessons learnt from internal and external organisations;
- A **forward looking** approach that ensures the organisation is **flexible** and **adaptive** to meet the changing environment.

The development of the organisational culture to integrate health and safety into the way of working is one of the clear goals and this will also impact on the development of the organisation. Well-being factors have a clear link to employee engagement and as this is one of our main leadership aims the commitments made in the Health and Safety strategy and Action Plan that need to be delivered.

## Leadership Development – The Workforce Plan

The aim of this priority is to ensure that *the organisation has effective leadership at all levels and that the senior leaders are visible and consistent in leading the workforce to deliver on priorities.*

To deliver this aim there are several actions and outcomes within the workforce plan.

Drive/Need	Outcome	Action
Senior Leadership is visible	Employees feel that senior leaders are approachable and live the values	Through actions in the engagement plan e.g. leading One Council briefings
Develop line managers as leaders	Line managers know how to engage teams	Coaching framework delivered
Develop consistency of approach by leaders and managers	Managers and leaders know what is expected of them as a 'Maidstone Manager'	Streamline the competency framework and reinforce expectations.
Employees are engaged with the organisation	Employees behave in a way that is consistent with the values	See engagement action plan
Members are supported in their role as community leaders	To increase community involvement and representation	Development sessions available for Members supported by party leaders.

### 5.3 Skills Development

The council has a very thorough approach to the identification and support of learning and development needs for staff and members and works in partnership with other councils to ensure a cost effective delivery of requirements.

There will be an on-going need for professional and technical skill development which would be considered to be 'business as usual'. The focus of the skill development theme within the Workforce Strategy is the areas which support the response to the changing environment.

#### Skill Development – The Workforce Plan

The aim of this priority is to ensure that *the organisation has people with the right skills now and for the future to deliver the council's visions and priorities in a manner that aligns to its values.*

With the changing environment there will be a need for further development of the skills of the workforce whether these are direct employees or working in partner organisations; those identified through the workforce planning process are in the table below.



<b>Skill area</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target audience</b>
Change management	Managing the increased pace of change	All line managers
Customer consultation & insight	Localism and improved resident perception	All line managers, front line staff
New technology	Improved efficiency, channel shift, social media	All staff and Members
Commercialism, business analysis & development	Services may have technical expertise but not the business skills to develop a commercial approach	Line managers in areas of opportunity for selling services
Project & programme management	To secure most effective approach to high level change	Line managers
Negotiation and influencing	Increased work with partners need to influence outside of direct control	Roles interacting with partners
Coaching	Develop line managers to be able to get the best from their teams in a supportive way	Line managers
Facilitation skills	To assist in the management of change with team work	Project members in areas of workforce change
Managing 'remote' workers	Develop teams with increased partnership split site working and home working	Line managers

With the reduction in turnover and decreased levels of recruitment but increased level of redeployment the need for skill based training has increased with the need for basic induction to the work of the council decreased. The challenge is to be able to enhance the existing workforce to adapt to new ways of working and to gain the additional discretionary effort.

#### **5.4 Recruitment and Retention**

This strategy is based on the assumption that the level of economic growth will remain relatively static during the period. If the economic climate changes quickly so that there is a demand for skills within the area of the built economy (Planning and Surveying) the council will need



to quickly consider the use of market supplements for retention, however it is not anticipated that this will be necessary in the life of this plan.

The reducing size of the work force has largely been due to the deletion of posts when they become vacant. This presents more of a challenge because it means that either a replacement person has to be found internally, which may well necessitate a greater level of training or processes have to be streamlined to enable the re-distribution of work. More work needs to be undertaken to look at how people can plan for moves around the business as part of the career planning processes, this increases the need for horizontal movement between posts rather than the vertical 'promotions' that were expected in the past.

One area of direct recruitment that will continue is apprenticeships. The council has a long tradition of using trainee schemes to attract younger staff into employment and then retain them. The development of apprenticeships is consistent with one of our key priorities – Great Opportunity – which supports the growth of opportunities in the borough and apprenticeships are being encouraged in all businesses.

The age group under twenty five years is under-represented in the council and the apprenticeships help to redress this problem. However this is one of the few areas of equality imbalance that we are able to directly influence through recruitment. In the past we have been able to target particular under-represented groups when we have recruited new staff so that, although appointments continue to be on merit, we have been able to encourage applications from these areas, but with a reduced number of new recruits this is more difficult.

## **Recruitment and Retention – The Workforce Plan**

The aim of this priority is to ensure *the right people, with the right skills are in the right roles to deliver the achievement of the council's vision and priorities in a manner that aligns to its values.* The outcomes and actions in the Workforce Plan are set out below.

Drive/Need	Objective	Action
A representative and balanced workforce	Increase the % of employees under the age of 25	Apprenticeship programme
A flexible workforce	Internal recruitment and selection enables horizontal movement to develop careers and give employment stability	Streamline processes for internal re-deployment.
A flexible workforce	Develop a range of skills from other organisations	Secondment opportunities with other organisations encouraged and a secondment policy agreed.
Develop skills in partner organisations	Support partner organisations to develop skills	Offer secondment opportunities to partners when opportunities arise.

## 5.5 Pay and Reward

In 2012 the council made changes to the pay scales which addressed historical anomalies and strengthened the link of pay for performance for senior managers. The council has had a Total Reward approach since 2007 but it is clear that some of the benefits and flexibilities that are in place are not fully utilised by managers. The main developments in this area will be to strengthen the use of the available benefits and this will include the revision of the Staff Handbook so that employees are aware of what is on offer.

With the introduction of 'High Performance' increments for grades 13 and above there will need to be robust development of the process for agreeing high performance increments where they are applicable.

With the move to the new pay scales particular attention will be upon the impact of the changes on equal pay, this work will be combined into the annual pay policy statement published by the council.

### Pay and Reward – The Workforce Plan

The aim of this priority is to ensure that *we are able to attract and retain talented people and that employees feel that they have a fair deal whilst maintaining cost efficient services for the public.*

The outcomes and actions in the Workforce Plan are set out below

Drive/Need	Outcome	Action
Compliance with Localism Act	Open and transparent regarding the council's use of resources	Publish the pay policy statement annually
Retain competitive position as an employer	Ensure that pay scales remain at the market median	Benchmark salaries – particularly for hard to fill posts.
Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package so that employees feel they are fairly rewarded.	Update and re-issue employee handbook
Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package so that employees feel they are fairly rewarded.	Health initiatives developed
Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package – pensions are understood and valued	Auto enrolment implemented
Retain competitive position	Staff feel valued for	Awards ceremony

as an employer	their contribution	continued and strengthened
Retain competitive position as an employer	Staff feel valued for their contribution	Mechanisms developed to increase the ways for recognising staff

## 6. Summary

This workforce strategy sets out the context within which the council operates and identifies the key factors that will influence the workforce issues in the future. Although there is a general acknowledgement that it is not possible to give absolute certainty to the size and shape of the council in the next few years there are clear requirements for skills and flexibilities to enable the appropriate and timely response to change. The plan will be reviewed as needs emerge and as more up to date feedback is received from staff surveys, a summary of the actions are set out in Appendix Three.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY OUTCOMES

**GREAT PLACE – to be the best place to live in Kent**

For Maidstone to be a decent place to live

**Has decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.**

- Develop sustainable communities
- Increase choice and improve the quality of life for vulnerable people
- Improve our existing homes
- Improve access to housing advice and work to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Maidstone

**Is a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough.**

- New waste management arrangements
- Development of commercial services –including business case for commercial waste
- Completion of “new” cleansing model – area working, deep cleaning, enforcement
- Improve perception of cleanliness in the borough
- Reduce the Council’s energy consumption
- Implement Air Quality Management Area Action Plan

**GREAT OPPORTUNITY – highest employment rate in Kent**

For Maidstone to have a growing economy

**Has a growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy.**

- Creating the right planning environment
- Development of key infrastructure
- Business expansion
- Inward investment
- Development of stronger business relationships
- Tackling worklessness

**Has a transport network that supports the local economy.**

- Integrated transport strategy with KCC
  - Sustainable transport approach
  - Behavioural change/modal shift
  - Maidstone town centre as a regional transport hub
- Consultation February/March 2012 alongside Core Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- Integrated parking strategy (including detailed proposals for park and ride) – completion April 2012

## **GREAT PEOPLE – Investors in People - Gold by 2015**

Corporate and Customer Excellence

**Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced;**

- Long term strategy - early intervention preventative approach to tackle disadvantage
- Medium term strategy – intervention with families with multiple needs; key criterion – intergenerational worklessness
- Other intervention including community safety
- Maidstone’s Community Budgets project will focus on families who have:
  - Household unemployment/NEET 16-18 year olds
  - At least one adolescent aged 13-18 experiencing difficulties (school non-attendance, exclusion, emotional/behavioural, and offending)
  - Parental need or existing involvement in adult services (Police, Probation, mental health, social services)

**Has value for money council services that residents are satisfied with.**

- Strategic Plan – Medium Term Financial Plan alignment
- Improvement Journey
- Customer centred organisation
- Localism and “Bigger Society”
- Future Shape of the Organisation – including structure and governance
- Workforce Strategy

**IIP Gold - Engagement Plan****Update February 2013**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>What/Topic</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
April 2012 <b>complete</b>	One Council briefing	Outrageous ambitions and priorities & intro of 'One Council' logo and concept	Interactive briefing and activities	HR, Policy, CLT
July 2012 <b>complete</b>	Staff Forum	Feedback from the One Council Briefing Up date from Health Champions	Share feedback and ask for feedback from the group – asked prior to the event to seek feedback from their teams and they can then bring this to the forum. Especially interested in the 'Not sure' category and what we could do to turn that to a 'smiley'  Health Champions – what they did in the training, what the plans are – share some of the well being sessions planned – how can staff forum contribute	CEX or Dir  Health Champs
July 2012 <b>complete</b>	Unit Managers	Overview of the Engagement agenda and the journey so far – bring Unit Managers up to date How we will take it forward Get feedback Intro difference/learning styles etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLT / SMT Dev work Masterclass</li> <li>• Why so important</li> <li>• Link to Best Companies</li> <li>• Update from One Council Briefing</li> <li>• Link to the key role that managers play in delivering employee engagement</li> <li>• Update on methodology – PET – what we intend to do and why</li> <li>• Living Great People - Explore difference / Learning styles activity</li> <li>• Place capacity building for Equality</li> <li>• Link to IIP feedback – inconsistencies in delivery &amp; effectiveness</li> </ul>	CLT  DS/TE
August/Sept 2012 <b>complete</b>	Core Brief / Team Meetings	Update from One Council Living Great People Understanding difference unique individuals	Activity around difference Learning styles L&D to provide outline and tools for managers to use	Unit Managers
September 12 <b>complete</b>	IIP	IIP benchmark review	IIP internal review to establish work areas and specific	HR External

Date	Session	What/Topic	How	Who
September 12	Engagement general	Issue of updated staff handbook and possibly the update of the Greats on the new promotional materials	Create an opportunity for staff to ask questions and raise issues whilst also sharing the updated handbook/promo materials	HR
Sept/Oct 12 <b>complete</b>	Core Brief / Team	Team building	Unit managers to be offered materials for team building on relevant topics where they want to keep the momentum created by the learning styles activities	Unit managers HR
Sept 2012 <b>complete</b>	Well Being	Equality sessions	Theatre & - sessions to be run for the whole council with unit managers trained as facilitators	HR Unit Managers
October 2012 <b>complete</b>	Staff Forum	Feedback from the Equality sessions & the Learning Styles sessions IIP review and contribution to actions Ideas for the Mental Health Awareness Day	Group activity and involvement – some pre questions to gain feedback from teams	HR Health Champs
October <b>complete</b>	Well-being	Mental Health Awareness Day	Promotion of support available in Maidstone, promotional materials, activity (e.g. walk round Mote Park, Yoga)	Kate Pomphrey
October <b>complete</b>	Unit Managers	Develop materials for DVD on 'Great Place' Develop materials for 'One Council' briefing IIP – review information from assessment, where are we now and what do we focus on	Before event – send info about what we will want from them; send links to good examples of type of thing we want to develop for Great Place ensuring this also includes rural areas. In session – write questions to be used for interviews by staff in the 'One Council' briefings; develop storyboards for the DVD content specifically to be used to bring to life the 'Great Place' theme and the outcomes we have to deliver. The DVD to be used in team briefs & to enable the discussion around where each team fits into this. IIP review	CLT/SMT  HR
November 2012 <b>complete</b>	One Council	Feedback from staff on the journey so far Bring Great Place to life	Looking at Maidstone as a great place – map activity – where are the boundaries of Districts, Family Fortunes on sense of belonging, Maps to identify good places in Maidstone and those that need development.	CLT SMT HR & Policy

Date	Session	What/Topic	How	Who
November <b>complete</b>	Well Being	National Stress Awareness	Promotional activities and massage at the desk	Kate Pomphrey
November <b>complete</b>	Well Being	National Diabetes Day	Awareness and promotion Testing – to schedule at Depot as well as Maidstone House	Kate Pomphrey
December 2012	Ad Hoc	Great People	Leadership visibility and engagement - Back to the floor up and down Christmas preparations	CLT / SMT
December <b>complete</b>	Ad Hoc	Great People – Stress Survey	Gauge Impact of the strengthening of priorities and how roles fit in, bullying session etc	CLT/SMT A Barker
January 2013	CLT/SLT	Great People	Feedback the liP outcome and the proposed action plan for engagement developed as a result Include the HoS in development of proposals	HR
January 2013 <b>complete</b>	Staff Forum	Great People	Feedback the liP outcome and any results from stress survey Validate liP feedback	HR & CLT
January 2013 <b>complete</b>	Unit Managers	Great People Great Place	Reminder of why we're doing team activities as part of engagement, Group coaching session on Great Place team activity Stress results & liP results	HR & CLT
January 2013 <b>complete</b>	Engagement general	Support for the development of the engagement plan	Project outline developed and sent to organisations for quotations * Specification attached	HR
January/Feb <b>Complete/on going</b>	Core Brief / Team	Great Place	Word search activity for teams	Unit Managers
Jan/Feb 2013 <b>complete</b>	Well Being	Awards Ceremony	Celebration of success	CLT & HR
February 2013 <b>complete</b>	Well Being	Equality sessions	Theatre & - sessions for members and staff that missed the original sessions	HR
February 2013	Engagement general	Support for the development of the engagement plan	Tender evaluation	HR Procurement
March 2013	Core Brief / Team	Planning for the year ahead	Service planning – a conversation about key developments in the coming year for the team and how this might link to the team development (link to L&D strategy & longer term planning) * proposed activity attached	HR



Date	Session	What/Topic	How	Who
March 2013	Unit Managers	Great Opportunity	Great Opportunity planning for one council meeting	HR, Policy, CLT
March 2013 – June 2013	Engagement general	Coaching	Start of Coaching programme for managers within the organisation to learn coaching skills and start to consider how to spread this across the council	HR
April and May	Engagement general	Appraisals	All staff to have appraisals which support development and draw links to the corporate plan objectives	Line managers
16 April 2013	Staff Forum	Competency refinement	Plan to involve staff forum in the development of the competencies if the successful organisation has been appointed at this time.	External consultant
April 2013	One Council	Great Opportunity		HR, Policy, CLT
May 2013	Team brief	Great Opportunities		
July 2013	Engagement general	Great People	Best Companies survey	
		Logo design to pull it all together – values & competencies, performance and priorities		

Appendix Three

**Workforce Plan 2013 - 2015**

All actions in the Workforce Plan link directly to the corporate priority 'Corporate and Customer Excellence' and support the other key priorities indirectly.

	<b>Key Theme</b>	<b>Need / Driver</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
1	Organisation Development	Need to review and change organisation structures	Facilitate smooth organisational change	Review the current organisation change policy and minimise difference between MKIP partners	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) Head of HR (HHR) Heads of Service	Dec 2013
2	Organisation Development	Need to review and change organisation structures	Facilitate smooth organisational change	Establish clear processes and support mechanisms for managers and staff	HR Manager	Sept 2013
3	Organisation Development	Increased partnership work in MKIP	Strategic employment models agreed	Options evaluation of different employment models, agreed model applied to current and future partnerships.	MKIP Programme Manager	March 2013
4	Organisation Development	Increased partnership work.	Flexibility in workforce movement.	Secondment policy developed.	HR Manager	July 2014
5	Organisation Development	Maintain and develop the organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities	Measure levels of employee engagement	Best Councils survey and engagement plan updated.	HHR	Survey July 2013
6	Leadership Development	Maintain and develop the organisation culture to be consistent with the values and priorities	Minimise stress amongst the work force	Monitor health and well-being through HSE Stress Survey.	HHR	Dec 2012 and Dec 2014
7	Leadership Development	Senior Leadership is visible	Employees feel that senior leaders are approachable and live the values	Through actions in the engagement plan e.g. One Council briefings	HHR, Policy, CLT	Ongoing

8	Key Theme	Need / Driver	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
	Leadership Development	Develop line managers as leaders	Line managers know how to engage teams	Coaching framework delivered	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Ongoing
9	Leadership Development	Develop consistency of approach by leaders and managers	Managers and leaders know what is expected of them as a 'Maidstone Manager'	Streamline the competency framework and reinforce expectations.	HHR and SLT	Ongoing
10	Leadership Development	Employees are engaged with the organisation	Employees behave in a way that is consistent with the values	See engagement action plan	HHR and CLT	Ongoing
11	Leadership Development	Members are supported in their role as community leaders	To increase community involvement and representation	Development sessions available for Members supported by party leaders.	Dem Services Group Leaders	May 2013
12	Skills Development	To develop skills for the changing context of the organisation	See skills development plan section 5.3		HHR	Ongoing
13	Recruitment and retention	A representative and balanced workforce	Increase the % of employees under the age of 25	Apprenticeship programme	HHR	March 2014
14	Recruitment and Retention	A flexible workforce	Internal recruitment and selection enables horizontal movement to develop careers and give employment stability	Streamline processes for internal re-deployment.	HHR	March 2014
15	Recruitment and Retention	A flexible workforce	Develop a range of skills from other organisations	Secondments with other organisations encouraged and a secondment policy and guidance notes agreed.	HHR	March 2014

	<b>Key Theme</b>	<b>Need / Driver</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
16	Recruitment and Retention	Develop skills in partner organisations	Support partner organisations to develop skills	Offer secondment opportunities to partners when opportunities arise.	Heads of Service	Ongoing
17	Pay and Reward	Compliance with Localism Act	Open and transparent regarding the council's use of resources	Publish the pay policy statement annually	HHR	March annually
18	Pay and Reward	Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package so that employees feel they are fairly rewarded.	Update and re-issue employee handbook	HHR	June 2013
19	Pay and Reward	Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package so that employees feel they are fairly rewarded.	Health initiatives developed	HHR Community Development	Ongoing
20	Pay and Reward	Retain competitive position as an employer	Reinforce benefits package – pensions are understood and valued	Auto enrolment implemented	HHR	Nov 2013
21	Pay and Reward	Retain competitive position as an employer	Staff feel valued for their contribution	Awards ceremony continued and strengthened	HHR	Feb 2013 and annually
22	Pay and Reward	Retain competitive position as an employer	Staff feel valued for their contribution	Mechanisms developed to increase the ways for recognising staff	HHR	ongoing



## Equality Impact Assessment Initial Assessment

The initial assessment is a quick and easy screening process. It should:

- identify those policies, projects, services, functions or strategies which require a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) by looking at:
  - ∇ negative, positive or no impact on people that possess any of the protected characteristics
  - ∇ opportunity to promote equality for people that possess any of the protected characteristics
  - ∇ data / feedback
- prioritise if and when a full assessment should be completed
- justify reasons for why a full assessment is not going to be completed

<b>Service</b>	Human Resources and Council Wide
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<b>Title of Policy, Function Or Service</b>	Work Force Strategy 2013 - 2015
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<b>Type of Policy, Function Or Service</b>	Existing:	Yes
	New/proposed	
	Changed	

**Step 1 - Identify Aims**

**Q1. What Are the Aims of Your Policy, Function or Service?**

The aim of the Workforce Strategy is to align the Council’s workforce with the corporate plan to ensure that we have the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.

To determine the focus of the Strategy and the associated Workforce Plan we have considered both current local and national trends and the impact these will have on our ability to deliver council priorities.

**Q2. Who Is Going To Benefit From This Policy, Function Or Service and How?**

This is a high level strategic document which could impact on every employee and therefore have an impact on all of our services. The community should benefit if the strategy enables us to focus resources in the most cost effective and efficient manner. Members of staff should benefit as the strategy recommends a planned approach to development and engagement.

**Step 2 - Assess Potential Impact**

**Q3. Thinking about each of the groups below, does, or could the policy, function, or service have a negative impact on people who possess the protected characteristics below?**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unclear</b>
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Age		X	
Disability		X	
Race		X	
Sex		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Religion or belief		X	
Gender Reassignment		X	
Marriage and Civil Partnerships		X	
Pregnancy and Maternity		X	
Relationships between groups		X	
Other socially excluded groups		X	

**If The Answer Is "Yes" Or "Unclear" Consider Doing A Full Assessment**

**Step 3 - Assess Potential to Promote Equality**

**Q4. Does, or could, the policy, project or service help to promote equality for people who possess the protected characteristics?**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unclear</b>
Age	X		
Disability	X		
Race	X		
Sex	X		
Sexual orientation	X		
Religion or belief	X		
Gender Reassignment	X		
Marriage and Civil Partnerships	X		
Pregnancy and Maternity	X		
Relationships between groups	X		
Other socially excluded groups	X		

**If The Answer Is "No" Or "Unclear" Consider Doing A Full Assessment**

One aspect of the strategy particularly strengthens the position for those with protected characteristics as there is a commitment to equality monitoring and equal pay analysis.

**Step 4 - Collect and Use Evidence**

**Q5. Have you undertaken any consultation on this policy, function or service?**

<b>Yes</b>	X	<b>No</b>	
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**If yes give details of who has been consulted (internally and externally) and a brief summary of any equality and diversity issues raised**

Member Employment and Development Panel  
 Trade Unions  
 Cabinet Member  
 Management Team and Head of Service

<b>Q6. Do you have any feedback data from people with any of the protected characteristics that influences, affects or shapes this policy, function or service?</b>			
<b>Group</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unclear</b>
Age	x		
Disability	x		
Race		x	
Sex	x		
Sexual orientation		x	
Religion or belief		x	
Gender Reassignment		x	
Marriage and Civil Partnerships	x		
Pregnancy and Maternity		x	
Relationships between groups		x	
Other socially excluded groups		x	

**If the answer is "no" or "unclear", no-one knows or opinion is divided consider doing a full assessment**  
 There were people affected by several of the protected characteristics – age, disability, race and gender, in the groups consulted. There was no feedback to indicate that the strategy in any way was disadvantageous to those in the protected characteristics

<b>Step 5 – Finalise Your Decision</b>			
<b>Q7. Using the assessments in questions 3, 4 and 5 should a full assessment be carried out on this policy, project or service?</b>			
<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	X
<b>If you have to complete a full assessment use the easy to follow toolkit and form on Intranet</b>			
<b>Q8. How Have You Come To This Decision?</b>			
Due to the strategic nature of the document all staff, including those with protected characteristics may be affected at any time. However any specific changes that resulted from the general direction of this strategy would result in a EIA which would look specifically at proposals and the impact on those with protected characteristics.			
<b>You only need to answer this question if you answered yes to Q7.</b>			
<b>Q9. What Is Your Priority For Doing The Full Assessment?</b>			
<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	

<b>Step 6 – Details of People Involved</b>	
<b>Q10. Who was involved in the assessment, and how?</b>	
The EIA was undertaken individually by the Lead Officer.	
<b>Name of Lead Officer</b>	Dena Smart, Head of HR Shared Services
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date : 22/02/2013</b>	<b>Contact number 01622 602712</b>

# Agenda Item 10

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**10 APRIL 2013**

## **REPORT OF REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Report prepared by Clare Wood**

### **1. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE REVIEW**

#### **1.1 Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To consider the recommendations within the 'Visitor Information Centre Review' report attached at **Appendix A**.

#### **1.2 Recommendation of Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

1.2.1 That Cabinet agrees the following recommendations:

1. That the use of technological tools for engaging with and providing information for visitors is investigated.
2. That staff members providing visitor information receive customer services training and undertake the Visitor England on-line training programme.
3. That a consistent methodology for logging visitor numbers to the VIC at the Museum and the Town Hall is put in place to monitor the use of the service.
4. That a visitor information presence in the gateway is investigated.
5. That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive revisit the way portfolios are arranged and officer duties allocated to create more cohesion and improved clarity of purpose.
6. That there should be a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall;
7. That a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall be supported through Visitor Economy Business Unit resources;



8. That no arrangement should be entered into that would compromise this; and
9. That in consultation with relevant stakeholders that the Council clarifies the value of visitors to the borough by putting in place visitor strategy setting out how Maidstone's offer can be enhanced and publicised.

### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 At its meeting in May 2012 the Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that they would review the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) to determine if there was an economically viable and/or beneficial scenario to return the visitor information centre or part of the VIC to the town hall.
- 1.3.2 The Committee has undertaken site visits to Bexley and Rochester's Visitor Information Centres to understand the different delivery models for visitor information. They have also held select committee style interviews in formal and informal settings and considered other research on the topic such as visitor information data.

### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The Cabinet could decide not to endorse any of the recommendations within the "Visitor Information Centre Review" report, however the recommendations are based on evidence from a range of sources and support the Council's objectives with regard to being a decent place to live and having a growing economy outlined at 1.5.

### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2011 -15 lists "For Maidstone to be a decent place to live' as a key priority, under which sits the outcome 'Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough'. The recommendations within the report contribute to the fulfillment of this outcome. The Strategic Plan also identifies for Maidstone to have a growing economy a flourishing tourist industry supported by appropriate visitor information clearly supports this priority.

### 1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 The Recommendations contained within the report will need to be risk assessed as part reviewing whether they should be accepted or not.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	X

1.7.2 Depending of the acceptance of the recommendations within the report there could be financial, staffing, procurement and asset management implications. For example using the Town Hall to deliver visitor information would have implications on how the Town Hall is managed, such a facility would also need to be staffed therefore there could be staffing and financial implications.

1.7.3 Appendices

Appendix A – Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Visitor Information Centre Review.  
Appendix B – Scrutiny Committee Response Implementation Action Plan.

1.7.4 Background Documents

Visitor Information Centre Review Evidence Pack.

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because: .....

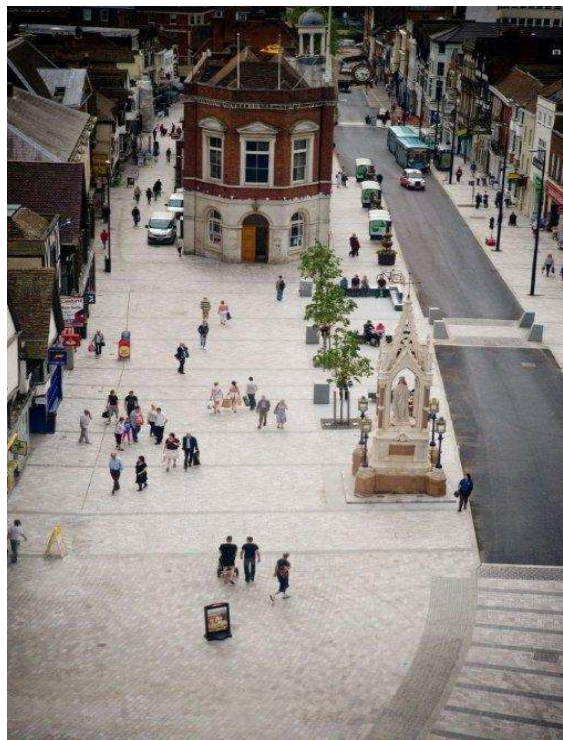
.....

Wards/Parishes affected: .....

.....

# Visitor Information Centre

## Municipal Year 2012/13



### Task & Finish Membership:

Councillor Burton (Chairman)	Councillor Beerling (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Black	Councillor Cox
Councillor English	Councillor Mrs Joy
Councillor Nelson-Gracie	Councillor Newton
Councillor Mrs Parvin	Councillor Mrs Paterson
Councillor Ross	Councillor Mrs Springett
Councillor Vizzard	

## **Chairman's Summary**

I would like to thank all the Council Members that have participated in this review. An exceptionally high number of Councillors who are not regular members of the Regeneration and Economic Development Committee have contributed and attended many of the meetings and evidence gathering visits. This to demonstrates the deep concerns held by Members upon the issue of where the Visitor Information Centre should be situated and the closely intertwined consideration of the future of the Town Hall itself. Indeed, it has been difficult to keep the two issues in separate focus and at the same time look for a solution for one without compromising the other.

The final report here presented is a fair summary of the often detailed discussions and the conclusions that have been reached. In particular it is worth noting the comments about decision making and lines of responsibility when matters sometimes sit across more than more Cabinet Members portfolio. Through the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee these thoughts have already been fed into the Governance Review of Maidstone Borough Council.

The Committee are especially appreciative of the undertaken given by Cllr Eric Hotson (Cabinet Member for Corporate Service) not to make a decision about the use of the Town Hall lobby until the work of the group had been substantially completed.

The Committee hope that this report will not be seen as simply a series of recommendations about the Visitor Information Centre but as a beginning from which Maidstone can revitalise its entire Visitor Strategy and embrace the many jewels of heritage and interest that wait to be exploited. In these most difficult of economic conditions we cannot afford to squander any opportunities.

## Background



In 2011 Maidstone's Visitor Information Centre moved from the foyer of the town hall into the new extension at the Museum. With the foyer of the Town hall empty the space was offered to Volunteer Action Maidstone (VAM) as a customer point.

Since the moving of the Visitor Information Centre (ViC), Jubilee Square, part of the High street regeneration project has been completed and while VAM have played a valuable role in keeping the Town

Hall open and in use there was evidence that visitors were confused about where to go for visitor information.

The value of the visitor economy is often under estimated but it is essential to England's economy. It generates £97 billion each year, employs in excess of two million people and supports thousands of businesses, both directly and indirectly. In Maidstone the visitor economy is estimated to provide 5,000 jobs (7.3%) in the borough.

## Looking Elsewhere

Best practice visits to Rochester and Bexley as well as to the current ViC site demonstrated the various delivery models for visitor information. Bexley had recently moved their ViC from a local attraction run by volunteers to the local Library. Bexley has a do it yourself approach with no dedicated staff but multi-skilled the librarians to assist with visitor information. Rochester has a destination ViC with its own dedicated building encompassing a coach drop off point, café, facilities, gallery and shop in addition to the ViC desk and information area. Generally there is a move away from accommodation services and a greater focus on events. This is being enabled through the use of new technologies. Maidstone has a visitor app for smart phones however for events that happen at short notice it is not suitable as it take three months to update. It is clear from the research from Visit England that there are a variety of delivery models and that the use of new technology is having an impact in this area however; the delivery model did not form part of the scope for this review.



1. That the use of technological tools for engaging with and providing information for visitors is investigated.



### **Service at the Museum**

An initial visit to the ViC at the Museum found that there was almost no visitor information available and staff knowledge and customer services could be improved, this was endorsed by the mystery shopping exercise undertaken earlier in the year by Visit England. The Panel noted that out of the 72 leaflet holders only 19

were advertising attractions in Maidstone.

2. That staff members providing visitor information receive customer services training and undertake the Visitor England on-line training programme.

The Review Panel acknowledged that there is ongoing work in relation to the signage for the ViC and the upgrading of maps in the Town Centre. It was considered that creating a coach drop-off point outside the museum was a good idea.

### **The Town Hall**

The data from VAM for enquires at the Town Hall clearly shows that over the summer a third of enquires are for visitor information, the panel would like to express their gratitude to VAM, who not only deal with visitor information enquires the best they can but also provides maps to visitors and ensure that they know where the actual ViC is before they leave. The Kent business barometer for July 2012 shows that 96% of visitor to Maidstone were domestic and 3.5% were European (European visitors up 1.5% on the year before). The Panel noted that in many European towns that visitor information was usually available at the local town hall.

There is no quality data pertaining to the success of the ViC at the Museum as they have only been there for a year and it was not clear from the data collected how many people were visiting the museum and how many were visitor enquires. In order to quantify the success of the ViC at the Town Hall data collection methods for recording visitors need to be improved.

3. That a consistent methodology for logging visitor numbers to the ViC at the Museum and the Town Hall is put in place to monitor the use of the service.



## Making use of our Gateway

While considering the location of the Visitor Information Centre there was a consensus that the Council was not making the best use of space at the Gateway, with a coach drop-off point outside and closing of the Arriva shop the panel considered that some of the space downstairs in the Gateway could be used for leaflet racking and/or a electronic notice board for events.



4. That a visitor information presence in the gateway is investigated.

## Structure, Delivery & Resources

VAM have expressed a willingness to provide visitor information with appropriate support from the Council. However; Members were concerned about the internal appearance of the Town Hall foyer, which is still used by members, officers and customers for meetings in the chambers. It was felt that at present there was no incentive for VAM to invest in the space as there was no formal agreement between VAM and the Council over the use of space or length of time that it would be available to them for. It was felt that more thought could be given to the layout and feasibility of the space to ensure that both parties aims could be achieved – quiet meeting space and reception for VAM and a clean and tidy town hall foyer to welcome guests and Members to the building.

The review panel have experience difficulties during the course of the review as Town Hall and ViC currently sit in different portfolios. There was also confusion about the role of the staff located within the ViC at the Museum, who work within the Visitor Economy Business Unit (VEBU) and although based at the Museum do not report to the Museum Manager.

5. That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive revisit the way portfolios are arranged and officer duties allocated to create more cohesion and improved clarity of purpose.

## Conclusions

There is currently no conclusive evidence to support returning the ViC in full to the Town Hall. However; with the completion of Jubilee square and the planned second stage of the High Street regeneration project the panel agreed that Town Hall should be the hub for events in Maidstone.



6. That there should be a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall;
7. That a ViC presence at the Town Hall be supported through VEBU resources; and
8. That no arrangement should be entered into that would compromise this.

Maidstone has no holistic strategy for attracting visitors to the borough. There several different groups who have a stake in the visitor economy but Maidstone lacks a joined-up approach and a vision. While it is clear that visitors contribute to the Maidstone economy it is also not clear what value the Council places on visitors.

9. That in consultation with relevant stakeholders that the Council clarifies the value of visitors to the borough by putting in place visitor strategy setting out how Maidstone's offer can be enhanced and publicised.

## **Thank you**

The Panel considered evidence from a variety of stakeholders and would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who have personally contributed to this review:

### **Medway Council**

Carl Magjitey  
Ed Woollard

### **Bexley Council**

Philip Ware  
David Bowles

### **Volunteer Action Maidstone**

Charlotte Osborn-Forde  
Kate Dickinson  
Liz Tredget

### **Maidstone Borough Council**

Simon Lace  
Laura Dickson  
Brian Morgan  
Cllr Greer  
Cllr Hotson  
David Tibbit  
Neil Harris

The Committee would also like to thank the council officers and members of the public who took the time to contact the Committee and offer their opinions and ideas on the Visitor Information Centre. All of the correspondences received were considered and added a valuable dimension to this review.

**This report is available in alternative formats.  
For further information about this service please  
contact the Scrutiny Section on 01622 602524.**

**The report is also available on the Council's  
website:**

**[www.maidstone.gov.uk/osc](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/osc)**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SCRAIP)**

**Committee: Joint Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting Date: 26/04/2013**

**Minute No:**

**Topic: Visitor Information Centre Review**

<b>Recommendation<sup>i</sup></b>	<b>Cabinet Member<sup>ii</sup></b>	<b>Response<sup>iii</sup></b>	<b>Timetable<sup>iv</sup></b>	<b>Lead Officer<sup>v</sup></b>
1. That the use of technological tools for engaging with and providing information for visitors is investigated.	Cllr Greer			Laura Dickson
2. That staff members providing visitor information receive customer services training and undertake the Visitor England on-line training programme.	Cllr Greer			Laura Dickson
3. That a consistent methodology for logging visitor numbers to the VIC at the Museum and the Town Hall is put in place to monitor the use of the service.	Cllr Greer			Laura Dickson
4. That a visitor information presence in the gateway is investigated.	Cllr Hotson & Cllr Greer			Laura Dickson & Sandra Marchant
5. That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive revisit the way portfolios are arranged and officer duties allocated to	Cllr Garland			Alison Broom

create more cohesion and improved clarity of purpose.				
6. That there should be a Visitor Information Centre presence at the Town Hall;	Cllr Hotson			Laura Dickson
7. That a ViC presence at the Town Hall be supported through VEBU resources; and 8. That no arrangement should be entered into that would compromise this.	Cllr Hotson			Laura Dickson & David Tibbit
9. That in consultation with relevant stakeholders that the Council clarifies the value of visitors to the borough by putting in place visitor strategy setting out how Maidstone’s offer can be enhanced and publicised.	Cllr Greer			Laura Dickson

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**Notes on the completion of SCRAIP**

<sup>i</sup> Report recommendations are listed as found in the report.

<sup>ii</sup> Insert in this box the Cabinet Member whose portfolio the recommendation falls within.

<sup>iii</sup> The Officer/Cabinet Member responsible for responding to the recommendation should indicate in this box either the acceptance or rejection of the recommendation.

**If the recommendation is rejected** an explanation for its rejection should be provided. The ‘timetable’ and ‘lead officer’ boxes can be left blank

**If the recommendation is accepted** an explanation of the action to be taken to implement the recommendation should be recorded in this box. Please also complete the ‘timetable’ and ‘lead officer’ boxes.

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<sup>iv</sup> The Officer/Cabinet Member responsible for responding to the recommendation should indicate in this box when the action in indicated in the previous box will be implemented.

<sup>v</sup> The Officer/Cabinet Member responsible for responding to the recommendation should indicate in this box the Officer responsible for the implementation of the action highlighted in the 'response' box.