

# AGENDA

## COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 12 November 2013  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors: Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), Brindle, Mrs Gibson,  
Mrs Joy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Mannering, Munford,  
Mrs Parvin, Vizzard and Yates

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1. **The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Notification of Substitute Members**
4. **Notification of Visiting Members/Witnesses**
5. **Disclosures by Members and Officers**
6. **To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information**
7. **Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2013.** 1 - 5
8. **Evidence from the Homelessness Review; Guiding the Homelessness Strategy** 6 - 42  

Interviews with representatives from a national and local level with regards to homelessness and the impact of Welfare Reform.
9. **Future Work Programme** 43 - 61

Continued Over/:

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**Issued on 4 November 2013**

*Alison Broom*

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

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## MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

#### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2013

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman), Mrs Gibson, Mrs Joy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Mannering, D Mortimer and Yates.  
Councillors

**Also Present:** Councillor Mrs Grigg

37. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEB-CAST

**RESOLVED** : That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

38. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Brindle, Munford, Mrs Parvin and Vizzard.

39. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor D Mortimer was substituting for Councillor Vizzard

40. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

Councillor Mrs Grigg was present as a Visiting Member and member of the Working Group for the Health Inequalities Mental Health review which was to be the focus of the evening's meeting.

41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

42. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

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

43. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 AUGUST 2013.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 August be approved as a correct record and duly signed.

44. ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BEFORE THE POINT OF CRISIS REVIEW.

The Chairman welcomed:

- Dr Bob Bowes, Chairman of the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG);
- Dr David Chesover, GP Member of the West Kent CCG;
- Meuthia Endrojono-Ellis, Head of Mental Health Commissioning, West Kent CCG;
- Jenny Walsh, Services Manager, Maidstone Mind; and
- Andrew Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health Improvement, Kent County Council (KCC).

Dr Bowes, Chairman of the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided a brief overview of the CCG's current position. He explained that it had identified the gaps and challenges faced by the workforce. There was a need to improve the quality of provision and to closely monitor services. It was working towards improvements by opening up access to services and reducing waiting lists.

A service user who wished to remain anonymous was invited to provide evidence to the Committee, the web-cast was paused to facilitate this and was resumed once the service user had been excused from the meeting. The evidence given would be used by the Committee's working group in its final review report on Mental Health.

In response to the evidence provided the Committee questioned the witnesses on the following areas:

- Early intervention was this lacking?
- Fire fighting caseloads; was this the position currently faced by all organisations?
- Were they confident that the GP was the first point of contact and had the capability to deal with Mental Health needs?

Dr Chesover responded by explaining that a GP provided a 24 hour, 7 day a week service through out of hours services. He felt that there was confusion as to whether public were fully aware of this.

Members considered the triage pilot scheme funded by the Department of Health, backed by the Home Office and supported by Norman Lamb MP and whether it had been considered for West Kent. Ms Endrojono-Ellis informed members that something similar was being developed in East Kent to support the Police. She explained that the priority of the West Kent CCG was to work to improve crisis care. It wanted to shift care into the community which was part of its 2014/15 community commissioning priorities.

Jenny Walsh explained Maidstone Mind's position as a Voluntary Organisation. She informed the Committee that people described as 'fit for work' came to them for support as well as those who had fallen

through the gaps or been discharged from other services and could not access counselling or talking therapies. Ms Walsh informed the Committee that Maidstone Mind was a charity reliant on funding. This was going out to tender next year and potentially their funding could stop but they would still be relied on to pick up the gaps in service provision which was a major concern.

Dr Bowes requested information on Maidstone Mind's case numbers in order to be in a position to establish which were not being met by the NHS so that it could be in a position to evaluate numbers, cost and the possible gap to be faced. Further to this Dr Chesover suggested that 1 or 2 case studies be provided.

The CCG told the Committee that it was unaware of the exact need with regards to Mental Health due to the handover from the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Dr Bowes explained that Ms Endrojono-Ellis had been appointed because Mental Health had not been handed over in good order.

The Committee considered the role of Public Health in Mental Health Services. Andrew Scott Clark explained that Public Health was about the prevention of the bigger problem and there were services that could be commissioned. It was about understanding the local need, known triggers for Mental Health crisis included Welfare Reform and deprivation. In terms of prevention, Mr Scott-Clark confirmed there was a need for these types of services to be commissioned.

Dr Chesover informed the Committee that in the past 'essential services' had been planned separately. There would be now a more joined up approach to commissioning with the role of Public Health and the Local Authority, post April 2013. He confirmed that joined up commissioning was starting to happen. Members were informed that the Health and Well-Being Board's (HWBB) role was to establish the way forward by identifying priorities with partners.

Members questioned the issue of one Mental Health professional serving all of Kent as part of its crisis response. It was inconclusive whether or not this was this case. However, witnesses from the CCG explained that the Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT) had informed it that they were at present unable to meet the national standards for crisis care. The KMPT had come to the CCG with solutions for the way forward which included working towards a single point of access 24/7 and ensuring further, professional support was available.

The needs of the whole population in terms of Mental Health, including those in rural areas of the borough, were considered. The Committee was informed that ways of meeting this challenge included moving services into the community and maintaining the voluntary sector.

Members questioned whether waiting lists could be causing long, term, irreparable damage. It was confirmed that waiting lists were a legacy of the April handover to the CCG but that this was being tackled rapidly. GPs were working hard to ensure patients were seen within the timescales or

would contact colleagues to make urgent provisions dependant on the problem. It was stated that care would be individualised. Their first duty was 'to do no harm' and ensure the patient was seen.

Members raised concerns that early interventions were not being made because of the waiting lists. They were informed that a document was coming out in a few weeks time to GPs detailing all the services available for referral, across child and adult services.

Dr Cheseover told that Committee that every person suffered with Mental Health, it affected 100% of the population not 1 in 4. Mental Health was anything from anxiety to something much more severe that it impacted on a patient's physical health. It was emphasised that the first point of contact should always be the GP who would start the process in the correct way, the CCG as Commissioners supported this view. It was envisaged that a structure would be in place within the next five months. The Committee felt that it would be useful if the CCG returned to update it January for a progress report on this.

The Committee queried the number of GPs with expertise in Mental Health. Dr Chesover told the Committee that it was a valid question to be asked: should we have more mental health specialists? He was not sure that a GP was the right professional level and suggested Nurses as a possibility. It was confirmed that it was an area that would be addressed.

Members considered the role of the Police and their position at the front line of crisis situations. Section 106 of the Mental Health act permitted the removal of someone with a Mental Health disorder from a public place to a place of safety by the police. The Committee felt that it was important to invite representatives from Kent Police to a scrutiny meeting, especially in light of recent media reports that 25% of police time was spent dealing with issues related Mental Health and to examine the level of section 106 issued and whether there was a need to improve relations with partners, to ensure a more rapid responses to acute cases.

The Committee considered other areas that could impact on or attribute to Mental Health service provision. It discussed addiction and the emphasis placed on drugs but not often enough on alcohol. It also identified were those with a history of violence were often turned away from other agencies but were presenting themselves to Maidstone Mind who engaged with them.

The following organisations were identified as possible witnesses for the Committee to engage further with on Mental Health Service provision:

- Kent & Medway NHS Partnership Trust (KMPT);
- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust;
- Kent Drug & Alcohol Action Team (Kdaat);
- KCA UK, Drug, Alcohol & Mental Health Services;
- Adult Social Care;
- Housing Providers;
- Kent Probation Services;

- Addiction Services;
- Social Services; and
- Kent Police.

**RESOLVED:** That

- a) The West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group returns to update the Committee in January 2014;
- b) Maidstone Mind provides the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group with details of the number of caseloads it has and one to two case studies;
- c) That the Committee's further meetings on Mental Health include the following witnesses:
  - Kent & Medway NHS Partnership Trust (KMPT);
  - Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust;
  - Kent Drug & Alcohol Action Team (Kdaat);
  - KCA UK, Drug, Alcohol & Mental Health Services;
  - Adult Social Care;
  - Housing Providers;
  - Kent Probation Services;
  - Addiction Services;
  - Social Services ; and
  - Kent Police.

45. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Future Work Programme.

Members agreed to cancel its meeting on 8 October 2013 and replace it with the additional, scheduled date on 29 October 2013 at which the Committee would meet as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny to interview the Police Crime Commissioner.

The Committee included an update from the West Clinical Commissioning Group in its Future Work Programme, in line with its review timetable.

**RESOLVED:** That

- a) The meeting on 8 October 2013 be cancelled; and
- b) An update from the West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group be included in its Future Work Programme in line with the Committee's review timetable.

46. DURATION OF MEETING.

6.30 pm to 8.40 pm

# Agenda Item 8

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2013**

#### **REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Neil Coles**

- 1. EVIDENCE FROM THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW - GUIDING THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**
  - 1.1 Issue for Decision
    - 1.1.1 Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, it is a statutory requirement for all local housing authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years.
    - 1.1.2 A prerequisite for this is conducting a review of homelessness in the borough. The Homelessness Review takes into account the current and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough, the activities carried out in the borough for the prevention and relief of homelessness, and the resources available in the borough for these activities.
    - 1.1.3 This report outlines the emerging findings from the Homelessness Review currently being undertaken, so that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can help to shape the overall principles and action plan for the Homelessness Strategy for 2014-2019.
  - 1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services
    - 1.2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the emerging findings from the ongoing Homelessness Review that will help inform the Homelessness Strategy:
      - The increasing importance of the private rented sector in reducing homelessness and the barriers to providing a sustainable affordable housing solution;
      - The increasing number of landlord possessions in the private rented sector compared with the reduced ability for prospective tenants to access private rented accommodation;
      - The reduction in successful homelessness preventions and whether this is linked to the council's new Allocation Scheme;

- The reduction in referrals to Kent County Council’s Supporting People programme (for example to provide housing-related Floating Support) for homelessness services despite the increasing levels of homelessness in Maidstone, and;
- The increase in mortgage possession orders granted but not yet enforced which may result in a future spike in homelessness as the property market recovers.

1.2.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides recommendations concerning the priorities and actions that should be included in the Homelessness Strategy.

1.2.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees to receive a future report from the Head of Housing and Community Services outlining the draft Homelessness Strategy for consideration.

### 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

#### **Background**

1.3.1 Since the council’s previous Homelessness Strategy was adopted there have been a number of changes that have had the potential to impact on homelessness both locally and nationally.

1.3.2 Given the range of changes, it is largely impossible to quantify the direct impact of individual reforms on homelessness. However it is important to monitor the impacts of these reforms, and seek to mitigate the negative effects on the vulnerable that may emerge as a result.

#### **Welfare Reforms and National Policy**

1.3.3 Since 2010, the coalition government has set out to reform the welfare system to reduce spending on benefits, as well as making work pay. These reforms have the potential to impact on homelessness. Some of the most significant recent and upcoming reforms that may affect homelessness are:

- Introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap and reduction of LHA rate from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> Percentile. This came into force in April 2011 for new claimants, with a rolling implementation from January 2012 for the 1,940 existing claimants affected. This has effectively reduced the LHA rates payable to claimants relative to market rents
- Since January 2012 the age limit for single people able to claim the LHA rate for self-contained accommodation increased from 25 to 35. As a result, those aged 35 and under

can now only claim the LHA shared room rate (i.e. a lower rate based on the reference rent for a room in shared accommodation rather than self-contained accommodation). This affected 240 existing claimants.

- Since April 2013 Local Housing Allowance rate increases have been linked to the Consumer Price Index rather than Retail Price Index (which includes real local rental market evidence). This has had the effect of reducing likely LHA rate increases.
- When Universal Credit is rolled out, the '13 week protection rule' will be removed. This rule allows the full payment of rent for up to 13 weeks if a claimant loses their job or falls ill; as long as they had not claimed Housing Benefit for the previous 52 weeks and could previously pay their rent when they signed the tenancy. Instead, the lower LHA rate will be paid immediately.

### **Consultation with Partner Organisations**

1.3.4 An important part of the review was to consult with partner organisations within the borough. The partner organisations included child, adult and youth services from Kent County Council, partners from the Voluntary and Community Sector and Registered Social Landlords within the borough (including Golding Homes, the largest provider of social housing).

1.3.5 The consultation identified the following groups as being considered most susceptible to becoming homeless:

- Single unemployed men under 35;
- Households with under-occupation penalties in housing benefit;
- Households with interest only mortgages and no repayment vehicle;
- People with mental health problems;
- Housing benefit claimants who have to seek accommodation in the private sector;
- Large families that are benefit claimants;
- Those who are leaving prison;
- 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
- Older people (55-64) with a care and/or support need who may have been hit with an under occupancy penalty or affected by welfare reform;

- Armed forces leavers;
- Severely overcrowded households;
- Clients with mental health issues, and;
- Young carers.

### **Consultation with Private Sector Landlords**

- 1.3.6 The private rented sector has also become ever more important when preventing and relieving homelessness. This is not only because social housing is in short supply, but also because since the Localism Act 2011, the council has the power to end their housing duty by finding appropriate housing in the private sector for those who are homeless.
- 1.3.7 The private rented sector in Maidstone has grown rapidly over the last five years, mirroring the growth in the sector nationally. This has been fuelled by increased demand from prospective tenants who are unable to access owner occupation, and has resulted in increasing private sector rent levels.
- 1.3.8 For many residents the private rented sector has become increasingly unaffordable, and this has reduced residents' ability to access private rented sector accommodation.
- 1.3.9 Private sector landlords are important partners when considering housing issues in the borough. A consultation exercise was carried out with private sector landlords in the borough during a local landlord forum organized by the National Landlords Association.
- 1.3.10 The consultation identified a range of concerns:
- Private Sector Landlords were strongly against the removal of direct payments of housing benefit to landlords when Universal Credit is introduced;
  - There are fears that their tenants will spend rent money on other things and get into arrears, and;
  - There was a general negative perception of tenants in receipt of benefits, with landlords considering them a high risk.
- 1.3.11 There was a strong consensus that the council should offer to guarantee the rent of housing benefit clients and that the council should offer to repair any damage tenants on housing benefit may cause to properties when they move out.
- 1.3.12 Other suggestions that were made during the consultation that may be worth noting were to:

- Help landlords to have less void periods;
- Regulate bad landlords, and;
- Give incentives for renovating neglected houses.

### **Consultation with the Homeless**

1.3.13 A focus group was carried out before a pre tenancy training session to consult on the views of those who were directly affected by homelessness. The focus of the consultation was on the barriers to accessing housing, particularly in the private sector. The following themes emerged from the focus group:

- Lack of suitable, affordable private housing;
  - Affordability issues surrounding fees, deposits, and rent in advance when accessing private rented accommodation;
  - The worry of accessing private rented accommodation, being evicted and having to present as homeless again;
  - Lack of security of tenure in private rented accommodation;
  - Being evicted, with landlords then not wanting to take you on as a tenant in the future;
  - Lack of letting agents that list landlords willing to take those on benefits.
- Those present at the focus group were then asked to think of ideas that may tackle these barriers. The following ideas emerged:
- Changing perceptions of landlords in respect of benefit claimants;
  - Promoting introductory tenancies that give everyone a chance;
  - Providing a list of landlords that will accept tenants on benefits;
  - Knowing where to get free advice, and;
  - Negotiating directly with the landlord, helping to build a relationship with the landlord before moving in.

### **Housing Affordability**

1.3.14 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was carried out in 2010, identified groups of people who are more likely to find it difficult to afford 'market' housing (i.e. the cost of housing on the open market, either renting or buying). Those particular

groups, and the likely percentage of those who would be unable to afford market rent, are:

- Lone Parents (67.1%);
- Single, non-pensioners (34.1%), and;
- Household head not in employment (31.1%).

- 1.3.15 It is also worth noting that those in urban locations are less likely to be able to afford market rent (29.0%) than those in rural locations (17.7%).
- 1.3.16 The SHMA also suggests that 22.6% of households headed by someone employed in the borough are unlikely to be able to afford market rent compared to those households headed by someone employed outside the borough (where 7.2% of households unlikely to afford market rent).
- 1.3.17 The SHMA noted that there was a consensus among registered social landlords and those dealing with homelessness that there is a shortage of accommodation in social rented housing for single households.

#### **Headline Results from the Homelessness Review**

- 1.3.18 The number of homelessness decisions made by the council (included in the council's P1E return) has increased significantly since April 2011. (Table 1 shows the breakdown of homelessness decisions that is reported to government since April 2008.)
- 1.3.19 The numbers of cases that are accepted as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need have also increased since 2010.
- 1.3.20 This is an important category of cases, as these are the households we have a duty to secure accommodation under homelessness legislation (or termed the 'full housing duty'). This trend shows no sign of decreasing, and if the current trend continues then there is likely to be a further increase in homelessness approaches in 2013/14.

Table 1- Homelessness decision made since April 2008

	Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so	Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	Eligible, but not homeless	Ineligible	Total decisions
<b>2008/09</b>	37	15	8	66	1	<b>127</b>
<b>2009/10</b>	7	5	7	38	0	<b>57</b>
<b>2010/11</b>	27	5	7	40	1	<b>80</b>
<b>2011/12</b>	189	25	28	29	2	<b>273</b>
<b>2012/13</b>	198	22	42	25	6	<b>293</b>
<b>2013/14 (Q1 and Q2)</b>	92	15	22	32	1	<b>162</b>

1.3.21 The proportion of cases that are found to not be homeless has dropped, from a high of 85% in 2009/10 to 32% in 2012/13. In the main this is due to a change in how applications for assistance have been dealt with.

1.3.22 This trend is similar to the national data supplied by other local authorities in their P1E returns, and follows advice given to local housing authorities by the Local Government Ombudsman that the previous approach of allowing homeless applications to remain undetermined until the person is provided with a housing solution be no longer pursued.

1.3.23 The change in how applications for assistance are dealt with also explains the downward trend in homelessness preventions. Many households that would previously been dealt with as preventions are not being dealt with as needing a homelessness decision.

1.3.24 The typical profile of someone who was accepted as having a full housing duty towards them is:

- A female lone parent (47% of applicants);
- Aged between 25-44 (82% of applicants), and;
- With one child (46% of applicants).

1.3.25 The most common reason for the loss of the last settled home, for cases where we owe the full housing duty, since 2008/9 has been parents no longer willing or able to accommodate (27.1%). The next most common reasons have been termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (18.9%), followed by other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (12.4%).

- 1.3.26 Before 2010/11, the main reason for loss of last settled home was parents no longer willing or able to accommodate. However since 2010/11, the proportion of cases that stated this as the reason for the loss of their last settled home has decreased. There has been a marked increase in breakdown of relationships with partners, both violent and non-violent, that has accounted for some of this increase.
- 1.3.27 Significantly, landlord repossession claims have been on an upward trend since 2005. Cases where a landlord has taken possession of a property doubled between mid-2008 and 2011. However the current trend is for landlord possessions to be on the decrease, despite repossession claims in the courts continuing to increase. This is coupled with an increased difficulty in securing accommodation for applicants in the private rented sector over the same period.
- 1.3.28 Mortgage repossessions have decreased since a high in 2009/10, however they remain at a higher rate than before the financial downturn. The relationship between mortgage repossessions and homelessness does not appear to have a strong direct relationship. This could be related to mortgagees obtaining possession orders but waiting until the housing market improves before foreclosing on the mortgage in order to realize the best possible capital return.
- 1.3.29 Between 2007-2010, 17 of the 20 households to whom we have owed a full housing duty and whose reason for the loss of last settled accommodation was mortgage arrears, 17 of these have been since 2010. Although this does not mirror mortgage possession statistics (which have decreased in the same period) it suggests that a greater proportion of repossessions are successful, given the upward trend for households being assessed as being homeless intentionally (e.g. through not making mortgage payments). This suggests that further research on how households become homeless intentionally would be beneficial.
- 1.3.30 The estimates for rough sleeping show that although rough sleeping in Maidstone appears to have dropped since 2010, it has stayed at a steady level between 2011 and 2012. The regional trend has generally been of an increase in rough sleeping over the past three years. The annual rough sleeping estimate is to be completed during November.
- 1.3.31 Data submitted from the Supporting People Programme has shown that a large proportion of clients where homelessness appeared within their needs are single homeless people. This has been decreasing over the last three years, and the proportion of

homeless families with support needs has been increasing.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The council is required to complete a Homelessness Review to inform its Homelessness Strategy.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Understanding the drivers for homelessness within the borough will assist the council to meet its priority for Maidstone to be a decent place to live through the reduction of homelessness.

1.5.2 Homelessness does present a negative impact on the local economy and increasing homelessness has a detrimental effect on economic stability.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

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 Finance – there is a financial impact resulting from the council’s obligation to provide emergency temporary accommodation to certain homeless households. Reducing homelessness will have a positive budgetary impact.

1.7.3 Equality Impact Needs Assessment – the impact of homelessness on minority communities will need to be identified in the council’s Homelessness Strategy.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices - None

1.8.2 Background Documents

1.8.3 Maidstone Borough Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013.

<b><u>IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?</u></b>		<b><u>THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED</u></b>	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, this is a Key Decision because: .....			
.....			
Wards/Parishes affected: .....			
.....			

## Introduction

### The duty to carry out a homelessness review

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Maidstone Borough Council, as a housing authority, must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in the borough.

The homelessness review must consider:

- a. The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district;
- b. the activities which are carried out for any the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
  - i. preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district;
  - ii. securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
  - iii. providing support for people in the district:
    - who are or may become homeless; or
    - who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again;
- c. the resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.

### The Review Process

The Council set out to consult with as many organisations as possible who are engaged with working with those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The Council also consulted directly with service users of various homelessness services and with private sector landlords. This was carried out in several ways:

- A consultation for was sent out to partner organisations that work with the homeless and those who are at risk of becoming homeless; including Registered Social Landlords in the borough
- Requests for data were made to various Social Services departments at Kent County Council
- A survey was conducted of private sector landlords at a local meeting of the National Landlords Association
- A focus group was held before a pre-tenancy training session
- A survey was carried out on those presenting themselves as homeless at the Maidstone Gateway

The Council is grateful to all those who have contributed to this review.

## The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

The last Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2008-2013. During this period there have been significant changes to the economy, national policy context and local conditions that will affect homelessness in the borough.

The financial downturn of 2007/2008 pushed the country's economy into recession in 2008/2009 which has had a massive economic effect.

In 2010 a new coalition government was elected, which concentrated on a whole host of reforms intended to reduce public spending in order to re-balance the public sector deficit. At the same time the government announced a number of significant reforms to welfare benefits that some commentators believe may have an impact on homelessness.

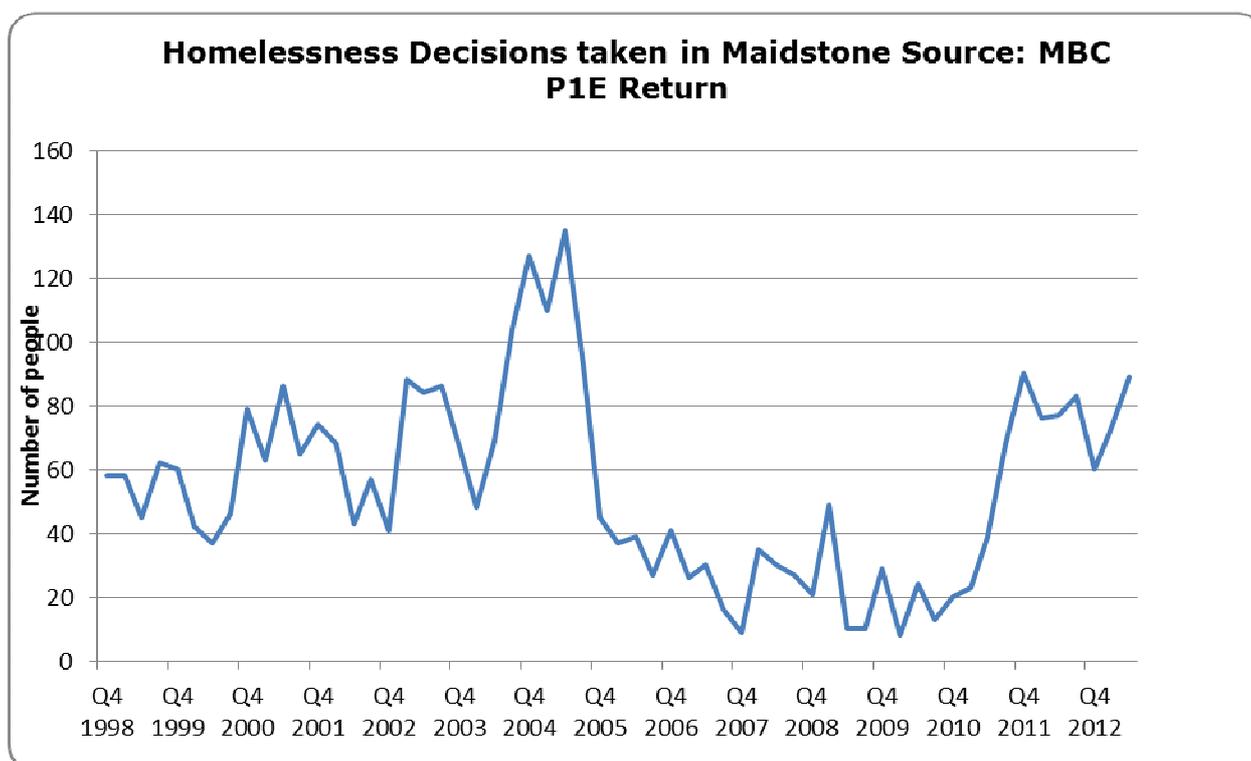
However there have also been changes locally since the 2008-2013 strategy was published. Since 2008, the council has been administered by a single party for the first sustained period since the 1980s. This has given the council a period of stability and a new strategic focus.

The council adopted a new Housing Allocations Policy effective from April 2013, in which a housing need *and* a local connection must be demonstrated before being accepted onto the housing register. The new allocations policy also emphasises the benefits of community contribution (either paid employment, voluntary work or being a carer inside the borough of Maidstone); giving those who have made a community contribution as the best opportunity to be nominated.

## Levels of Homelessness in Maidstone

Levels of homelessness have tended to fluctuate according to several factors such as local circumstances (e.g. the closure of a large employer), national circumstances (e.g. the vagaries of the economy).

The government requires all local housing authorities to complete a return (known as the P1E) every quarter on homelessness activity. This includes the number of people approaching the council as homeless and this can be seen in the graph below.



For the purpose of this analysis, the last six full years of homelessness data (2007-2012) will be used, as well as the first two quarters of data for 2013.

As can be seen in the graph, people presenting themselves as homeless stayed at a relatively constant level, fluctuating between 40 and 80 people per quarter, between 1998 and 2003. There was a spike between 2003 and 2005; but subsequently there was a drop to a lower level than before from 2005 onwards. Since 2010 there has been a sharp increase of those presenting themselves as homeless. This trend has fluctuated but seems to be remaining around the 60 to 80 cases per quarter level.

Most of the data from the P1E return to central government only gathers detailed data on those who are eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (the full housing duty, as this means the local housing authority must secure accommodation for the applicant and their family). Therefore to understand the context of the data from the last five years it is important to understand the trend in not only those presenting themselves as homeless, but also those that Maidstone Borough Council is owed a duty to house under legislation.

As can be seen from the graph above, there have been two main trends in homelessness acceptances over the last five years. There was a period between 2007 and 2009 where

acceptances were at around 10 acceptances per quarter. Between mid 2009 and mid 2010 acceptances dropped off to around one a quarter. After mid 2010 the number of acceptances has increased dramatically, hitting a peak of 58 in quarter 3 of 2012.

The table below details homelessness decisions for the last six years.

	<b>Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally so</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Eligible, homeless but not in priority need</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Not Homeless</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Ineligible</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total Decisions Taken</b>
<b>2007</b>	35	<b>43.2</b>	14	<b>17.3</b>	4	<b>4.9</b>	28	<b>34.6</b>	0	<b>0.0</b>	81
<b>2008</b>	45	<b>39.8</b>	17	<b>15.0</b>	7	<b>6.2</b>	43	<b>38.1</b>	1	<b>0.1</b>	113
<b>2009</b>	14	<b>12.5</b>	7	<b>6.3</b>	8	<b>7.1</b>	83	<b>74.1</b>	0	<b>0.0</b>	112
<b>2010</b>	13	<b>20.0</b>	5	<b>7.7</b>	6	<b>9.2</b>	41	<b>63.1</b>	0	<b>0.0</b>	65
<b>2011</b>	155	<b>70.4</b>	21	<b>9.5</b>	17	<b>7.7</b>	24	<b>10.9</b>	3	<b>1.4</b>	220
<b>2012</b>	192	<b>64.9</b>	24	<b>8.1</b>	46	<b>15.4</b>	30	<b>10.1</b>	4	<b>1.4</b>	296
<b>2013 (Up to Q2)</b>	117	<b>72.2</b>	10	<b>6.2</b>	19	<b>11.7</b>	14	<b>8.6</b>	2	<b>1.2</b>	162

Even though the number of people presenting themselves as homeless to the council increased between 2007 and 2009, during the same time the proportion of those found not to be homeless increased year on year.

However since 2010 the number of people presenting themselves as homeless increased; as well as the number of people who were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. At the same time, the proportions of those found not to be homeless or intentionally homeless have decreased. This is likely to be linked to the period when decisions letters were always issued for people receiving a negative decision, to enable them to request a review of the decision, but not necessarily to those for whom accommodation was secured.

Another figure to be noticed is that in 2012, the proportion of those found to be eligible, homeless but not in priority need doubled since the previous year. So far this year this proportion has dropped down to 11.7 per cent. This is a higher proportion than any other years before 2011.

So far for 2013, the proportion of those who are found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need is at the highest it has been for the period we have been examining. The numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless look as if they will be higher than any other years if the trend for first two quarters of 2013 stays the same.

It is likely that the numbers of those who present themselves as homeless, as well as the numbers of those who are accepted as MBC having a homelessness duty will remain high. This is because there is no sign that the trend of increased numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless; or the trend of increased numbers of people being found to be owed the full housing duty; will fall in the near future.

## Ethnic background of those who have presented themselves as homeless

<b>Ethnic background of those who presented themselves as homeless and MBC made a decision between 2007 and 2013. Source: P1E return</b>					
<b>Ethnic Background</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Other</b>
% of those who gave an answer to the ethnic background question	93.0	2.1	2.1	1.4	1.4

As can be seen in the table above, the vast majority of those who presented themselves as homeless and the council made a decision were from a White ethnic background. These figures can be compared with figures from the 2011 census to find out how closely they match with the ethnic profile of the borough as a whole. These figures can be seen in the table below.

<b>The ethnic composition of Maidstone Borough. Source: 2011 Census</b>					
<b>Ethnic Background</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Other</b>
% of residents in the borough of this ethnicity	94.1	0.9	3.2	1.5	0.3

When the two figures are compared, it appears that those of White, Asian or Mixed ethnic background are underrepresented in the homelessness figures, and those of a Black or Other ethnic background are over represented. However these figures should be treated with caution, as the numbers of those presenting themselves as homeless from Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are low. For example, between 2007 and 2012 only 17 people of a Black ethnic background presented themselves as homeless.

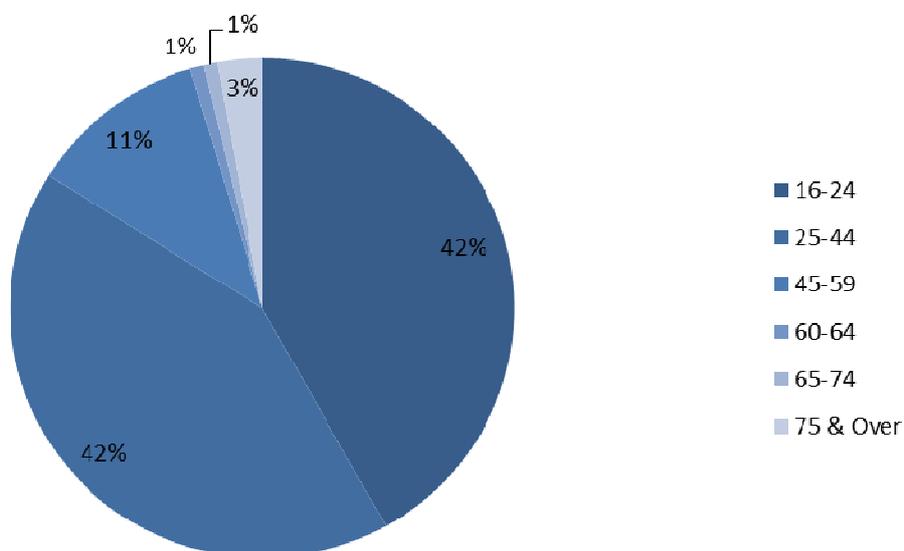
## Age

The vast majority of those who are accepted by the council as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need are aged between 16 and 44 at the time of their acceptance. A chart showing the age of those who were accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need between 2007 and 2013 can be seen below.

Within the 16-44 age group, there is an equal split between those aged 16-24 and those aged 25-44. There is a very small proportion of those accepted as homeless aged 60-74, and a slightly larger proportion of those aged 75 and over.

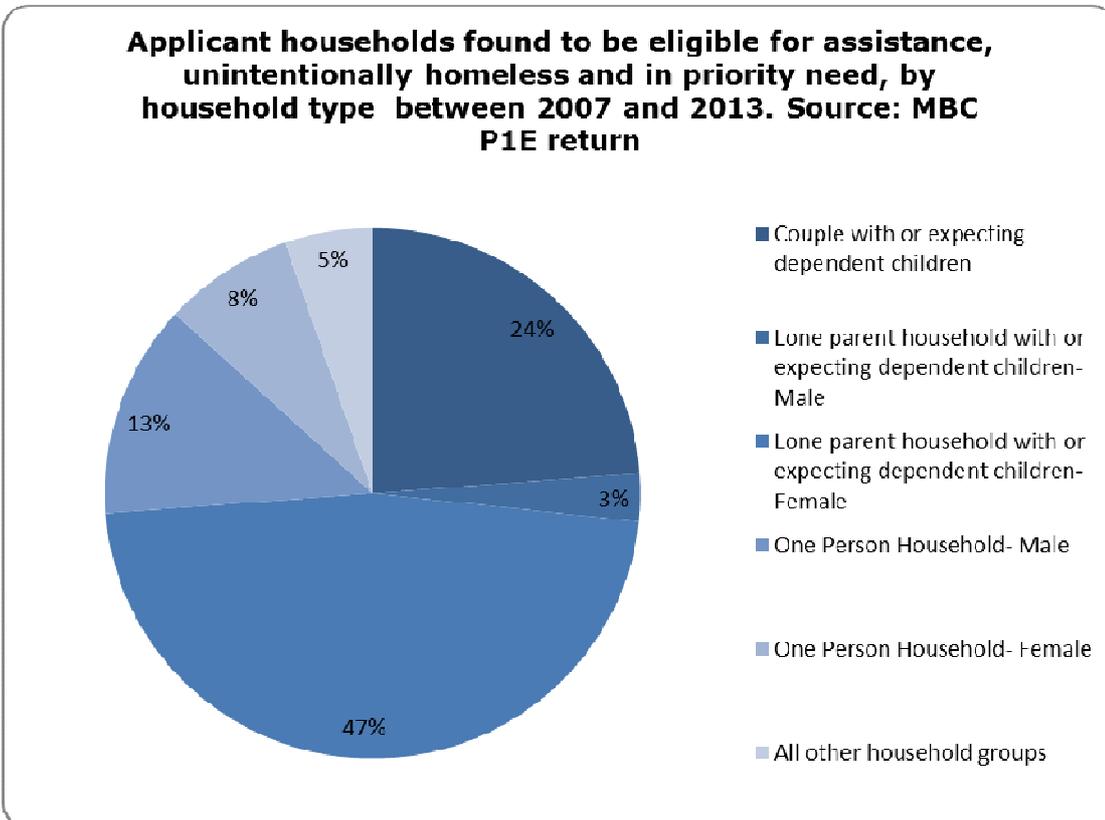
This demonstrates that those aged between 16 and 44 are the most likely to become homeless and be eligible for assistance from the council in the form of temporary accommodation.

**The age of those who were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need between 2007 and 2013. Source: MBC P1E Return**

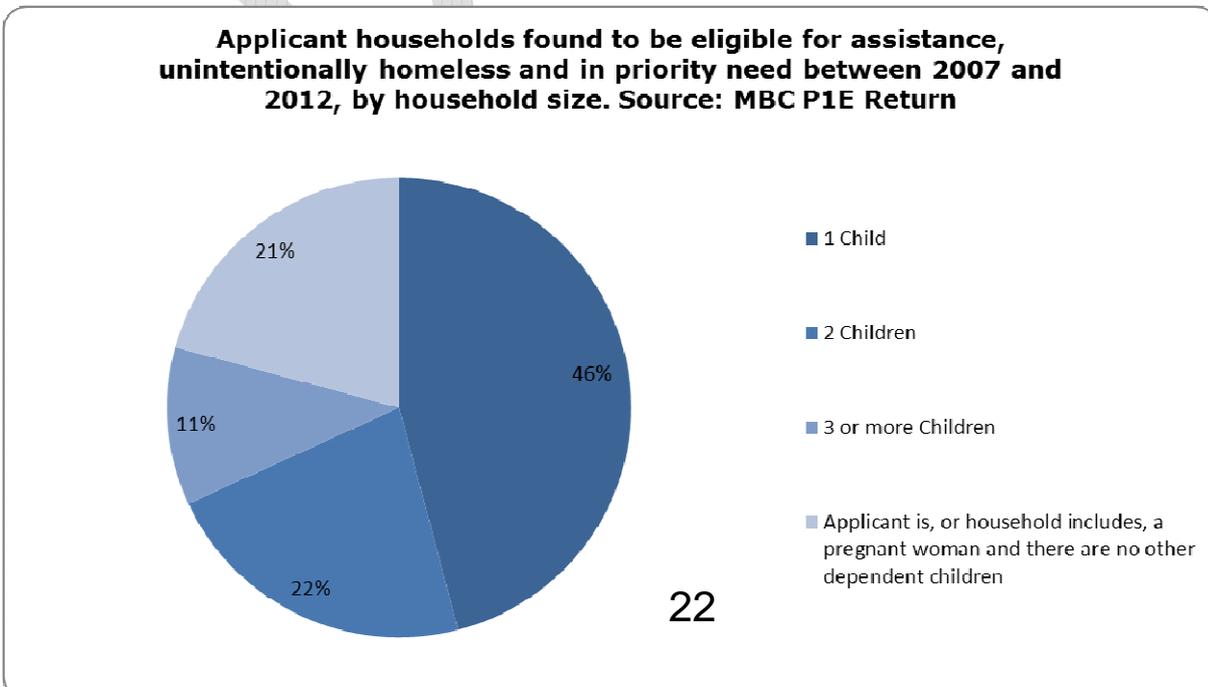


## Household Type

Between 2007 and 2012, out of those who were accepted by the council as eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, the most common family type was a female lone parent with or expecting dependent children (47%). The second most common family type in this group is couple with, or expecting, dependent children (24%), with single male households being the third most common family type (13%). The breakdown of family types can be seen on the chart below.

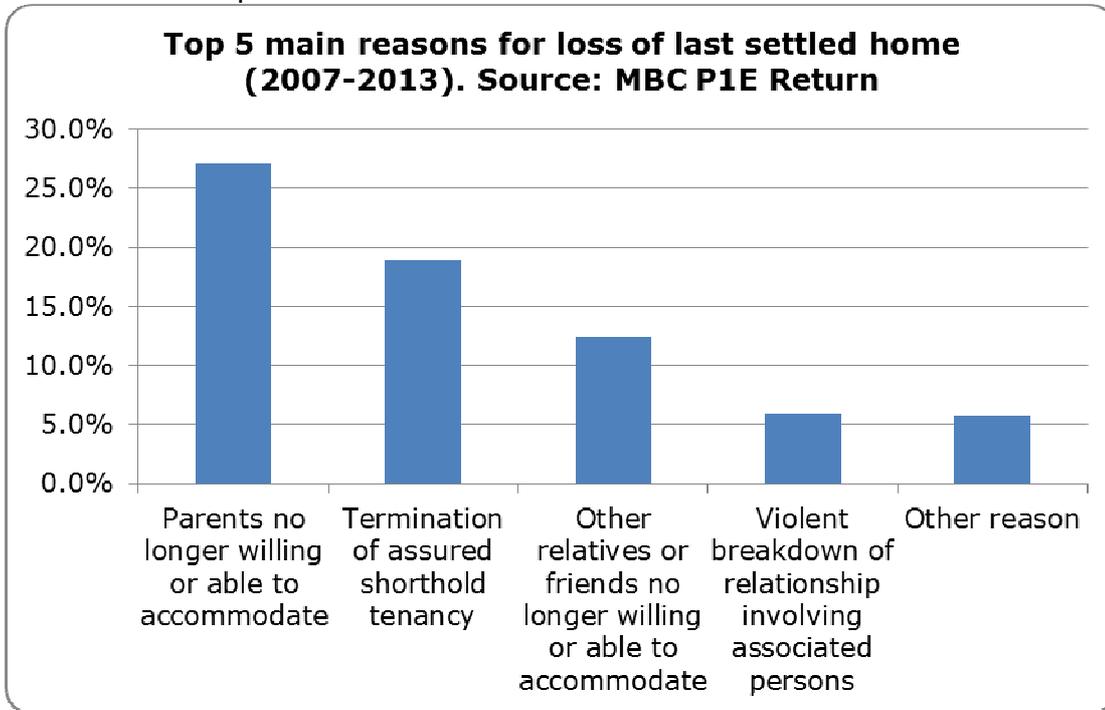


The most common number of children for households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need with dependent children in this group was one child (46%). Next, there is an almost equal split between those families with 2 children (22%) and applicants/households that include a pregnant woman and there are no other dependent children (21%). The breakdown of household size can be seen on the chart below. It is worth noting that this question ceased to be asked after Q4 of 2012.

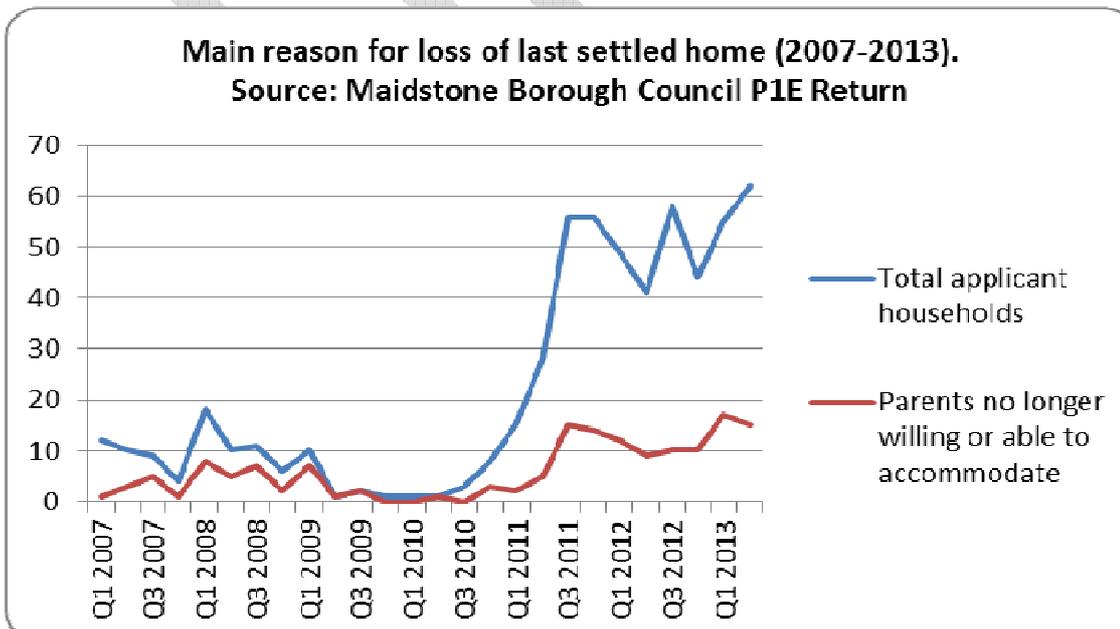


## Reasons for loss of last settled home

The graph below demonstrates the top five reasons for the loss of the last settled home. Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate (27.1%) was the biggest reason for homelessness in Maidstone between 2007 and 2012. This finding, along with the fact that 42% of those accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, suggests that there are increasing numbers of young people who have been unable to leave the family home and set up their own household.



The trend between the number of cases that are found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need that had the main reason for the loss of the last settled home as parents no longer willing or able to accommodate closely mirrors the trend for overall applicant households. These two trends can be seen on the graph below.

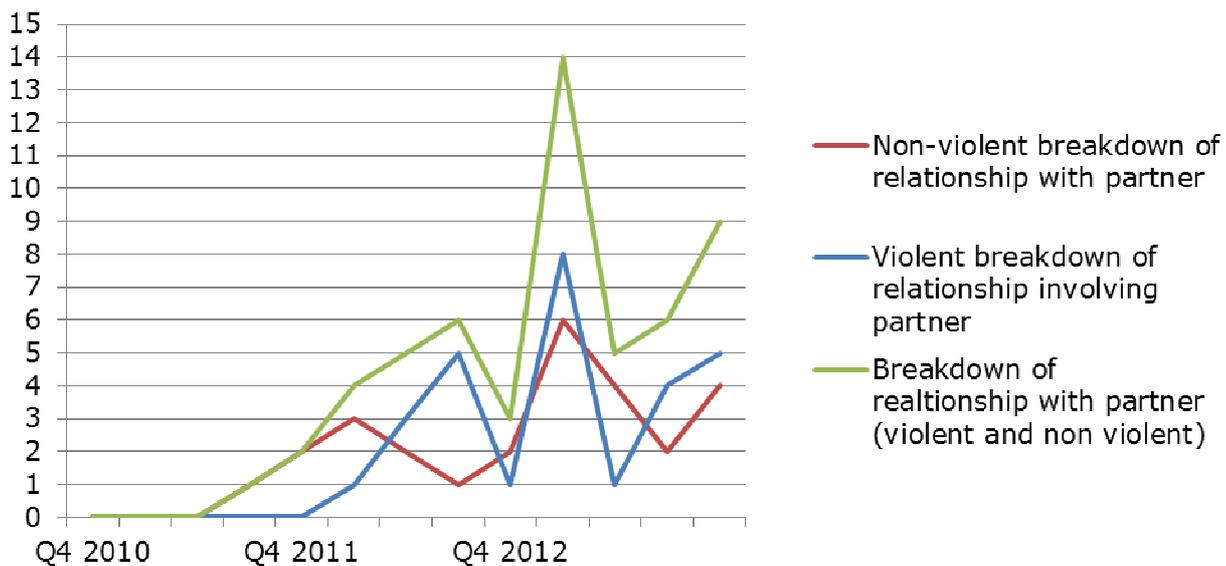


Termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (19.2%) is the second most likely reason for loss of the last settled home. However this is compared with only 2.4% of people who lost their previous settled home due to rent arrears in private sector accommodation. This suggests that people are losing their homes for reasons other than being unable to afford the rent e.g. the landlord is freeing up their stock to let to a different client group at a higher rent.

There have been very low numbers overall, and no obvious trends in the data, for people losing their last settled home because of leaving prison, hospital, other institutions or Local Authority care and leaving HM Forces.

In recent years breakdown of relationships with partners, both violent and non-violent, have been increasing as a reason for homelessness. This has been coupled with a rise in acceptance of homelessness cases overall and a general increase across most reasons for homelessness. However the increase is marked in this case as there was only an occasional case of homelessness as a result of breakdown of relationships with partners before quarter 1 of 2011.

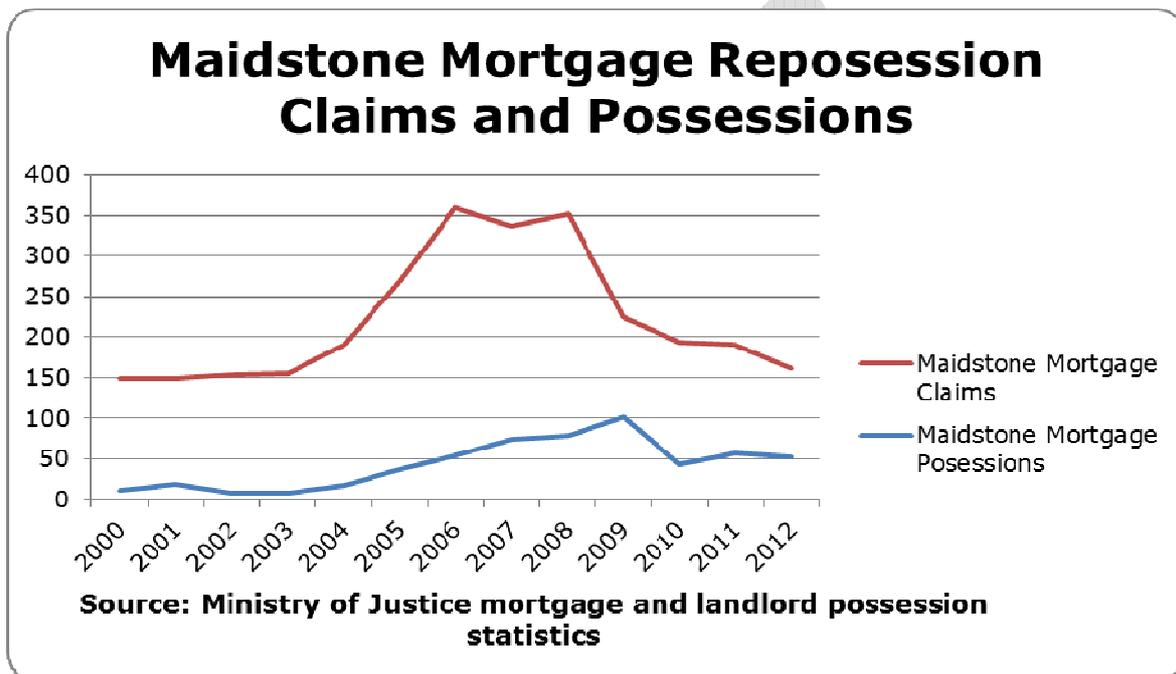
**Main reason for loss of last settled home for applicant households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need 2007-2013. Source: Maidstone Borough Council P1E return**



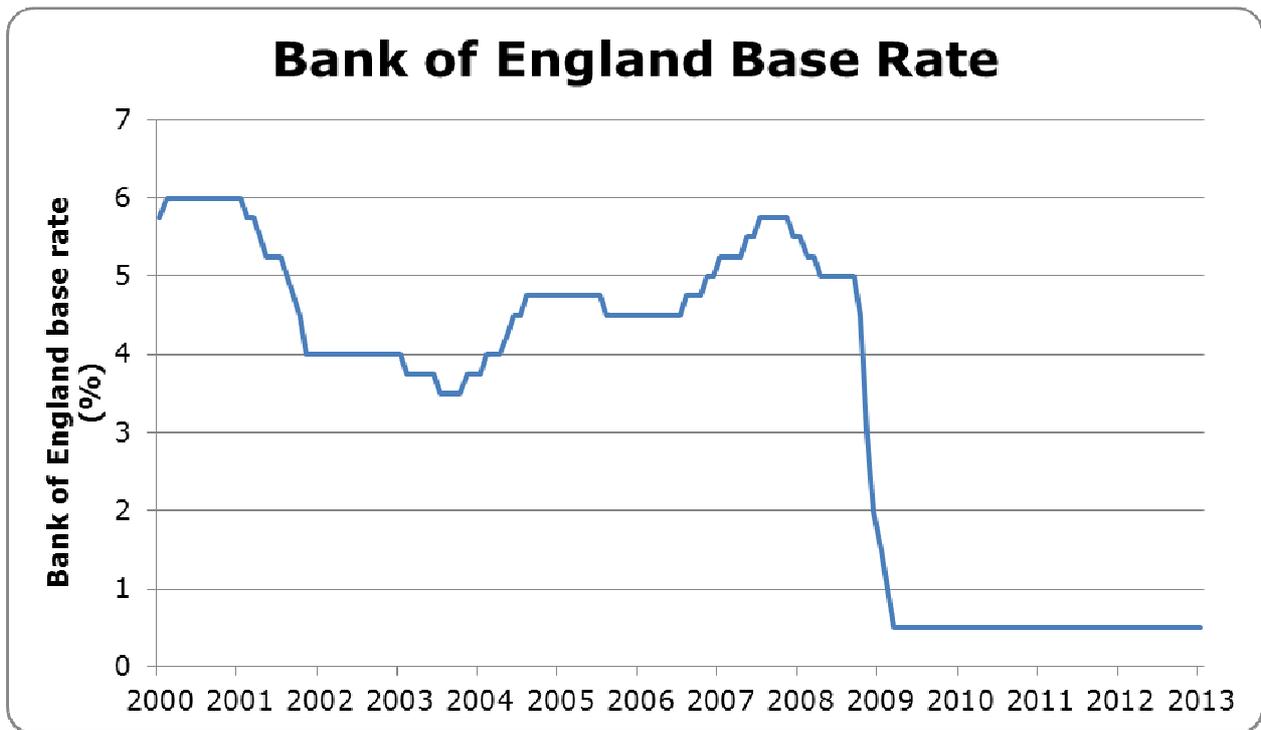
## Repossessions

The level of repossessions, both landlord and mortgage, have increased over previous years. For both types of repossessions, there has been an increase in repossession claims in the courts since 2005. However for mortgage repossessions this number of claims has decreased dramatically since 2009, and is back at pre-2005 levels. This trend can be seen on the graph below.

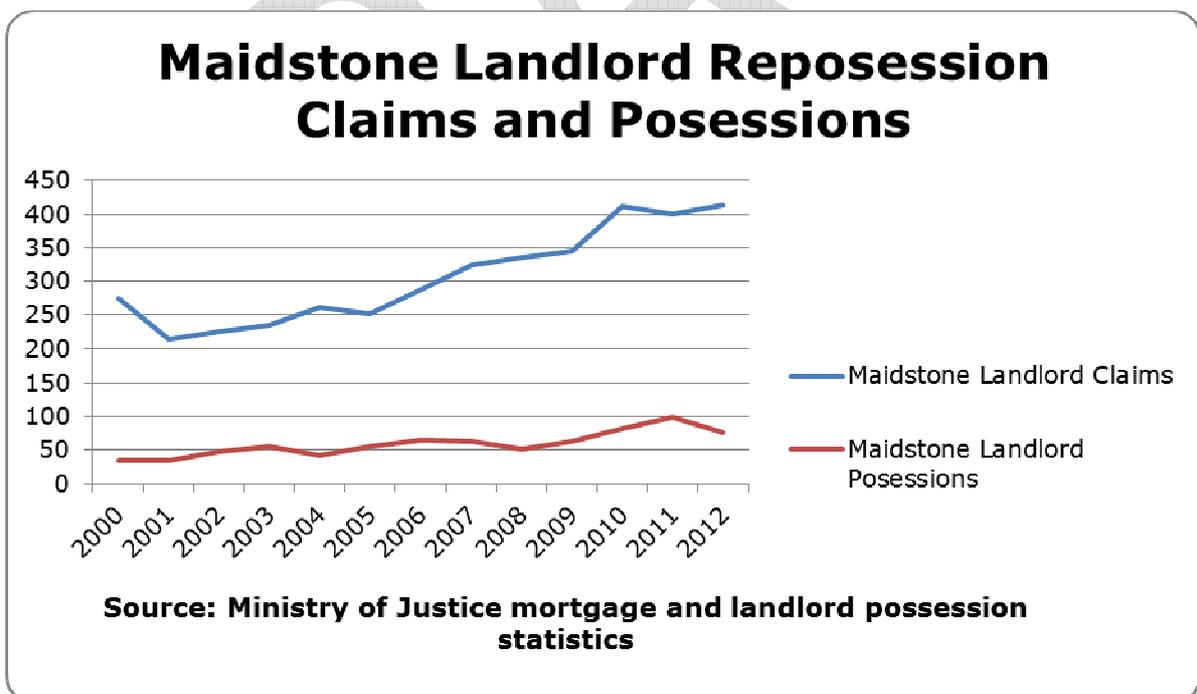
Despite the level of mortgage repossession claims decreasing, the number of actual possession orders obtained has remained at a higher level than before the spike in claims for possession orders. This could suggest that mortgage companies have obtained possession orders but are waiting until the housing market improves before enforcing possession to realise the capital asset.



There is a slightly different trend for landlord repossessions. Although there seems to be an ever increasing number of claims for possession orders, the level of landlord possession orders obtained has not increased as drastically. However it is worth noting that possessions are seeing a trend of gradual increase. This can be seen in the graph below.



The mortgage repossession statistics correlate relatively closely with the Bank of England base rate, and accordingly with the financial crisis. This is because mortgage interest rates are closely linked to the Bank of England Base Rate. As the base rate increased from a low of 3.5% in July 2003 to a high of 5.75% in July 2007, mortgage repossession claims increased accordingly. As the base rate began to fall from 5.5% in December 2007 onwards, and settled at an all time low of 0.5% in March 2009 mortgage repossession claims also fell.



However, despite the number of repossession claims falling, the number of possession orders granted remains higher than the pre-2004 level.

Looking at mortgage repossessions and how closely they link with the Bank of England base rate and the state of the economy, there are two risks for owner occupiers in the short to

medium term that may result in increased levels of homelessness. The first is an increase in the bank of England Base Rate, which will increase the cost of mortgages. The second is if there is further pressure on the national and local economy resulting in residents finding it harder to continue paying their mortgage.

### **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople**

The bi-annual caravan count, carried out by the Department for Communities and local government, gives a good idea of the numbers of Gypsy and Traveller households living in caravans in the borough. The results for the last six published counts can be seen below.

	<b>No. of Socially Rented</b>	<b>No. on Private Land (with Planning Permission)</b>	<b>No. on Private Land (without Planning Permission)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Jul 2010</b>	31	188	102	321
<b>Jan 2011</b>	32	205	104	341
<b>Jul 2011</b>	32	278	104	414
<b>Jan 2012</b>	38	293	48	379
<b>Jul 2012</b>	41	307	52	400
<b>Jan 2013</b>	38	336	48	422

**Source: Department for Communities and Local Government Biannual Caravan Count**

The last six counts show an upward trend in the numbers of caravans in the borough. There is also a positive trend in the proportion of those caravans that are situated on private land with planning permission and socially rented pitches. This is a positive trend when considering homelessness, as those on unauthorised private sites are more likely to be evicted and be made homeless. Therefore the larger proportion of Gypsies and Travellers living on authorised sites, the less likely they will be to become at risk of becoming homeless through eviction.

The borough's Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTSAA), which was carried out in 2012, estimated the housing needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The assessment estimated that the borough needed to provide the following numbers of authorised pitches in order to satisfy demand, detailed in the table below.

<b>Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Need</b>	
<b>2011-2016</b>	105
<b>2016-2021</b>	25

**Source: Maidstone Borough Council Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment; January 2012**

As of January 2013, it is clear that there has been good progress on providing additional authorised pitches for the Gypsy and Traveller community. Since July 2011, the number of caravans sited on authorised pitches has increased by 58. Although this number does not translate exactly into the number of additional pitches provided, as multiple caravans may be sited on one pitch, it does show that progress has been made.

## Homelessness Preventions

Maidstone Borough Council carries out homelessness prevention activities, carried out by the Housing Options Service. These preventions can range from giving debt advice, to sorting out housing benefit problems, to resolving problems with rent arrears. Homelessness prevention work can be carried out for any households that approach the authority for advice, regardless of whether they are statutorily homeless or not. The figures for homelessness preventions from 2008/2009 financial year onwards can be seen below. Please note these figures were only gathered from 2009 onwards.

Year	Number of Preventions
2009	487
2010	550
2011	721
2012	479
2013 (to June)	184

As can be seen by the figures, the number of homelessness preventions has been on the decrease and further analysis is required to determine what has caused this.

## Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping remains the most visible and damaging manifestation of homelessness. The Department for Communities and Local Government defines Rough Sleepers as follows for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates:

'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").'

Figures for rough sleeping are published annually, after a count or estimate is carried out across the country in the autumn. The count (or estimate) is a snapshot of the extent of rough sleeping in an area on one night.

The methodology of gathering these statistics changed in 2010, so data from before this time cannot be compared as it would be impossible to tell whether any changes were due to the change in methodology or due to other circumstances.

The estimates for rough sleeping in Maidstone, as well as neighbouring authorities can be seen in the table below.

<b>Rough Sleeping estimates and counts for Maidstone and neighbouring local authorities. Source: DCLG</b>						
Year	Maidstone	Medway	Ashford	Tonbridge & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Swale
<b>2010</b>	27	7	2	1	9	0
<b>2011</b>	19	12	7	4	13	2
<b>2012</b>	19	17	4	3	10	6

The estimates for rough sleeping show that although rough sleeping in Maidstone appears to have dropped since 2010, it has stayed at a steady level between 2011 and 2012.

Rough Sleeping in Maidstone appears to be higher than its neighbouring authorities. This could be linked to the number of services for single homeless people that are located in Maidstone and not found in the adjoining areas. The exception to this is Tunbridge Wells, which has a single homeless accommodation and a higher number compared to Ashford, Tonbridge & Malling and Swale. For most neighbouring authorities, numbers of rough sleepers have increased over the three years. For all neighbouring authorities, numbers of rough sleepers are higher in 2012 than in 2010.

## Housing Cost and Housing Provision

The Maidstone Borough Council area has an average housing cost area compared nationally, but fares well regionally and compared to Kent. The table below shows the average house price for the South East, Kent and Maidstone in April to June 2013.

<b>England</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>Kent</b>	<b>Maidstone</b>
£242,415	£281,148	£241,195	£229,099
Source: Land Registry			

According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was carried out in 2010, there are particular groups of people who are more likely to find it difficult to afford 'market' (the cost of housing on the open market, either renting or buying) housing. Those particular groups, and the likely percentage of those who would be unable to afford market rent, are:

- Lone parents (67.1%)
- Single, non-pensioner (34.1%)
- Household head not in employment (31.1%)

(Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2010)

It is also worth noting that those in urban locations are more likely to not be able to afford market rent (29.0%) than those in rural locations (17.7%). Another noteworthy observation is the split between those households headed by someone employed in Maidstone Borough (22.6% of households unlikely to be able to afford market rent) compared to those households headed by someone employed outside Maidstone Borough (7.2% of households unlikely to afford market rent).

The SHMA noted that there was a consensus among registered social landlords and those dealing with homelessness that there is a shortage of accommodation in social rented housing for single households.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to providing affordable housing to address these needs for affordable housing. The statistics for delivery of affordable homes can be seen in the table below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Affordable Homes Delivered</b>
2009/2010	399
2010/2011	228
2011/2012	284
2012/2013	244
2013/2014 (up to 30 <sup>th</sup> September)	91
Source: MBC	

## **Supporting People Clients**

The Supporting People Programme is a government programme to provide housing related support services such as homeless hostels, women's refuges and sheltered accommodation to help vulnerable people live independently. Supporting People in Kent is administered by Kent County Council on behalf of all the Kent local authorities (except Medway). A Commissioning Body made up of representatives from each district council, Probation, Health and Social Services meets to take strategic decisions about the programme delivery. A range of providers, including housing associations, charities and some local authorities, deliver the service across Kent.

As part of the consultation, the Supporting People Programme in Kent submitted data on homelessness; activities they carry out around homelessness and resources available to them in Maidstone.

All the data is either extracted from the National Data Set held by the Centre of Housing Research at St Andrews University. Providers of the service are required to make a submission to the centre on clients from the following services:

- Supported housing
- Women's refuge
- Foyer
- Teenage parent accommodation
- Direct access accommodation
- Floating support
- Outreach
- Resettlement
- Adult placement
- Supported Lodgings

The table below shows all of the clients entering into housing related support services from the Supporting People Programme in Maidstone over the previous three years; who spent the previous night in the Maidstone Borough Council area, where homelessness appeared within their needs.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of people</b>
<b>2010-2011</b>	152
<b>2011-2012</b>	90
<b>2012-2013</b>	102
<b>Grand Total</b>	344

This shows that the number of homeless people supported by the supporting people programme has dropped by around 50% between 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. It is worth noting that no substantial changes in capacity, or approach by Supporting People during this period. Therefore this represents a genuine decrease in those who are homeless and are accessing the programme.

The gender split of clients supported by the programme is roughly a 2:1 ratio of Male: Female clients. The gender split over the last three years can be seen in the table below.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Female	53	34.9	30	33.3	36	35.3	<b>119</b>
Male	99	65.1	60	66.6	66	64.7	<b>225</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>152</b>		<b>90</b>		<b>102</b>		<b>344</b>

The table below shows if clients of Supporting People have been accepted as requiring services under statutory framework over the last three years.

	<b>2010/2011</b>	<b>% of total clients</b>	<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>% of total clients</b>	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>% of total clients</b>
<b>Mental Health (Secondary)</b>	15	9.9	6	6.7	4	3.9
<b>Care Management (Social Services)</b>	13	8.6	8	8.9	12	11.1
<b>Probation/Youth Offending Team</b>	19	12.5	11	12.2	10	9.8
<b>Drug Intervention Programme</b>	9	5.9	4	4.4	8	7.8

The proportion of clients with secondary mental health needs and clients requiring support from Probation or the Youth Offending Team has decreased over the last three years. At the same time, the proportion of clients with Care Management needs has increased.

The table below shows the breakdown of types of clients where homelessness appears in their support needs.

<b>Primary Client Group</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Single homeless with support needs</b>	102	67.1	59	65.6	50	49.0	211
<b>Rough Sleeper</b>	45	29.6	23	25.6	26	25.5	94
<b>Young people at risk</b>	0	0	0	0	16	15.7	16
<b>Homeless families with support needs</b>	3	2.0	5	5.6	6	5.9	14
<b>Mental health problems</b>	0	0	2	2.2	2	2.0	4
<b>Alcohol misuse problems</b>	0	0	0	0	2	2.0	2
<b>Offenders/at risk of offending</b>	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	1
<b>People at risk of domestic violence</b>	0	0	1	1.1	0	0	1
<b>Refugees</b>	1	0.7	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	152		90		102		344

As can be seen from the table above, the majority of the supporting programme's clients are single homeless people; however this proportion has been declining over the last three years. The next largest proportion of clients for the supporting people programme were rough sleepers, however the proportion of clients for this group has also been declining over the previous three years.

A group of clients that have been increasing over the previous three years have been Homeless families with support needs.

In 2012-2013 the programme supported a large proportion of clients that were young people at risk; whereas there were no clients in this category before.

Using data gathered from their floating support service, the Supporting People Programme identified the clients who had been referred into the service in Maidstone and were living in temporary circumstances on an insecure basis. This is shown on the table below.

<b>Current Accommodation</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Lodging with Parents/Relatives/Friends</b>	56	36	18	110
<b>Sofa surfing</b>	56	47	36	139
<b>Bed &amp; Breakfast</b>	17	8	2	27
<b>Temporary</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	130	91	56	277

This shows that over the previous three years, there have been a significant number of vulnerable people living in temporary accommodation on an insecure basis who have been referred as homeless to the Supporting People programme.

## Those who are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless

As part of the consultation with various agencies and organisation that work with those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, we asked a question about those who are most likely to be at risk of becoming homeless in their client groups. The following groups were identified by these organisations:

- Single unemployed men under 35
- Households with under-occupation penalties in housing benefit
- Households with interest only mortgages and no repayment vehicle
- People with mental health problems
- Housing benefit claimants who have to seek accommodation in the private sector
- Large families that are benefit claimants
- Those who are leaving prison:
  - They may not have a local connection
  - They may be told that by being in prison they are intentionally homeless
  - Those who cannot return to the area they came from due to restrictions on their licenses
  - Those with previous rent arrears
  - High risk offenders, sex offenders, those with substance misuse issues or mental health issues (or any combination of these circumstances)
- 16-18 year olds who are NEET
- Older people (55-64) with a care and/or support need who may have been hit with an under occupancy penalty or affected by welfare reform
- Armed forces leavers
- Severely overcrowded households
- Clients with mental health issues
- Young carers

Out of these groups identified as being particularly vulnerable, there was an emphasis on those with mental health problems; young, single unemployed people and those who may be affected by welfare reforms.

## Significant gaps in provision

The consultation with partner organisations included a question on whether they thought there were any gaps in provision for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The following gaps in provision were suggested:

- Supporting people with mental health problems to find, secure and maintain accommodation. It is often difficult to prove priority need in these cases; and even harder to locate accommodation that will nurture rather than hinder their mental recovery
- It is hard to find permanent and emergency accommodation for single people
- There is a lack of general housing advice (i.e. advice for those who are not homeless, in priority need, and are not immediately threatened with homelessness); which impacts on other support services as they are relied on to provide generalist housing advice
- Move-on accommodation is almost completely unavailable in some areas (of Kent)
- Funding cuts mean floating support can only be provided for a short time, and housing providers will not accept nominations for housing unless this is in place
- Tenants who are arrested are unaware they can maintain Housing Benefit for 13 or 52 weeks depending on the circumstances, and therefore lose their homes unnecessarily
- Clients are not always told of any help they can get with rent deposits or rent in advance when approaching the council
- Lack of private sector accommodation available in Maidstone for single people dependent on welfare benefits
- There are no appropriate local emergency placements for young people that are not in B & B/Premier Inn
- A lack of semi-independent supportive lodging accommodation that can be accessed by 16-18 year olds who need extra support
- Homelessness among older people is overlooked. Promote models that enable independent living such as extra care, supported living and specialist housing
- Rent Deposit Schemes suffer from a lack of landlords willing to participate, leading those who sign up for such schemes into false hope. This can be helped by ensuring such schemes are available as cash
- There is a large street population in Maidstone, who are not necessarily homeless. Media attention has not adequately made the distinction between the two groups

## Welfare Reforms

Since 2010, significant reforms of the welfare state have been proposed, legislated for and taken effect. These will inevitably affect the levels of homelessness in the borough. Listed below are the main welfare reforms to have taken place since 2010 that have particular relevance to homelessness.

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Date</b>
Housing Benefit	Capping of Local Housing Allowance rates for properties of specific sizes. Reduction of Local Housing Allowance rate from 50 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	April 2011 (new claimants); rolling implementation over a year from January 2012 for existing claimants
Housing Benefit	The age threshold for the shared accommodation rate for Local Housing Allowance will be increased from 25 to 35	January 2012
Pension Credit	Rates for the savings credit part of Pension Credit reduced	April 2012
Crisis Loans	The maximum rate of a crisis loan will be at 30% of the appropriate benefit personal allowance rate. Maximum for householders or people who are homeless set at 60% of appropriate benefit personal allowance.	April 2012
Housing Benefit	Local Housing Allowance rates frozen ahead of April 2013 change where rates will no longer be linked to market rent	April 2012
Council Tax Benefit	Council Tax Benefit to be replaced by a locally devised scheme of Council Tax Support	April 2013
Housing Benefit	Size criteria will apply in the social rented sector, penalising tenants for under occupying social housing	April 2013
Benefit Cap	Cap on the amount of benefits out of work households can claim. Cap set at level of average earnings of a working family	April 2013
Universal Credit	The current system of working age benefits and tax credits (including housing benefit) are to be replaced by a new benefit called Universal Credit (UC). The process of moving all claimants onto UC will begin in October 2013 and be finished by October 2017. Claimants will be given one lump sum of benefits each month.	October 2013-October 2017
'13 week rule'	When Universal Credit is rolled out, the '13 week protection rule' will be removed. This rule allows the full payment of rent for up to 13 weeks if a claimant loses their job or falls ill; as long as they had not claimed Housing Benefit for the previous 52 weeks and could previously pay their rent when they signed the tenancy. Instead, the lower LHA rate will be paid immediately.	October 2013-October 2017
Housing Benefit	Local Housing Allowance rate linked to	April 2013

## Consultations for the Review

As part of the review other important stakeholders were consulted to gather opinions:

- A focus group was carried out on a group of clients of Housing Options, who were homeless, before a pre-tenancy training session. The focus group focused
- A survey was carried out on Private Sector landlords at a local meeting of the National Landlord Association

The results of these consultations are outlined below.

### Focus Group with Housing Options Clients

A focus group was carried out before a pre tenancy training session to consult on the views of those who were affected by homelessness. The focus of the consultation was on the barriers to accessing housing, particularly in the private rented sector. The following themes emerged from the focus group:

- Lack of suitable, affordable private housing;
- Up front costs- fees, deposits, rent in advance;
- The worry of going private, losing the house and having to go on the council list/through the homelessness process again;
- Lack of security in private rented accommodation;
- Being evicted, with landlords then not wanting to take you on as a tenant in the future;
- Lack of letting agents that list landlords willing to take those on benefits.

Those present at the focus group were then asked to think of solutions that may tackle these barriers. The following proposals emerged:

- Change perceptions of landlords;
- Introductory tenancies that give everyone a chance;
- A list of landlords that will accept tenants on benefits;
- Knowing where to get free advice;
- Negotiating directly with the landlord, helping to build a relationship with the landlord before moving in.

### Consultation with Private Sector Landlords

Private Sector Landlords were strongly against the removal of direct payments of housing benefit to landlords when Universal Credit is introduced. There are fears that their tenants will spend rent money on other things and get into arrears.

There was a general negative perception of tenants in receipt of benefits, with landlords considering them a risk, rather than a safe bet.

There was a strong consensus that the council should offer to guarantee the rent of housing benefit clients and that the council should offer to repair any damage tenants on housing benefit may cause to properties when they move out.

Other suggestions that were made during the consultation that may be worth noting were:

- Help landlords to have less void periods;
- Regulate bad landlords; and
- Give incentives to landlords for improving neglected houses

## **Activities carried out in the borough to prevent homelessness and resources available for these activities**

### **Maidstone Borough Council**

#### Private Rented Sector

Maidstone Borough Council, as the local housing authority, has a responsibility to prevent homelessness in the borough. When people present themselves as homeless, and we are satisfied they are unintentionally homeless, eligible for support and in priority need Maidstone Borough Council have a duty to house them. This may include placing people into temporary accommodation whilst trying to find suitable alternative accommodation. The Localism Act 2010 allows local authorities to discharge their duty to these people by providing them with a good quality home in the private rented sector.

### **Kent County Council**

Kent County Council is responsible for Child and Adult Social Services, including administering the supporting people programme, so has an important part to play in preventing and relieving homelessness. Kent County Council supplied completed consultation forms for each of the areas that work with those that are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless.

#### Families and Social Care

Kent County Council Families and Social Care (FSC) is responsible for providing social care across the borough.

FSC carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Prioritising, in collaboration with local housing authority, access to Extra Care Schemes for older people
- Administering the revenue funding for supported housing provision

The resources available for carrying out these activities are as follows:

- Care management staff and strategic commissioning staff
- Funding streams are available specifically for housing vulnerable groups
- Grant funding of voluntary groups that focus on supporting vulnerable groups who may face homelessness

#### West Kent Adolescent Support Team

West Kent Adolescent Support Team (AST) works closely with Maidstone Borough Council in responding to homeless 16-18 year olds.

West Kent AST carry out the following activities:

- Providing support to young people and their families to mediate, or find suitable solutions within the family/friends network
- Providing support to young people in semi-independent living to prevent placement breakdown and further homelessness
- Assessing young homeless people and determining what duty is owed under the Children Act including Section 20 accommodation to those young people identified as being a child in need
- Providing joint assessments with Maidstone Borough Council Housing Officers

The resources available to West Kent AST to carry out these activities are as follows:

- 2 Social Workers and some Social Work Assistant staff who carry out assessments and work directly with young people and their families
- Section 17 (of the Children Act- safeguarding vulnerable children) resources to provide accommodation and support
- Section 20 (of the Children Act- local authority care provision) placements

### Info Zone

Info Zone is part of Kent's integrated Youth Service. Info Zone delivers information and advice to 16-24 year olds.

Info Zone carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Providing homelessness advice from professional case workers
- Working in partnership with other agencies to support the housing situation of individuals
- Courses on life skills, including independent living skills and budgeting skills, that may help prevent homelessness
- Referral to appropriate agencies if required

Info Zone have professional caseworkers available to carry out advice work, as well as staff available to deliver their other activities.

## Supporting People Programme

The supporting people programme submitted data as part of the consultation. This data can be seen in the section on Supporting People Clients. In addition to administering funding for floating support, temporary accommodation and supported accommodation the Supporting People Programme funded a rent deposit scheme delivered via the local housing authorities. This scheme is specifically for those individuals who are leaving supported accommodation who cannot afford the deposit to begin a tenancy themselves. The scheme is detailed below.

<b>Supporting People Rent Deposit Scheme for Maidstone</b>	
How much Supporting People funding did your district receive for Rent Deposit Schemes?	£65,000
What eligibility criteria did you apply to the use of these funds?	Applicants wanting to move in to the private rented sector direct from supported accommodation in our Borough. Applicants in supported accommodation outside of the Borough but have a local connection to Maidstone.
What opportunities arose as a result of having these funds?	Some Landlords / Letting Agents do not accept the Council's Bond scheme. In these situations we have been able to offer a cash payment to the Landlord on behalf of the applicant in order for them to secure the tenancy.

Details of how the rent deposit scheme has operated for the last four years can be seen below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of households assisted</b>	<b>Number of service users that could have accessed RDS</b>	<b>Total amount spent</b>
<b>2009 / 2010</b>	5	30	£3305
<b>2010 / 2011</b>	13	41	£9208.06
<b>2011 / 2012</b>	8	19	£5875.12
<b>2012 / 2013</b>	5	29	£3295

There is £43,316.82 remaining for the Supporting People Rent Deposit Scheme

## **Social Landlords**

Social Landlords who operate in the borough were consulted for the purpose of the review. Social Landlords are critical to the issue of homelessness in the borough because Maidstone Borough Council do not own their own housing stock, but nominate those on the housing list to available socially rented properties in the borough. Two responses were received from Social Landlords- Golding Homes and Town and Country Housing.

## Golding Homes

Golding Homes is the largest Social Landlord in the borough. Golding Homes carry out the following activities:

- Signposting clients to services provided by Maidstone Borough Council and Citizens Advice Bureau
- Pre-tenancy training courses delivered alongside MBC which helps clients to secure and maintain a tenancy; either in the private rented or socially rented sector
- Golding consider 'direct lets' (lets outside the usual allocation process) to properties offered to those that are homeless and in temporary accommodation
- Tenancy Support programme which introduces people to their tenancy and provides support up to six weeks with a designated officer. For the first 12 months of tenancy regular visits are maintained to tenants; and neighbourhood advisors hold regular meetings with tenants
- 'Rentsense' system; which, manages and predicts trends in rent arrears which will enable us to identify which tenancies are at risk earlier and try to resolve rent arrears before they become an issue
- Golding Homes provide a variety of supported living accommodation; including sheltered schemes for the over 50s and Willowbrook Place teenage pregnancy unit

Golding Homes has the following resources available:

- Signposting is part of normal staff duties
- An officer is provided once a month to do pre-tenancy training
- Direct lets in specific circumstances as part of their allocations process
- Designated tenancy support officer that provides assistance at the start of a tenancy
- Eight neighbourhood advisors to monitor and maintain tenant relationships in specific areas
- 'Rentsense' software
- A team of Officers who assist those who are in arrears to maintain their tenancy
- Supported living accommodation, including sheltered accommodation, with a team of staff who manage these schemes

## Town and Country Housing Group

Town and Country Housing Group carry out the following activities in the borough:

- Tenancy support
- Tenancy training
- Money support
- Community Support that signposts those with support needs such as mental health substance misuse etc.
- Benefits advice and Learning, Skills and Employment support services
- Income Management Team who intervene to prevent homelessness

- Town and Country Housing report that Maidstone Borough Council has been able to maximise the use of their social housing in the borough. Since the beginning of the 2012/2013 financial year 100% of vacancies have been re-let by MBC

Town and Country Housing Group noted that they were unable to quantify or provide precise resource allocations for the activities they carried out to prevent homelessness in their clients.

## **The Voluntary and Community Sector**

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has an important role to play in preventing homelessness. The VCS was consulted by sending a consultation form via the Voluntary Action Maidstone network of voluntary organisation, as well as contacting organisations we had existing links with. Through this we were able get responses from various organisations within the sector on activities carried out and resources available.

### Porchlight

Porchlight are a charity supporting vulnerable homeless people in Kent, Medway and Croydon. Porchlight carry out the following activities:

- 24 hour 0800 helpline number, with dedicated staff providing a referral and advice service for all issues connected to homelessness
- Outreach and accommodation projects providing keyworker support
- Workers funded by the Crisis Private Rented Sector scheme tasked with sourcing private rented accommodation for under 35s in the private rented sector
- Delivering keyworker support, through contracts with the Supporting People Programme

### HOPE Kent

HOPE Kent is a charity that was set up to provide supported accommodation for homeless ex-offenders or those at risk of offending throughout Kent. HOPE works in partnership with the Kent Probation Area of the National Probation Service.

HOPE carry out the following activities around homelessness:

- Providing accommodation to those with support needs
- Advice if required
- Floating support
- Assistance with benefits, financial planning, applying to local rent deposit schemes,
- Assistance with appeals
- Hostel and move on accommodation
- Food vouchers and other forms of direct aid to clients
- Floating support to maintain tenancies
- Liaison with outside organisations around substance misuse

To carry out these activities, the following resources are available:

- One member of staff for Maidstone, who is responsible for providing homelessness advice, assistance with maintaining tenancies, budgeting advice, helping clients with their Kent HomeChoice applications
- A project has been funded, with one part time member of staff, to enlist the services of volunteers to assist in the support process in some properties
- There is a budget open to clients that enables financial assistance with welfare and education

#### Crossroads Care- West Kent Young Carers Project

Crossroads Care delivers services for Carers and people with care needs. It has a particular focus on young carers. Crossroads Care has supported young carers to access assisted housing. It has no particular resources available for this activity, but it is part of the service delivered as personal support for individuals.

#### Citizens Advice Maidstone

Citizens Advice Maidstone is the local branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau. It provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice on a wide range of issues affecting the people of Maidstone. This includes advice and signposting on issues around housing and homelessness. Citizens Advice Maidstone carries out the following activities around homelessness:

- Advice and advocacy for homeless people
- Debt management advice to maintain tenancies and mortgages
- Negotiations with landlords and lenders to maintain occupation of properties
- Advising and helping to prepare court papers and court applications
- Some representation and support at court to defend possession proceedings and prevent evictions
- Referrals to appropriate agencies as part of home search activities

Citizens Advice Maidstone have the following resources available:

- A legal aid solicitor
- Two specialist housing advisors; equal to one full time post
- Volunteer staff at the Maidstone Borough Council Gateway; their office at Tonbridge Road and also available by telephone
- Two welfare benefit advisors
- Two money and debt advisors
- One employment specialist advisor
- Some home visits are available if clients are not able to access help in any other way

## Maidstone Borough Council

### Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 12 November 2013

#### Future Work Programme

Report of: Orla Sweeney, Overview & Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 To consider the Committee's future work programme.
- 1.2 To consider the information update given by the Chairman.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee considers the draft future work programme, attached at **Appendix A**, to ensure that it is appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit. Any items on the draft future work programme, highlighted in bold, are provisional items for the Committee to approve.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers the sections of the List of Forthcoming Decisions relevant to the Committee at **Appendix B** and whether these are items that require further investigation or monitoring.
- 2.3 That the Committee considers its continuous professional development needs and recommends possible training or development sessions it would like to undertake.

#### 3 Future Work Programme

- 3.1 Throughout the course of the municipal year the Committee is asked to put forward work programme suggestions. These suggestions are planned into its annual work programme. Members are asked to consider the work programme at each meeting to ensure that it remains appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.
- 3.2 The Committee is reminded that the Constitution states under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules number 9: Agenda items that 'Any Member shall be entitled to give notice to the proper officer that he wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee or Sub-Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee. On receipt of such a request the proper officer will ensure that it

is included on the next available agenda, the Member must attend the meeting and speak on the item put forward.'

#### **4 List of Forthcoming Decisions**

- 4.1 The List of Forthcoming Decisions (**Appendix B**) is a live document containing all key and non-key decisions.
- 4.2 Due to the nature of the List of Forthcoming Decisions, and to ensure the information provided to the Committee is up to date, a verbal update will be given at the meeting by the Chairman. The Committee can view the live document online at:  
<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPIId=443&RD=0>

#### **5. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

- 5.1 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following Council priority:
  - 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.'
- 5.2 The Strategic Plan sets the Council's key objectives for the medium term and has a range of objectives which support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

**Community, Leisure Services & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2013-14**

Meeting Date	Agenda Items	Details and desired outcome
11 June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman</li> <li>• Work programming workshop</li> <li>• Leader &amp; Cabinet Member Priorities for 2013/14 Municipal Year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2013-14</li> <li>• Ascertain work plan for the year and strategic direction for the Council &amp; Select and develop review topics focusing on achievable outcomes.</li> </ul>
16 July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member Priorities for 2013/14 Municipal Year</li> <li>• Draft report: Approval of a new Play Area Strategic Standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider the Cabinet Update and make recommendations as appropriate</li> <li>• To consider the report and make recommendations as appropriate</li> </ul>
13 August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCTV Protocol</li> <li>• Collective Switching of Energy Supplier Service for Householders</li> <li>• Eco Pilot</li> <li>• Draft Health Inequalities Action Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider the report and make recommendations as appropriate</li> </ul>
10 September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health Inequalities (Mental Health) Review</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To interview the witness invited to the meeting and participate in a 'act finding' discussion as part of evidence gathering for the review topic.</li> </ul>
8 October 2013	<b>CANCELLED</b>	<b>CANCELLED</b>
29 October 2013	<p><b><i>Acting as the Crime &amp; Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health and the Police and frontline services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee will be acting as the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee interviewing the witness invited to the meeting and participate in a 'act finding' discussion as part of evidence gathering its review topic (Mental Health). Witnesses will include the Safer Maidstone Partnership.</li> </ul>
12 November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness Strategy Review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee to consider the findings of the Homelessness Strategy Review, interviewing witnesses from a national and local level to</li> </ul>

		establish the needs of Maidstone. The Committee will need to consider when the Homelessness Strategy will return to it, pre-decision, before its adoption.
10 December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Homelessness Strategy</b></li> </ul>	
14 January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Air Quality Action Plan</b></li> <li>• <b>Health Inequalities (Mental Health) Review – follow up interviews with the Clinical Commissioning Group</b></li> </ul>	
11 February 2014	<b><i>Acting as the Crime &amp; Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i></b>	
11 March 2014		
8 April 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluations of Cabinet Member Priorities for 2013/14 Municipal Year</li> </ul>	



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# LIST OF FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

Democratic Services Team  
E: [democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk)

Publication Date: **30 October 2013**

# List of Forthcoming Decisions

## INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the decisions to be taken by the Executive and various Committees of Maidstone Borough Council on a rolling basis. This document will be published as updated with new decisions required to be made.

## KEY DECISIONS

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Result in the Maidstone Borough Council incurring expenditure or making savings which is equal to the value of £250,000 or more; or
- Have significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in Maidstone.

At Maidstone Borough Council, decisions which we regard as “Key Decisions” because they are likely to have a “significant” effect either in financial terms or on the community include:

- (1) Decisions about expenditure or savings which equal or are more than £250,000.
- (2) Budget reports.
- (3) Policy framework reports.
- (4) Adoption of new policies plans, strategies or changes to established policies, plans or strategies.
- (5) Approval of portfolio plans.
- (6) Decisions that involve significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether Borough-wide or in a particular locality.
- (7) Changes in fees and charges.
- (8) Proposals relating to changes in staff structure affecting more than one section.

Each entry identifies, for that “key decision” –

- the decision maker
- the date on which the decision is due to be taken
- the subject matter of the decision and a brief summary
- the reason it is a key decision
- to whom representations (about the decision) can be made

## List of Forthcoming Decisions

- whether the decision will be taken in public or private
- what reports/papers are, or will be, available for public inspection

### EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Cabinet collectively makes its decisions at a meeting and individual portfolio holders make decisions independently. In addition, Officers can make key decisions and an entry for each of these will be included in this list.

### DECISIONS WHICH THE CABINET INTENDS TO MAKE IN PRIVATE

The Cabinet hereby gives notice that it intends to meet in private after its public meeting to consider reports and/or appendices which contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The private meeting of the Cabinet is open only to Members of the Cabinet, other Councillors and Council officers.

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Reports and/or appendices to decisions which the Cabinet will take at its private meeting are indicated in the list below, with the reasons for the decision being made in private. Any person is able to make representations to the Cabinet if he/she believes the decision should instead be made in the public Cabinet meeting. If you want to make such representations, please email [janetbarnes@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:janetbarnes@maidstone.gov.uk). You will then be sent a response in reply to your representations. Both your representations and the Executive's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the Cabinet meeting.

### ACCESS TO CABINET REPORTS

Reports to be considered at the Cabinet's public meeting will be available on the Council's website ([www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)) a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

### HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The Council actively encourages people to express their views on decisions it plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or Cabinet Member (details of whom are shown in the list below).

Alternatively, the Cabinet are contactable via our website ([www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)) where you can submit a question to the Leader of the Council. There is also the opportunity to invite the Leader of the Council to speak at a function you may be organising.

# List of Forthcoming Decisions

## WHO ARE THE CABINET?



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### List of Forthcoming Decisions

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary:	Key Decision and reason (if applicable):	Contact Officer:	Public or Private (if Private the reason why)	Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)
<b>Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development</b>  Due Date: Friday 8 Nov 2013	Community Infrastructure Levy  Progress report on the Community Infrastructure Levy, including principles for populating the regulation 123 list.		Rob Jarman, Head of Development Management <a href="mailto:Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk">Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013	Budget Strategy 2014 15 Onwards Capital  To determine the strategy for developing the future Capital Programme, for 2014/15 onwards, as part of the consideration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).	KEY Reason: Budget Reports	Paul Riley, Head of Finance & Customer Services <a href="mailto:paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk">paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Budget Strategy 2014 15 Onwards Capital
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013	Budget Monitoring - Second Quarter 2013/14  Revenue and capital budget monitoring report		Paul Riley, Head of Finance & Customer Services <a href="mailto:paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk">paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Budget Monitoring - Second Quarter 2013/14

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013	Mid-Year Strategic Plan Performance Report 2013/14  quarterly performance monitoring		Clare Wood <a href="mailto:clarewood@maidstone.gov.uk">clarewood@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Mid-Year Strategic Plan Performance Report 2013/14
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013  52	Bringing empty homes back into use as affordable housing  To consider purchasing property to help deliver the Empty Homes Programme with the Homes and Communities Agency.	KEY Reason: Expenditure > £250,000	Andrew Connors, Housing Enabling Officer <a href="mailto:andrewconnors@maidstone.gov.uk">andrewconnors@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Private - It is in the public interest that this report be taken in private because it discloses information regarding negotiations that have taken place and are continuing with the property owner, including the value of the property. Keeping this information private at this time will enable the council to conclude negotiations and secure the best purchase price possible	Empty Homes back into use report
<b>Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013	Car Parking at Cobtree Manor Park  A report into the management of car parking at Cobtree Manor Park		Jason Taylor, Parks and Leisure Manager <a href="mailto:jason.taylor@maidstone.gov.uk">jason.taylor@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	public	Car Parking at Cobtree Manor Park

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<p><b>Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee</b></p> <p>Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013</p>	<p>Estate Progress Annual Report</p> <p>The estate progress report for the last quarter along with a review of work across the estate over the last year</p>		<p>Joanna Joyce <a href="mailto:joannajoyce@maidstone.gov.uk">joannajoyce@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>public</p>	<p>Estate Progress Annual Report</p>
<p> <b>Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee</b></p> <p>Due Date: Wednesday 13 Nov 2013</p>	<p>Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Center</p> <p>A report into the visitor center at Cobtree Manor Park.</p>		<p>Joanna Joyce <a href="mailto:joannajoyce@maidstone.gov.uk">joannajoyce@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>public</p>	<p>Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Center</p>
<p><b>Licensing Committee</b></p> <p>Due Date: Thursday 14 Nov 2013</p>	<p>Hackney Carriage Licence - Unmet Demand Survey</p> <p>To consider the outcomes of the Unmet Demand Survey into the numbers of Hackney Carriage Licenses</p>		<p>Lorraine Neale <a href="mailto:lorraineneale@maidstone.gov.uk">lorraineneale@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>Hackney Carriage Licence - Unmet Demand Survey</p>

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<p><b>Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development</b></p> <p>Due Date: Thursday 14 Nov 2013</p>	<p>Maidstone Museums' Collections Development Policy 2013 - 2018</p> <p>To consider the approval of a revised Collections Development Policy for the Council's museums</p>	<p>KEY Reason: Policies, Plans, Strategies</p>	<p>Simon Lace, Museums and Heritage Manager <a href="mailto:SimonLace@maidstone.gov.uk">SimonLace@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>Maidstone Museums' Collections Development Policy 2013-2018 Maidstone Museums' Collections Development Policy 2013-2018</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b></p> <p>Due Date: Before Friday 22 Nov 2013</p>	<p>Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits Overpayments write offs</p> <p>Approval of write offs for irrecoverable debts of Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments</p>		<p>Sheila Coburn <a href="mailto:sheilacoburn@maidstone.gov.uk">sheilacoburn@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Private - personal details held</p>	<p>Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits Overpayments write offs</p>

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b>  Due Date: Monday 25 Nov 2013  55	Bankruptcy Policy for Council Tax and Business Rates Debt  The approach to be adopted by the council in collecting unpaid council tax and business rates through the use of bankruptcy proceedings.	KEY Reason: Policies, Plans, Strategies	Sheila Coburn <a href="mailto:sheilacoburn@maidstone.gov.uk">sheilacoburn@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Bankruptcy Policy for Council Tax and Business Rates Debt
<b>Audit Committee</b>  Due Date: Monday 25 Nov 2013	Treasury Management Half Yearly Review 2013/14  Treasury Management Half Yearly Review 2013/14		Paul Riley, Head of Finance & Customer Services <a href="mailto:paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk">paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Treasury Management Half Yearly Review 2013/14
<b>Audit Committee</b>  Due Date: Monday 25 Nov 2013	Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update  report following the annual governance statement review		Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications <a href="mailto:angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk">angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

<b>Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:</b>	<b>Title of Report and Brief Summary</b>	<b>Key Decision and reason (if applicable)</b>	<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i></b>	<b>Documents to be submitted (other relevant documents may be submitted)</b>
<b>General Purposes Group</b>  Due Date: Tuesday 26 Nov 2013	Nominations to Outside Bodies  Report to consider nominations received for Outside Bodies		Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications <a href="mailto:angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk">angelawoodhouse@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Nominations to Outside Bodies
<b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b>  Due Date: Before Thursday 28 Nov 2013	Equality Objectives Mid-year Update  Equality Objectives Mid-year Update		Clare Wood <a href="mailto:clarewood@maidstone.gov.uk">clarewood@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Equality Objectives Mid-year Update
 <b>Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development</b>  Due Date: Before Friday 29 Nov 2013	Maidstone Enterprise Hub  To allocate up to £700,000 from Capital Programme to establish an Enterprise Hub in Maidstone Town Centre.	KEY Reason: Expenditure > £250,000	John Foster <a href="mailto:johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk">johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Maidstone Enterprise Hub

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

<b>Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:</b>	<b>Title of Report and Brief Summary</b>	<b>Key Decision and reason (if applicable)</b>	<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i></b>	<b>Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i></b>
<b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b>  Due Date: Friday 29 Nov 2013	Discretionary Housing Payment  Future policy for the award of discretionary housing payments.		Stephen McGinnes <a href="mailto:stephenmcginnes@maidstone.gov.uk">stephenmcginnes@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Discretionary Housing Payment
<b>Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services</b>  Due Date: Friday 29 Nov 2013	Health Inequalities Action Plan  Action plan detailing work on reducing health inequalities in Maidstone	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	Katie Latchford <a href="mailto:katielatchford@maidstone.gov.uk">katielatchford@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Health Inequalities Action Plan

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<p><b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b></p> <p>Due Date: Before Friday 29 Nov 2013</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;">50</p>	<p>Mid Kent Audit Partnership - Evolution to 'One Team - One Employer'</p> <p>The report proposes that staff who are currently employed by the four partnership Councils should in future be employed by one (Maidstone) with charges made to the other Councils in accordance with existing budgets.</p>		<p>Brian Parsons, Head of Audit Partnership <a href="mailto:Brianparsons@maidstone.gov.uk">Brianparsons@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Private - Paragraph (4) - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office-holders under, the authority.</p>	<p>Mid Kent Audit Partnership - Evolution to 'One Team - One Employer'</p>
<p><b>Cabinet</b></p> <p>Due Date: Wednesday 4 Dec 2013</p>	<p>Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy</p> <p>Approval of Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for public consultation (to be undertaken at the same time as the Maidstone Borough Local Plan).</p>	<p>KEY Reason: Policies, Plans, Strategies</p>	<p>Darren Bridgett <a href="mailto:darrenbridgett@maidstone.gov.uk">darrenbridgett@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy</p>

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 4 Dec 2013	MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT – GROUP 2 POLICIES  2nd group of local plan policies for consideration at Scrutiny committee and Cabinet	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	Michael Murphy <a href="mailto:michaelmurphy@maidstone.gov.uk">michaelmurphy@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT – GROUP 2 POLICIES
 <b>Council</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 11 Dec 2013	Local Council Tax Discount Scheme  Decision on the local council tax discount scheme to be applied for 2014/2015.		Stephen McGinnes <a href="mailto:stephenmcginnes@maidstone.gov.uk">stephenmcginnes@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Local Council Tax Discount Scheme
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 18 Dec 2013	Regeneration and Economic Development Plan Consultation  To consider the draft Regeneration and Economic Development Plan for the Borough and agree its release for public consultation.	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	John Foster <a href="mailto:johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk">johnfoster@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Regeneration and Economic Development Plan Consultation

Forthcoming Decisions  
November 2013 - May 2014

<b>Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:</b>	<b>Title of Report and Brief Summary</b>	<b>Key Decision and reason (if applicable)</b>	<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i></b>	<b>Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i></b>
<p><b>Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b></p> <p>Due Date: Friday 20 Dec 2013</p>	<p>Lease of Giddyhorn Lane Tennis Courts</p> <p>Lease renewal to Maidstone Lawn Tennis Club of the tennis courts at Giddyhorn Lane Playign Fields</p>		<p>Lucy Stroud <a href="mailto:lucystroud@maidstone.gov.uk">lucystroud@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Private because of commercially sensitive information.</p>	<p>Lease of Giddyhorn Lane Tennis Courts</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services</b></p> <p>Due Date: Friday 20 Dec 2013</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018</p> <p>Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018; Homelessness Review 2013</p>	<p>Reason: Policies, Plans, Strategies</p>	<p>Neil Coles <a href="mailto:neilcoles@maidstone.gov.uk">neilcoles@maidstone.gov.uk</a></p>		<p>Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018</p>

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Decision Maker and Date of When Decision is Due to be Made:	Title of Report and Brief Summary	Key Decision and reason (if applicable)	Contact Officer:	Public or Private <i>if Private the reason why</i>	Documents to be submitted <i>(other relevant documents may be submitted)</i>
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Monday 27 Jan 2014  61	Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)  The purpose of the IDP is to identify the infrastructure required to meet the spatial objectives and growth anticipated in the Local Plan and thus demonstrate that the Plan is both realistic and deliverable.	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	Rob Jarman, Head of Development Management <a href="mailto:Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk">Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Monday 27 Jan 2014	Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-31  To consider the Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-31 for public consultation	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	Rob Jarman, Head of Development Management <a href="mailto:Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk">Robjarman@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-31
<b>Cabinet</b>  Due Date: Wednesday 12 Feb 2014	Budget Monitoring - Third Quarter 2013/14  Revenue and capital budget monitoring		Paul Riley, Head of Finance & Customer Services <a href="mailto:paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk">paulriley@maidstone.gov.uk</a>	Public	Budget Monitoring - Third Quarter 2013/14